Healthy Placemaking: How Do Immigrant Food Entrepreneurs Contribute To Community Wellbeing In A Multiethnic Community?

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Healthy Placemaking: How Do Immigrant Food Entrepreneurs Contribute To Community Wellbeing In A Multiethnic Community?

Abstract
Metropolitan suburban communities have become increasingly diverse in the past two decades. Most working-class and lower-income immigrant households settle in the old industrial suburbs of the US metro regions. These newcomers have reversed the declining patterns of many first-ring suburban communities. Policy makers have celebrated the contribution of these newcomers mainly to the labor market and local economy and paid less attention to the health-effect of immigrant revitalization. This study aims to address this gap by focusing on the ways that immigrant food entrepreneurs contribute to the health and wellbeing of a multiethnic working-class suburb (Upper Darby, PA). The research pursues three questions (1) how do immigrant food entrepreneurs contribute to community and economic development? (2) how do they shape the food environment of a diverse community? (3) how do they impact people's food shopping and consumption patterns? This mixed-method research has three lines of inquiry. The first relies on historical research to examine the ways that immigrant food businesses impacted vacancy and food access over time. The results showed that the persistent operation, ownership and business transfer of ethnic food businesses stabilized the community and provided continuous access to food. The second utilizes interviews, field observation, and a survey of customers at ethnic and non-ethnic food businesses to explore the roles of immigrant-run food stores among immigrant and native-born residents. The findings revealed that ethnic food businesses served both ethnic and non-ethnic clientele, promoted walking, and enhanced community safety and relationships. The third draws on cross-sectional surveys of a purposive sample of residents to understand how residents of different backgrounds navigate their food environment in a diverse setting. The survey demonstrated that ethnic food businesses contributed to the diversity and density of the food environment, enabling residents to navigate the food environment based on their own needs, preferences and food budget. This study carries implications for local governments that seek to achieve the triple goals of creating healthy communities, community and economic development, and integration of newcomers in receiving communities.

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HEALTHY PLACEMAKING:

HOW DO IMMIGRANT FOOD ENTREPRENEURS CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY WELLBEING IN A MULTIETHNIC COMMUNITY?

Maryam Khojasteh

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HEALTHY PLACEMAKING
HOW DO IMMIGRANT FOOD ENTREPRENEURS CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY WELLBEING IN A MULTIETHNIC COMMUNITY?

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Dedication

For all families bounded and separated by migration
For those who have stayed put and those who have left their motherlands
For my family back home gracefully enduring the separation
And for my migrant family here without whom this research would not be possible
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It does take a village to write a dissertation. This research would have not been possible without the continuous help of my mentors, friends, and family. I am beyond grateful for all who were fundamental in shaping not only this dissertation but also myself as a scholar. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my dissertation chair, Domenic Vitiello, who patiently guided me to find my research identity and niche. Domenic, thank you for your continuous guidance and support, for broadening my horizon, allowing me to explore and pushing me when necessary. Thank you for always being available not only to listen to me but also to hear me out.

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HEALTHY PLACEMAKING: HOW DO IMMIGRANT FOOD ENTREPRENEURS CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY WELLBEING IN A MULTIETHNIC COMMUNITY?

Maryam Khojasteh
Domenic Vitiello

Metropolitan suburban communities have become increasingly diverse in the past two decades. Most working-class and lower-income immigrant households settle in the old industrial suburbs of the US metro regions. These newcomers have reversed the declining patterns of many first-ring suburban communities. Policy makers have celebrated the contribution of these newcomers mainly to the labor market and local economy and paid less attention to the health-effect of immigrant revitalization. This study aims to address this gap by focusing on the ways that immigrant food entrepreneurs contribute to the health and wellbeing of a multiethnic working-class suburb (Upper Darby, PA). The research pursues three questions (1) how do immigrant food entrepreneurs contribute to community and economic development? (2) how do they shape the food environment of a diverse community? (3) how do they impact people’s food shopping and consumption patterns? This mixed-method research has three lines of inquiry. The first relies on historical research to examine the ways that immigrant food businesses impacted vacancy and food access over time. The results showed that the persistent operation, ownership and business transfer of ethnic food businesses stabilized the community and provided continuous access to food. The second utilizes interviews, field observation, and a survey of customers at ethnic and non-ethnic food businesses to explore the roles of immigrant-run food stores among immigrant and native-born residents. The findings revealed that ethnic food businesses served both ethnic and non-ethnic clientele, promoted walking, and enhanced community safety and relationships. The third draws on cross-sectional surveys of a purposive sample of residents to understand how residents of different backgrounds navigate their food environment in a diverse setting. The survey demonstrated that ethnic food businesses contributed to the diversity and density of the food environment, enabling residents to navigate the food environment based on their own needs, preferences and food budget. This study carries implications for local governments that seek to achieve the triple goals of creating healthy communities, community and economic development, and integration of newcomers in receiving communities.
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PREFACEx
This dissertation was born out of an independent research project I undertook in the Spring of 2014. At the time, I was working as a Graduate Research Assistant at the Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab (the Food Lab) at University at Buffalo. In 2014, it had been two long years since I moved to the States, and consequently, only two short years since I had been learning of all the ways the planning and public health fields intersect. Coming from Iran, creating healthy communities was not my concern nor my priority. I pursued a Master of Urban planning to learn how to enrich community-based economy, lift low-resources communities, and assist and empower low-income entrepreneurs. However, during the first few years at the Food Lab, I grew fascinated by the concept of planning systematically for a sustainable, just, and healthy food system. So much so, I forgot about my goals which brought me to the urban planning program at UB in the first place.

Looking back, my interest in food systems planning was not a complete divergence from my initial areas of interest. I was fascinated by the subfield of food systems planning for the same reasons that I was determined to be a community and economic development professional. Working at the Food Lab, I learned of the disparities in food access and how unfairness and injustice was woven into the consolidated food industry. I grew to understand how the burdens of the food industry is bore by small-holder farmers, farmworkers, and low-income customers and how a community-based food system might address the challenges posed by an industrialized food system. The common thread within my interests in food systems planning and community and economic development was the notion that each community has something to offer—an asset—that can be part of the solution if only we recognized it, planned for it and enriched it.

It was in the Spring of 2014 when my two seemingly distinct areas of interests converged. I started a simple review of the literature about food security of immigrants, which turned into a research question, and then a research project. The literature, for the most part, documented the dietary patterns and acculturation process of immigrants after they migrated to their new countries. The premise of most research was that immigrants and their children arrive in the US having a healthier diet. Over time, immigrants and their children adopt the food culture and norms of the host country; this acculturation process is either voluntary (i.e. eating at fast-food franchises to “assimilate”) or dictated by environmental and financial barriers (i.e. expensive healthy food options, limited access to healthy food retails).

This depiction was not incorrect, but it was incomplete. I knew by way of living as an immigrant in the US that these are not the only two options for immigrants who arrive in the country. It amazed (read, frustrated) me that my systematic review of the literature in food security and immigrants revealed very little of the existence and contribution of ethnic food markets—small grocery stores that carry ingredients to prepare a whole meal. The literature was depicting a relationship between immigrants and their new food environments that did not match reality. My experience living in an immigrant neighborhood and shopping at ethnic grocery stores had showed me a different story; one that shows immigrants do not simply give in to what their food environments offer them; they shape them.
I channeled that frustration into a year-long empirical project that formed the foundation of this dissertation. The primary purpose of the project was to understand how immigrant entrepreneurs manage to offer fresh fruits and vegetables in a low-resource environment, and what challenges they face in owning and operating a small-scale grocery store. The secondary goal was to offer another perspective on the relationship between immigrants and foods in their host countries, where immigrants are not passive entities who only react to their new conditions, but active players who reconstruct and reshape their new environments. As a result, I immersed myself in the expansive literature on immigrant entrepreneurship. Unlike the research on immigrant food security, I quickly found out that scholars of all disciplines are fascinated by ethnic entrepreneurs and have been paying attention to them for decades. Scholars have conducted numerous studies and developed theories to explain who immigrant entrepreneurs are, why they choose self-employment, and what their key success factors are. However, what I was yearning to know – and could not find an answer to – was how immigrant entrepreneurs (re)shape businesses and industries they join, in particular I wanted to learn about their footprints on the US food industry where immigrants have a significant presence from production to distribution.

This curiosity landed me at the PhD program at University of Pennsylvania, Department of Urban and Regional Planning. It was after joining Penn when I started to broaden my understanding of the relationship between immigrants and their receiving cities. This transition, however, was not quick nor painless. After my arrival, I learned that I was pursuing a question that is both too broad and too narrow. Exploring how immigrants are shaping the US food industry was so broad of a question that I would have needed an abundance of time, financial and human resources; a question that was a better fit for a career-long investigation than for a PhD dissertation. At the same time, my question was too narrow in scope as I, stubbornly, wanted to trace immigrants’ footprints solely on the food system – disregarding all the other ways that food systems are interwoven with communities and their functioning systems. The guidance I received pushed me to learn more about the relationship of immigrants and their communities, the debates surrounding immigrants’ effects and their depiction in the planning literature. I followed each lead and as helpful as they all were, it was a walking tour in the Philadelphia 9th South Street market where it finally clicked.

“"It is a different kind of revitalization," Dr. Vitiello said, pointing to the stark differences between the businesses in the northern and southern portions of the 9th South Street market. My classmates from the Immigrant City class and I were standing on a sidewalk in the southern or “Mexican” portion of the market, observing the businesses, and listening to Dr. Vitiello explain how “new immigrants” revitalized the run-down market that “old immigrants” had left behind. I am certain it was not the first time I heard “revitalization”, but it was the first time I understood what it looks like. The southern portion of the market differed from the northern side in a way that it was not decorated and beautified to appeal to the visitors and tourists coming to the market for a taste of specialty food products or an experience of cosmopolitan dining. There was no sign of physical redevelopment such as unified awnings for businesses, or curated public spaces for the visitors. The southern side of the market was home to many neighborhood-oriented and service-based businesses that meet the daily and essential needs of the
surrounding immigrant communities; from small grocery stores, to children clothing stores, to cash transfer services. Both portions of the market, indeed, have gained a new life in the past two decades. The revitalization of the southern part, however, was organic and made possible by every-day activities of immigrants searching for essential products and services.

Early on in my PhD program, multiple seeds were planned which brought forward the research project that follows. One pilot research on the 9th South Street market and two years later, I finally carved out my own research interest. I was still interested in uncovering stories of immigrants as agents of change. This time around, however, I had the opportunity to comprehend their roles under an umbrella broader than food access and food environment. I wanted to learn about the multiple roles that immigrant food entrepreneurs play in their new communities. I chose community wellbeing as the framework to understand the various ways that neighborhood-oriented immigrant food businesses shape their new communities.

The trajectory of this dissertation – from its early seeds to its full blossom – was not separate from my own personal journey in (un)learning and solidifying my multiple identities as a queer woman from the Middle-East. In the beginning, I firmly believed that my place of birth was independent to the research area I had chosen to dedicate my career to and felt disheartened by those who questioned my objectivity. I felt disheartened because at the time my scholar identity – a critical thinker and systematic investigator – was louder and larger than my other identities. I wanted to be seen and respected as a scholar, not a foreigner. I used to believe that an objective researcher is absent of the perspectives we each gain through our different social identities. And while I upheld the ideal of conducting an empirical and systematic research on immigrant entrepreneur in Buffalo NY, I likely would never have realized the gap in the literature had it not been for my own experiences and exposure to immigrant communities.

It is fair to say that in my first years in the States, I was oblivious to my “immigrant” identity; correcting those who called me an immigrant to emphasize that I am only “an international student.” I did not identify as an immigrant because I thought I did not fit into the definition of an immigrant; I left my country in search of a better education not in hope of a permanent stay. But, more importantly, the artificial distance I had made between me and other immigrants was part of my defense mechanism. I did not want to be an immigrant because then I had to justify it and explain why. Loaded questions such as “are you going back home after graduation?” sent the message that “you are welcome to stay as long as you are earning a degree. After that, not so much.”

I dove deep into immigration-related literature for my research, and I started to see myself and my experiences reflected in the literature. Whether that was of immigrants’ nostalgia for home, their social connections, their needs for a community, their “assimilation” process, or their challenges, I realized that I was also an immigrant. To be sure, many people would disagree with my self-identity for political and legal reasons. However, at this point, it did not matter if I called myself a foreigner or an international student; what mattered was that I resonated with the experiences of this group of people known broadly as immigrants. After all, I did leave my country in search of a better future, even if I was not sure what that would entail or where I would end-up.
The same way that pursuing this research helped me to find peace with my immigrant identity, my introspection and self-growth also helped framing and conducting this dissertation. Coming from a contentious Islamic country such as Iran, I have lived the consequences of being misrepresented and misunderstood. In the grand scale, I have been stripped away from my rights to visit my family because I am perceived as a Muslim, therefore an automatic threat to US security. On a personal level, my intellectual ability has been questioned, or disregarded. Even today, my foreigner status is still louder than my scholar identity to some. As a half-out/half-in-the-closet queer, I know first-hand what it does to your psyche waking up every day feeling invisible. Having these experiences and learning to navigate these different realms helped me to have a more unapologetic passion for telling the stories of those who are invisible, misrepresented, or misunderstood. My main motivation is still similar to where I started 5 years ago. However, this time around, I am not telling a story about “them” while keeping a foot-long distance; this time, this is as much about “my” story as it is theirs.

Having the multitude of experiences was also helpful in connecting with the immigrant communities and those who participated in this study. Despite many similar (psychological) experiences associated with being an immigrant, colorism and classism determine very different futures for those who arrive in this country. A West African refugee who fled civil war has a very different experience navigating life in the States than I, a white-passing individual who is fortunate to be pursuing higher education at an institution such as Penn. In fact, being associated with Penn was a major hurdle at the beginning. As Dr. Hillier once shared, when you are part of the Penn community, it does not matter where you come from or how much hardship you have had; once in the community, you are representing the institution.

The perceived class differences between myself and the immigrant communities of Upper Darby was so overwhelming that I postponed my field visits until I had no other choice. Once in the community, however, I was overwhelmed by how warmly and quickly the community – from immigrant residents to the township leadership team – welcomed me into their lives; they were eager to be heard and proud to represent their communities. In fact, to many of my participants, being from Penn did not bear any specific meaning; they cared more about the last time I met my family or if I have anyone here to look after me. Nonetheless, on occasions when the connection did not come easily, I relied on my various experiences to find common ground. After all, we all have felt home-sick, felt like we did not belong or yearned to belong, struggled with a second language, or simply missed our foods.

In conducting this dissertation and on multiple other occasions, I had to refer back to my research questions to stay focused. Immigration does not happen in a vacuum; it is a complex phenomenon that impacts and is impacted by social, political, cultural and economic context of the receiving communities. There are numerous debates on the effects of immigrants on receiving communities including but not limited to the impacts of immigrants on social cohesion, their potential for maintaining racial diversity, their relationship with the established residents, and similarities/differences between immigrants and the native-born minority population. While all of these topics are important and require attention, I had to intentionally leave them out of my analysis to have a focused argument. In other words, I acknowledge racial/ethnic tensions associated
with increased presence of immigrants both as residents and businessowners, and I hope to properly address those questions in my future research. For now, I hope this dissertation can do justice to illuminating the multiple roles that immigrant food entrepreneurs play in their communities.
CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION
On a Friday late afternoon in September, H-Mart – a Korean chain supermarket – is bursting with customers. At this time of the week, more people who take the escalator straight to the second floor to the food court than to the grocery section of the market. There are so many customers that families, couples, and solo shoppers share their long tables with one another; some eat while others patiently wait for their orders from the Korean, Chinese or Japanese vendors. Some customers carry bags filled with groceries they purchased downstairs. A Korean woman – who lives 30 minutes from Upper Darby – comes here every month to fill her pantry with Korean products. After shopping, she visits the food court and orders Korean food and bubble tea to go.

The customers are more diverse than the foods available at the food court. Two Vietnamese men who live in a nearby suburb share that they are here for “cultural connection” while eating Korean food. Not everyone, however, is here for purchasing familiar food. A young customer from Sierra Leon waits with his backpack to pick up to-go food to take home to downtown Upper Darby where he lives alone. Next to him, an Asian and African-American young couple who come from Olney – a diverse Northeast neighborhood in Philadelphia – are holding hands and waiting for their food. Two tables across them, there is an Indonesian family of four who took the train with their friends and relatives to eat at H-Mart for a late lunch. They live in Chinatown in Center City where there is an abundance of Asian restaurants, but coming to H-Mart is about the experience just as much as the food.

H-Mart is a food destination to many people: people who live close and far, people shopping for familiar and cultural foods and those looking for something different; people who come to grocery shop and those who come for the fun. H-Mart is not the only place that makes downtown Upper Darby a lively place to shop or spend time. There were several small businesses before H-Mart but the H-Mart opening brought a spill-over effect on the commercial corridor, stimulating growth and the establishment of other small businesses. On the same block as H-Mart, there are various other food stores, from a newly opened African restaurant to a Vietnamese restaurant operating for almost two decades.

Twenty years ago, downtown Upper Darby looked significantly different from today; there was no H-Mart, Korean karaoke, Peruvian restaurant, or Latino and Indian restaurants and grocery stores. The area had few businesses and many vacancies. The arrival of immigrants and refugees post-1965 to Upper Darby along with 1990’s outmigration of residents changed the life of the township. Not only did the new residents reverse population decline, but they brought new life to the township by occupying vacant properties, opening businesses, and offering essential services and a variety of foods. As a result, downtown Upper Darby is now a vibrant place that attracts customers, shoppers and visitors from near and far.

In fact, Upper Darby today is closer to the initial vision of early developers seeking to position the township as a regional shopping destination by building a landmark shopping mall a century ago. This mall ultimately could not compete with more modern and
luxurious shopping complexes opening further away in more affluent areas. A century later, Upper Darby is once again a shopping destination for surrounding towns and suburbs. This time, it is not for its historic mall but the ways that immigrant (food) businesses have transformed the area and have responded to the needs of diverse and working-class residents of the 21st century metropolitan suburbs.

The ways that immigrants have transformed the social, physical, cultural and economic fabric of Upper Darby is not exclusive to this township. Many suburbs across the country have experienced a demographic transition. After 1965, new immigrants and economically and socially established residents bypassed central cities or moved out of them to settle in suburbs. The majority of post-1965 immigrants arrived between 1990 and 2000. In 1990, 48 percent of immigrants resided in suburbs. By 1999, 31 percent of African Americans, 44 percent of Latinos, and 51 percent of Asian Americans lived in suburbs. These newcomers have transformed the predominant landscape of suburbs in America (Jones-Correa 2006). Today, the view of suburbs as overwhelmingly demographically white does not hold true for many places, especially those around metropolitan areas. In these regions, multiethnic suburbs are a common phenomenon where immigrants and newcomers have been the drivers of community and economic changes.

Local governments and policy makers around the country increasingly celebrate immigrants as drivers of community revitalization. The contribution of immigrants to labor markets and the economy is especially important in post-industrial cities and suburbs where community and economic development is no longer driven by big manufacturers but by immigrant-run and owned businesses (Johnson 2017). Because of this, it is unsurprising that many local governments and media outlets emphasize the economic contribution of newcomers (Kallick 2015). The need for economic resurgence overshadows the multiple other ways that immigrants contribute to community revitalization. Scholars have paid less attention to health and wellbeing aspects of immigrant revitalization (Sandoval-Strausz 2013) despite public health scholars demonstrating a “healthy immigrant effect”, or the fact that many immigrants and their children are healthier upon their arrival compared to the native-born residents (Kennedy et al. 2015). Building on the evidence from immigrant revitalization and immigrant healthy effect research, this study explores whether there is anything particular about immigrant placemaking that promotes health and wellbeing.

Given the fact that many immigrant entrepreneurs establish and operate food businesses, this dissertation focuses on the roles of immigrant food entrepreneurs in community wellbeing. The dissertation explores the multiple ways that newcomers shape and impact their new communities, from their impacts on community and economic development, to their effects on food environment, shopping and consumption patterns. In doing so, this dissertation makes contribution to two large research areas (1) it broadens the current conversations on immigrant-led revitalization to account for health and wellbeing impacts of immigrant entrepreneurship; and (2) it provides more nuances to food environment research and illuminates the complexity of food shopping and consumptions in diverse suburban settings.
Immigrants are reshaping community and metropolitan food systems in dramatic ways, changing the United States’ patterns of food production, distribution and consumption. The diverse and complex impacts of immigrants on food systems have only begun to receive attention from urban planning, community and economic development, public health and allied scholars. One of the more visible impacts of immigrant food entrepreneurs is the diversification of food in the US (Gabaccia and Gabaccia 2009). On the one hand, these entrepreneurs, many with agrarian backgrounds, have introduced new seeds and agricultural practices, defined new tastes and cuisines, formed alternative food supply chains, and shaped the pattern of food production in the US (Imbruce 2015). On the other hand, immigrant entrepreneurs impact the quality and quantity of foods available in a community through operating food-related enterprises from wholesalers to restaurants and small-scale groceries and markets (Short, Guthman, and Raskin 2007). Immigrant food entrepreneurs, however, are often invisible actors in the large food access literature, especially when researchers evaluate healthfulness of food environments. This derives from a binary approach to evaluating the food environments of low-income and minority neighborhoods. Food access studies often ignores the contribution of small-scale stores, particularly ethnic markets, when evaluating food environments, largely due to an overemphasis on national chain supermarkets as the prime outlet for healthy foods and their absence as the main symptom of a “food desert” (Powell, Auld, et al. 2007, Strome et al. 2016). On the other hand, many public health studies depict the food environments of low-resource communities as places saturated with energy-dense and low-nutrition food stores, colloquially labeled “food swamps” (Ver Ploeg et al. 2015). Immigrant food stores live in between and in the shadows of these two overly simplistic descriptions. They are typically small, thus researchers cast doubt in their ability to meaningfully contribute to food security. They often locate in low-resource communities; therefore, scholars assume them to provide unhealthy food stock. The reality, however, is far more complex from these assumptions.

Scholars, however, have started to question this binary understanding of food environment (Pothukuchi 2004, Raja et al. 2008b). Growing numbers of studies call for attention to human agency and social processes in food access research to understand the nuanced ways individuals experience and respond to their food environments (Cannuscio et al. 2014, Cummins 2007, Blacksher and Lovasi 2012). Public health researchers that found food retail interventions to be ineffective – or, insufficient- in promoting diet-related health outcomes further advanced the need for updating/modifying the predominant ways that scholars evaluate and conceptualize food environment and access (Elbel et al. 2015, Cummins, Flint, and Matthews 2014, Dubowitz et al. 2015). After all, these interventions were informed by the earlier food environment studies that reduced access to a mere proximity to big box food stores. The more nuance evaluation of food access acknowledges that proximity is solely one factor from a complex web of indicators that determines one’s shopping behaviors (Cannuscio, Weiss, and Asch 2010, Blacksher and Lovasi 2012). While the scholarly definition of food access has become sophisticated over time, the “food desert” notion has stayed a widely used term among the American public and policy makers, the vast majority of which has not gotten the message about how problematic and inaccurate it is.
The contributions of immigrants to community food systems are of special importance in US metro regions, where growing immigrant populations have revived many urban and suburban communities, especially in recent decades (Vitiello and Sugrue 2017). The increased diversity of the US demographic profile has created multiethnic communities, restructuring the racial composition of many neighborhoods across the US metro regions (Logan and Zhang 2010). In these multi-ethnic neighborhoods, immigrant entrepreneurs revitalize often low-resource communities by opening up businesses, reinvesting in the local economy (Pisani et al. 2012, Portes and Stepick 1993, Gleeson 2010) and housing market (Myers 2007, Myers and yang Liu 2005), diminishing vacancy rates (Sampson 2017; Katz and Ginsburg 2017), creating safe neighborhoods (Stansfield 2014, Stowell et al. 2009, Martinez 2006, Sampson 2017), and reviving social institutions (Carr, Lichter, and Kefalas 2012, Waters and Kasinitz 2013).

While research points to various ways that immigrants rebuild communities, fiscal benefits of having a renewed source of population, labor and businesses dominate the narrative of immigrant revitalization. In 2015, The New York Times published an article about how the increase in the number of immigrant workers has offset the decline in the US-born prime working population, describing it as “an aging US is revitalized by immigrants” (Kallick 2015). In the same year, the online magazine of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) featured an article on how immigrants have been “reinvigorating American Communities.” Sharing main conversations at a panel of “The New Faces for Economic Resilience” at the 14th New Partners for Smart Growth conference, the article highlighted the various ways that immigrants have been revitalizing communities from their effects on increasing population in declining rural areas in Minnesota or bringing resilience and local businesses to Baltimore neighborhoods that have struggled (HUD USER 2015).

In reality, immigrant entrepreneurs effect changes in their new communities in multiple ways. Immigrant entrepreneurs contribute to the long-term development of communities by training a new generation of entrepreneurs, accumulating community wealth, building inter and intra-ethnic relationships and helping to facilitate immigrant integration. Besides, national trends show that immigrant businesses are concentrated in neighborhood services, accommodation and food services, and retail (New American Economy 2016) such as groceries, eateries, bakeries, barbershops, and home-based services (Fiscal Policy Institute 2015). The food industry in the US has always been one of the largest employers of foreign-born population (Jennings et al. 2013). In fact, pro-immigration advocates often cite the essential roles of immigrants in the labor market and providing essential neighborhood-based services to argue for the positive impacts of immigrants on receiving communities. This is especially important since one of the main services that immigrants provide is food, a basic essential for life and a source of nutrition.

This dissertation provides an analysis of the multiple impacts of immigrant entrepreneurs on their receiving communities through ownership and operation of food enterprises. I use the community food environment as a vehicle to provide a more holistic analysis of the ways that immigrant entrepreneurs build their new communities beyond their obvious contribution to local economies. In doing so, I adopt a community wellbeing framework to merge conversations in two seemingly disparate fields of studies: immigrants’ roles in
community and economic (re)development and community food access. In this research, community wellbeing means factors and variables that contribute to quality of life, material wellbeing, and health of individuals. The holistic approach of community wellbeing allows me to simultaneously take into account the health benefits of immigrant food entrepreneurship and highlight how the social and economic benefits of immigrant food businesses are essential for overall wellbeing.

The dissertation pursues three main questions (1) how do immigrant food entrepreneurs contribute to community and economic development? (2) how do immigrant food entrepreneurs shape the food environment of a diverse community? (3) how do immigrant food entrepreneurs impact food shopping and consumption patterns of different groups in a diverse food landscape? I use a single case study of Upper Darby PA and adopt a mixed-method approach to explore and examine these questions. By choosing a first-ring, working-class, multi-ethnic suburb as the case study, this research provides a more nuance analysis to capture the complexity and multifarious effects that immigrant food businesses have on places that have become the commonplace landscape of many US communities.

Upper County, located in Delaware County PA, is one of the places in the US metropolitan regions with a high concentration of both foreign-born population and grocery stores. In 2015, there were 105 metro counties that had a foreign-population more than the country’s rate of foreign-born (13%). In these counties, the numbers of grocery stores ranged from 1 to 2,429; on average, each county had 249 grocery stores (including supermarkets, grocery stores of all kinds, but excluding convenience and corner stores). While there were variances in numbers of grocery stores for different counties, metro-counties regions with a high percentage of immigrants still had a better grocery store concentration compared to the non-metro counties. The numbers of grocery stores in 1926 non-metro counties with less than 13% percent foreign-born population ranged from 0 to 47; non-metro counties with a low concentration of immigrants had 5 grocery stores on average. Data limitation does not allow to make a direct link between the numbers of grocery stores and presence of immigrants. Nonetheless, given the fast and high rate of business formation by immigrants especially in service-based, the metropolitan regions with a large presence of immigrants may have a better access to food.

The food environment and community development literature have provided extensive evidence and descriptions on how places such as Upper Darby (suburban and low-resources) and its people (diverse and working-class) should look like. Based on the food environment literature, Upper Darby should be a “food desert” where its residents do not have access to healthy, fresh and affordable foods. And, according to community development literature, immigrant-run businesses should not survive for a long time and have minimal effects on the community. These “accepted wisdoms” – or, misconceptions produced and reinforced by the literature – are the background against which I compare the realities of Upper Darby.

The findings provide evidence for a more accurate understanding of what food landscape of diverse communities offer to their residents, and how that shapes their food shopping and consumption patterns. In particular, this study illuminates how individuals of
different backgrounds navigate the diverse food retail in their community to access the food they need and desire. National chain supermarkets played a significant role in food access in Upper Darby. However, their roles in food access of Upper Darby residents was much smaller than what the literature has suggested. In Upper Darby, immigrant-run food groceries and supermarkets have a crucial role in providing access to healthy and affordable food and in shaping the diet of its diverse residents. The food entrepreneurs of Upper Darby provide a range of food options for its residents to choose based on their own preferences, thus, creating an opposite of what a “deserted” food environment looks like. These entrepreneurs also played a significant role in sustaining and revitalizing the community by facilitating business and ownership transfers. These entrepreneurs trained a new generation of entrepreneurs, occupied vacant properties, and created a vibrant commercial corridor that supports and stimulates growth of other businesses. In fact, immigrant food businesses have become the township major asset both in community development and in bridging cultural/racial divides. In short, immigrant food entrepreneurs of Upper Darby created a community where making healthy decision is possible and convenient, whether that is providing walking access to food or feelings safe to do so.

By demonstrating the multiple roles that immigrant food entrepreneurs play in their receiving community, this study contributes to the literature on immigrant-led revitalization, community and economic development, and community food environment. The study establishes groundwork to further analyze the health and wellbeing aspect of immigrant revitalization; it provides evidence for the multifaceted contribution of small-businesses to community and economic development; and it argues for a more nuanced measurement and evaluation of food environment and food access, especially in diverse communities. These findings can shape future studies which are fundamental in informing public policies that shape distribution of resources and investments. The contribution of immigrant food entrepreneurs in health and wellbeing of receiving communities is specifically relevant and important to small and medium-sized communities that have received a considerable immigrant population in the last few decades; immigrant food entrepreneurs can transform communities and create a healthier food environment from small towns in America’s heartland to suburbs of metropolitan areas.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Food Environment Literature

Food, Environment and Health

Researchers have established a strong relationship between diet and diseases. In particular, researchers have linked food intakes to cancer (Willett and Trichopoulos 1996, Grosso et al. 2017), diabetes (Zuloaga et al. 2016, Pan et al. 1997), hypertension (Sacks et al. 2001, Graudal et al. 2012), and heart diseases (Kromhout 2001, Katcher et al. 2008). Many health institutions have been recommending dietary guidelines since 1960s, including but not limited to the American Healthy Association, the American Dietetic Association, the National Institutes of Health, and the American Heart Association. Despite variances, health institutions have been consistently focusing on four indicators of a healthy diet that have a prevention relationship with diseases (1) servings of fruits.
and vegetables per day (2) percentage of calories from fat (3) saturated fat and (4) dietary cholesterol (Morland et al. 2002). Although recommendations for dietary modifications have existed for decades, many dietary interventions, focused on education, have had difficulty producing sustainable dietary changes (Morland et al. 2002, Luepker et al. 1996).

In past two decades, planning and public health scholars have paid growing attention to the ways that the food environment, the food resources available within a community, impacts people’s health (Tabak et al. 2016, Raja et al. 2010, Sloane et al. 2003, Caldwell et al. 2009). New research challenged the predominant models and theories within the discipline of public health (Schulz and Northridge 2004, Krieger et al. 2002), which had ascribed much more weight to individualistic characteristics in predicting health outcomes compared to environmental factors. The shift from individual to environmental determinants of health not only impacted the public health field, but it resonated with planners interested in understanding communities at large (Malizia 2006, Kelly-Schwartz et al. 2004, Corburn 2004).

The concept of “food deserts” played a significant role in the proliferation of studies that have examined a relationship between access to food and people’s health. “Food desert” means a neighborhood with limited access to healthy food. Cummins et al (2002) attributed the first use of this term to a resident of a public housing estate in Scotland in the early 1990s pointing to the lack of essential amenities to support the community. Since then, studies have examined access to healthy food across communities and concluded that many low-income and minority neighborhoods in the US lack access to high quality healthy and affordable food (Larson et al. 2009, Walker et al. 2010, United States Department of Agriculture 2017). The disparity in access to food coupled with rising rates of obesity and diabetes among vulnerable populations have brought the attention of many policy agencies, scholars and community groups to environmental barriers to sustaining a healthy diet.

**Conceptualizing Food Environments: A Physical Access Problem**

There exists no general consensus on what a “neighborhood food environment” means or how it is measured (Mejia et al. 2015). Nonetheless, most of the early public health studies focused on two major factors in evaluating the healthfulness of food environments: physical proximity and presence of supermarkets. The early food access studies presented an association between lack of access to a supermarket and poor diet-related health outcomes such as obesity and diabetes (Gallagher 2006, Rose and Richards 2004, Laraia et al. 2004, Moore et al. 2008). These studies informed governmental obesity prevention studies and task forces (e.g. publications by CDC, the White House Task Force on Obesity) which recommended to “increase number of supermarkets” or “improve geographic availability of supermarket” to reduce childhood obesity (Barnes 2010, Khan et al. 2009).

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) describes a “food desert” as a census tract that is occupied by “low-income and low-access communities.” Low-income communities are identified based on poverty rate and median family income. Similar to the earlier studies, the USDA relies on a physical interpretation of access to identify low-access communities; a community has low access if at least 33% of the census tract’s
population lives more than a 1 mile away from a supermarket or a large grocery store with more than $2 million in sales (United States Department of Agriculture 2017). Based on this criterion, many small-scale and local grocery stores do not make the threshold and are technically invisible when it comes to measuring and evaluating food access. While there are several definitions of “food deserts,” scholars and policy makers most commonly use the USDA’s description to identify “food deserts” across the country.

There are three main arguments in the literature in support of supermarkets as “community health assets” (Zhang et al. 2016): 1. Supermarkets provide a wide selection of healthy foods including fresh produce, whole wheat products and healthy options for meat and dairy (Horowitz et al. 2004). 2. Supermarkets offer lower and competitive prices for healthy food options (Chung and Myers Jr 1999). 3. Supermarkets are the primary food shopping destination for many “Americans” including low-income households (Ver Ploeg et al. 2015); More than 80 percent of SNAP benefits are redeemed at supermarkets or superstores (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2018).

Disparity in access to supermarkets, as a result, has become a “primary concern” for scholars and policy makers (Martin et al. 2014). While distance criteria and supermarket definitions vary across studies, limited access to supermarkets served as a valid explanation for food insecurity, unhealthy diets, and health disparities (Caspi, Sorensen, et al. 2012). Powell and colleagues showed that national chain supermarket availability in African-American neighborhoods is about half that of White neighborhoods (Powell, Auld, et al. 2007). Scholars have repeatedly found similar results (Gordon et al. 2011, Ledoux and Vojnovic 2013, Lisabeth et al. 2010) and argued that lack of access to supermarkets in urban areas may limit residents’ food choices and lead people to rely on small neighborhood and convenience stores known to carry a poor selection of healthy foods, a wide selection of unhealthy foods, and at higher prices (Lent et al. 2015, Laska et al. 2010).

Research, in fact, suggests that residents of low-income, mainly minority neighborhoods, have a greater access to fast-food and energy dense foods than residents with high socioeconomic status in often White neighborhoods (Franco et al. 2008, Larson et al. 2009). Scholars point to the health consequences of living in such neighborhoods, arguing there is a strong association between BMI status of African-American children and their proximity to an abundance of convenience and fast-food stores (Razani and Tester 2010, Hilmers et al. 2012). Public health scholars labelled these communities “food swamps” to highlight the abundance of retail with high energy and low nutrition foods that contribute to an unhealthy diet (Ver Ploeg 2010). These studies operationalize “food swamps” by categorizing food retail into healthy and unhealthy outlets, measure the ratio and its relation to people’s health outcomes.

Food Environments: A More Nuanced Examination

The notions of food desert and food swamp were important in drawing the attention of policy makers and researchers to inequality and disparity in access to healthy and affordable food. However, a wide range of researchers and activities soon challenged the food desert concept for various reasons. First, researchers argued that food desert concept inaccurately implies that communities – often low-income communities of color- are
devoid of food resources (Raja et al. 2008a, Short et al. 2007). Second, other researchers and advocates pointed to the consequences of using a stigmatized language that further perpetuates racial and ethnic stereotypes by depicting communities of color through a deficit lens (Guthman 2008a). As Guthman argued, the concept of food desert is embedded in colonialist codes where often a white middle-class population brings “good foods” to “others” -the low-income and minority population- based on the assumption that they may lack education, knowledge and resources to maintain a healthy diet (Guthman 2008b). Third, many studies failed to establish a convincing link between healthy food access and healthy consumption patterns. Existing research found the associations of food access and health outcomes to be positive (Bodor et al. 2008, Zenk et al. 2009), negative (Asfaw 2008) or nonexistent (Cummins et al. 2005, Pearce et al. 2008).

As a result, public health scholars, planners and other food advocates have suggested theoretical and methodological changes to more accurately understand and evaluate healthy food access. These changes mainly included qualitative measures of access and incorporation of consumer food environment (or, foods available at food retails) (Gustafson et al. 2012) as well as considering all the other ways that individuals procure foods beyond shopping at food retails. The premise of the new suggestions – whether by planners or public health scholars- were an acknowledgement that a mere proximity to a national chain supermarket or a corner store does not determine individuals’ dietary pattern and/or health outcomes.

Geographical information system (GIS) software has dominated the field since 1990 largely due to its ability to use readily available data from other sources, minimizing time and cost associated with data collection (Lytle and Sokol 2017). Researchers who use GIS-produced maps often visualize “food deserts” by combining multiple layers of information such as supermarket location and density and access to a vehicle. These metrics have become more detailed over time, and researchers have started to incorporate other built environment information that complicate our understanding and measurement of access. These measures include but are not limited to pedestrian and vehicle access (Goldsberry et al. 2010), commuting patterns (network vs. Euclidean distance) (Widener et al. 2011), presence of sidewalks (e.g. walkability) (McKenzie 2014), and parking availability (Lewis et al. 2005).

Nonetheless, with more and more scholars casting doubt on the relation between distance to food outlets and population-level consumption patterns and health (Cummins and Macintyre 2002, Hackett et al. 2008), public health scholars have started to add qualitative data to complement the quantified measured of access often generated through GIS software. The qualitative data draws from a diverse sets of measurement tools to account for quality and availability of food inside of stores (Lytle and Sokol 2017). As a result, research on food environment measurement changed significantly since 2007 with proliferation of many studies that used a variety of tools such as checklists, market baskets, food inventories, and interviews/questionnaires to gain a better understanding of the consumer food environment (Krukowski et al. 2010, Bullock et al. 2010). The reasonings for use of store audit tools and qualitative assessment was to capture what food products were actually available to the customers (Alkon et al. 2013). This approach
allows researchers to identify healthy retailers based on their food stock rather than using a simplistic categorization based on the size or type of store.

Along with the methodological changes, scholars have broadened their understanding of the environments that influence and shape people’s consumption patterns and health. Planners and food advocates have adopted a definition of community food environments that takes a more holistic approach in identifying food resources within a community. By doing so, researchers responded to one major fallacy in the early food environment studies which dismissed different ways that people procure foods beyond supermarkets. For example, Pothukuchi offered a model for evaluating food environments, known as community food mapping, wherein all food resources – from food pantries to community gardens – are counted as a community food asset (Pothukuchi 2004). This comprehensive analysis of community food assets provides a more realistic picture to account for the various places people procure and purchase foods. Public health scholars, similarly, have started to take into account other environments where people may procure food beyond a supermarket, such as food resources available at work or school sites (Almeida et al. 2014, An and Sturm 2012).

Along with these methodological changes, the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) championed a holistic perspective toward community food system to transform the way that people connect with food, community and land. The CFSC introduced the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems as one way to work toward this holistic approach to community food security. Whole Measures for Community Food Systems is an assessment toolkit that describes and plans improvement of community food systems through participatory processes. Contrary to other measurement tools that focused simply on food supply as a food security measure, Whole Measures offers a community-oriented and value-based tool for evaluation, planning and decision-making with a diverse range of community members. According to this tool, a variety of factors are important in building a sustainable, just and healthy food system including justice and fairness, strong communities, vibrant farms, healthy people, sustainable ecosystems, and thriving local economies (Abi-Nader et al. 2009). Many communities in the US and across the globe have embraced this definition to evaluate and strengthen their community food system (Laurison and Young 2009, Coates 2013, Jieknyal and MacAuley 2017).

**Evaluating Food Environments: A Socio-Ecological Approach** Growing attention to the impact of food environments on diet-related health outcomes has stimulated a range of place-based interventions (Mayne et al. 2015, Giang et al. 2008, Foster et al. 2014). These interventions are expected to promote healthier diets and ultimately improve health by changing/modify the built environment. Despite the large support among policy makers for food retail interventions, the impacts of these projects on health outcomes, particularly in US urban areas, is unclear. The few studies that have evaluated the health benefits of recent food retail interventions present mixed results (Elbel et al. 2015, Cummins et al. 2014, Cummins et al. 2005, Fuller et al. 2015), finding the interventions to be largely ineffective in improving health of the participants in the short term (Glanz et al. 2005).
The reasons for the mixed-results of retail intervention, perhaps, lie in the research paradigm that reduces access to healthy food to a mere proximity issue. The main assumption in this paradigm is that people shop for food at their nearest food store. However, numerous studies focused on shopping patterns of low-income and minority shoppers provide a fuller understanding of the ways that people make decisions about where to shop and what to eat. These studies show that most shoppers travel beyond their closest supermarket (Hillier et al. 2011, Ledoux and Vojnovic 2013) and visit multiple food stores over a course of a month to do most of their shopping (DiSantis et al. 2016, Chrisinger et al. 2018). These studies suggest that residents make their food shopping decisions based on a variety of reasons and strategies that go beyond geographical proximity.

“A complex web of factors” determine food shopping decisions (Colón-Ramos et al. 2017). Shoppers, especially people with low incomes, in navigating their food environment, seek to optimize their use of time and financial capital (Polacsek et al. 2018). Qualitative and mixed-methods research suggests that shoppers consider their mobility or access to transportation, other questions of convenience, price or financial budget, food quality, cultural acceptability, individual and family food preferences, and safety while making decisions about where, when and how to shop (DiSantis et al. 2016, Kerr et al. 2012, Norshamliza and Batt 2009, Cannuscio et al. 2014). In-store characteristics that impact food shopping decisions include hours of operation, cleanliness, customer services and non-food merchandise (Krukowski et al. 2012). The majority of low-income shoppers adapt their shopping patterns to accommodate financial constraints and maximize their ability to juggle multiple work and family responsibilities (Cannuscio et al. 2014). This wide range of factors impacts the ways that individuals perceive their access to food, and consequently shapes their behavior and shopping patterns.

Researchers have found that people’s perceptions of food access have a positive association with their own and others’ dietary intake (Caspi, Sorensen, et al. 2012). Scholars argue that perceived food access reflects individuals’ “psychosocial, environmental and financial” realities (Caspi, Kawachi, et al. 2012) and provides information about food that is actually accessible and of interest to residents (Barnes et al. 2015). However, the objective GIS-performed spatial analyses do not reflect individuals’ perceptions and preferences. These studies often calculate whether a healthy food outlet (i.e. supermarkets in most cases) exists within walking distance of subjects’ home addresses, either using a simple radius buffer or a more complex network analysis that take into account numbers of intersections and street patterns (Caspi, Kawachi, et al. 2012). This may explain why many studies using geographical proximity are unable to establish a clear relationship between people’s physical access to food and health outcomes (Lytle and Sokol 2017, Gamba et al. 2015). On the other hand, Subjective measures of food access (i.e. self-reported access, perceived access) incorporate dimensions that are not captured in objective measures (Freedman and Bell 2009).

Public health scholars have increasingly called for the adoption of a socio-ecological model of health in which social processes and human agency are incorporated in placed-based studies to yield a better understanding of the ways that individuals perceive and react to their environments (Blacksher and Lovasi 2012, Cummins 2007). Socio-
ecological models focus on human behavior as a function of environmental and personal conditions. In this model, individuals’ agency - or their ability to make decisions - are acknowledged and taken into account to understand how people actively navigate their environment around their resources and challenges (Blacksher and Lovasi 2012). This model places individuals and their attributes back into food access research paradigms, not to eliminate the impact of environment factors but to provide a richer and more accurate understanding of the ways that individuals shape and respond to their environments (Cummins 2007). In this model, proximity is one of many factors that shape shoppers’ behaviors (Cannuscio et al. 2014).

A study by Cannuscio et al. (2014) demonstrated how individuals’ social relations, engagement, and interaction with their environments moderated their food shopping behaviors (Cannuscio et al. 2014). In their study, participants selected stores that were frequented by people with similar racial/ethnic, income and education backgrounds. The study showed that interaction with shopkeepers were influential in shaping the residents’ shopping behaviors; while a positive relationship created loyalty and patronage, contentious interactions pushed shoppers to bypass their nearest store to avoid conflict.

**Summary**

Research on food access, food environment and its relation to consumption patterns and health has become more complex over the past two decades. Research findings have complicated the concept of access since early 21st century. Today, most researchers do not merely rely on proximity to healthy food outlet as a prediction of access to a healthy diet. Scholars have brought attention to multiple barriers at different levels of influence that households experience in procuring healthy and affordable food. More and more, public health researchers, planners, and other food scholars have considered other factors that impact individuals’ food shopping and consumption patterns; including but not limited to personal time to cook, access to childcare, social and cultural norms, preferences and tastes, mobility and economic resources. As a result, public health scholars have embraced a socio-ecological model of health where multi-level interventions can promote a healthy diet by removing barriers at multiple levels of influence from community access to food to social environments and individual skills.

Many researchers and food advocates have called for “retirement” of food desert as a derogatory and inaccurate notion to describe food environment of low-income communities (Widener 2018). Some food advocates offered to replace food desert with “food apartheid” to more directly draw attention to the root causes of systematic disinvestment in low-income communities of color (Brones 2018). These advocates argue that food desert focuses on the problem (i.e. lack of healthy food) whereas food apartheid emphasizes on the issues that have caused the problem (i.e. racism and discrimination). While the use of “food desert” as a researchable idea has significantly decreased since the second half of the 2010s, researchers still investigate questions such as “how do African-American caregivers navigate a food desert” or “relation of living in a food desert to recurrent hospitalization in patients with heart failure” as of 2019 (Colón-Ramos et al. 2018, Morris et al. 2019).

This is not exclusive to the academic community. The “food desert” term has been used widely by the public, who are largely unaware of the complexity of food environment
and the debates that have been made in the past decade in critique of this notion. In fact, the idea of using “desert” as a metaphor for a community lacking certain assets has been so widely accepted that today it is used in different formats and situations. For example, the term “cultural deserts” has been used widely in the recent areas as a reference to areas lacking complexity, vibrancy, vitality, or interest in intellectual and artistic activity.

Despite significant methodological and theoretical changes, researchers still underappreciate ethnic grocery stores. Ethnic food markets are often ignored by researchers who fail to acknowledge their existence and/or differentiate them from other small stores such as convenience, corner or liquor stores (Joassart-Marcelli et al. 2017). Since researchers often use the store type as an indication for healthy food availability, ethnic food markets tend to be grouped with convenience and corner stores, where there is a common assumption for their abundance of “energy-dense, foods, sugar-sweetened beverages, alcohol, and little, if any, fresh fruits and vegetables” (Ortega et al. 2015, Joassart-Marcelli et al. 2017). This notion reproduces the stigma associated with ethnic stores and the food environment of poor and minority communities in general. As Joassart-Marcelli and colleagues argue if policy reports and scholarly literature do not ignore ethnic food markets (or, tiendas or bodegas), they depict them as part of the problem citing owner reluctance and market barriers to stock fresh and healthy foods (Gittelsohn et al. 2012, Neckerman et al. 2010, Joassart-Marcelli et al. 2017).

This omission might be due to and perpetuated by the difficulty of obtaining data about smaller retailers. This methodological issue, however, devalues the people of limited resources and their agency in navigate their food environments as well as the businesses available in their communities which are often run and owned by the residents and immigrants (Shannon 2016). For example, researchers have demonstrated how low-income and minority communities – especially those with high concentrations of immigrants – have a higher density of small and independent businesses with the potential to offer healthy food (Raja et al. 2008a, Short et al. 2007).

Similarly, the ways that public policies and major health institutions respond to disparate access to healthy foods still underappreciate ethnic grocery stores. For example, the most common response to increase food access has been to financially incentivize large supermarket chains to invest in low-resource neighborhoods. A prime example of that is the way that Healthy Food Financing Initiatives (HFFI) use federal funds (i.e. through Farm Bill) to create public-private partnerships to increase access to healthy foods through allocating loans, new market tax credits, and grant programs (PolicyLink 2015). To date, HFFI has leveraged more than $220 million in grants and an estimated $1 billion in additional financing.

While the initiative aims to assist “eligible healthy food retail”, the criteria used to review applications indicate that the initiative favors larger-scale development such as supermarkets. Reinvestment Fund that manages the HFFI grant program declares that “As the National Fund Manager, Reinvestment Fund will offer financial resources and expertise to eligible healthy food retail projects to expand access to healthy foods in underserved areas, to create and preserve quality jobs, and to revitalize low-income communities.” Similarly, numbers of jobs created, square footage, and the numbers of people served are the indicators based on which the footprints of the HFFI funded
projects are assessed. For small and ethnic food businesses, with 1-5 employees and a modest tax contribution, meeting these criteria is a challenge. For example, California Healthy Food Financing Initiative (CHFFI) supported a variety of projects in 2011, where most of the larger loans were awarded to companies that owned multiple grocery stores or supermarkets. The current trends in federal and state initiatives do not meet the needs of the minority small business owners who face discrimination related to financing, have limited capacity to apply for funding and meet eligibility requirements.

To be clear, establishment of supermarkets are an effective way to address disparity in access to food, and the funded projects were successful in “closing the grocery gap” or at least, in diminishing the gap in underserved communities. For example, the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI), a statewide financing program, funded 32 stores, with 16 of them located in Philadelphia. The 32 stores in 2008 served an estimated number of 320,000 or more residents who previously did not have a convenient access to a supermarket. However, the challenge is that to the existing funding institutions and programs, supermarkets are perceived as the main strategy to increase food access. For example, Reinvestment Fund conducts periodic “Limited Supermarket Access Analysis” to identify areas with limited access to healthy foods and potential areas of investment, as a “primary strategy to increase access to sources of healthy food in underserved communities.” The most recent version of this analysis dates to 2018. This tool might be helpful to policy makers and investors, but it disregards the existing community resources, especially small grocery stores that are already serving the communities.

The consequences of a focus on supermarkets and disregarding small and ethnic grocery stores go beyond disparate distribution of funding resources; it also impacts the ways that policy makers perceive and approach revitalization of low-resource communities. As stated by Reinvestment Fund, a second goal of the HFFI is to revitalize low-income communities. However, the prime strategy to do so is to facilitate entry of external investors to low-resource communities. This strategy, known as “smokestack chasing”, is a traditional economic development tactic where economic growth (e.g. job creation) has more value than sustainable community economic development. The latter places more weight on community control and ownership than it does on conventional indicators of growth. In other words, incentivizing supermarket establishments falls into contested economic development strategies where low-income communities are appropriated for further benefits of resourceful companies. In this strategy, the various ways that ethnic grocery stores and businesses – often run and owned by community members - contribute to community-led revitalization is disregarded.

**Immigrant Food and Entrepreneurship Literature**

Immigrant entrepreneurs have a significant presence in the food retail and services. In fact, food industry – from production to distribution- has been one of the largest employers of the foreign-born population in the US (Jennings et al. 2013). Immigrant-run and owned food groceries and restaurants are among one of the early and most visible ways that immigrants shape their new communities. However, as the review of the food literature demonstrated, researchers discount small scale and immigrant-run food businesses in their evaluation of food access and environment. As such, research has ignored foods available at these stores and their impacts on people’s health. Perhaps,
scholars have ignored immigrant grocery stores since they are part of an everyday landscape of diverse cities. To many researchers, immigrant grocery stores are places where newcomers offer cultural food products out of necessity to financially survive in a new country (Chrysostome and Arcand 2009).

Food, however, is more than a mere commodity that immigrants sell to generate income. Immigrant food stores are complex social and economic spaces. Nonetheless, scholars commonly focus on just one of four major aspects/components: owners and employees (immigrant entrepreneurs and their workers), product (foods), space (store), and customers. For example, anthropologists are more interested in learning about the ways these spaces shape cultural identities (Mankekar 2002); whereas, the public health scholars care more about the products (foods) and their role in food access and security (Emond et al. 2012). To provide a more comprehensive framework for the roles immigrant grocery stores play in food access and community and economic development, I review and synthesize literature from disparate disciplines. First, the review focuses on foods available at these markets and their impacts on people’s health. Second, it described characteristics of immigrant food entrepreneurs. Third, it describes how these spaces cultivate cultural identity and social relationships. Last, the review presents arguments for the roles of immigrant food businesses in community and economic development.

**Immigrant Grocery Stores, Food Environment, Access and Diets**

To be sure, immigrants, if not immigrant food entrepreneurs, have been previously studied in the food and public health literature but through the lens of immigrants’ acculturation, or the process by which immigrant groups adopt the culture of the host country (Satia-Abouta 2003, Satia et al. 2001). The public health literature documents the dietary acculturation of immigrants after they locate to their new countries (Gray et al. 2005, Park et al. 2011). This body of research suggests that new immigrants have healthier diets, compared with their second- or third-generation counterparts (Popkin and Udry 1998, Kaplan et al. 2004, Goel et al. 2004). The research also suggests that dietary acculturation over time may increase the risk for chronic diseases such as obesity (Gray et al. 2005). Researchers typically views immigrants as passive entities whose food choices are heavily influenced by the host countries’ predominant food environments.

The narratives focus on how immigrants react to their new environment, whereas a limited body of research documents the degree to which immigrants actively reconstruct their new environments.

A handful of studies have examined the potential of immigrant-run food businesses in increasing food access and contributing to food security (Bodor et al. 2008, Emond et al. 2012, Short et al. 2007). These businesses, despite their small size, often carry a diverse range of products, from meat to fresh produce. A case study from Indian and Asian food stores in Michigan showed that these places allocated about 5 to 15% of their total floor area to fresh produce (Gautam 2005), which is significant compared to a typical corner store that carries on average about 1.6 varieties of fruits and 2.6 varieties of vegetables (Cavanaugh et al. 2013). In fact, this dissertation builds on an earlier pilot study of two Middle-eastern groceries in Buffalo NY who were able to improve the food environment...
by providing access to fresh produce (and limited offering of “junk” food) in a low-resource urban environment (Khojasteh and Raja 2016).

Research shows that particular ethnic diets—such as Mediterranean, Asian and Southeast Asians—are beneficial to health as they are largely based on plant-based dishes using high volumes of vegetables, fruits, beans, and nuts as well as seafood, rice, and noodles (Ooraikul et al. 2008). Research shows that immigrants who live in a neighborhood with higher rate of foreign-born population have lower rates of cardiovascular diseases compared to their counterparts living in areas with less concentration of immigrants (Osypuk et al. 2009). While scholars have not established a direct link between the availability of ethnic grocery stores and the observed lower rates of diet-related diseases, a study of Latino grocery stores (tiendas) in San Diego CA helps to hypothesize such an association (Emond et al. 2012). Emond et al (2012) compared the availability, quality and cost of healthy vs. unhealthy foods at tiendas with general supermarkets and concluded that there is no significant difference between these two types of food markets in terms of access to fresh produce. They noted, however, that tiendas are limited in providing healthier options for meat and dairy products compared to the supermarkets (Emond et al. 2012).

**Immigrant Entrepreneurship: A necessity and an opportunity**

Immigrant entrepreneurship in the United States blossoms out of necessity and opportunity (Chrysostome 2010). Necessity-based entrepreneurs are those who may start a small business in an ethnic enclave, whereas opportunity-based entrepreneurs are more akin to the entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley. A key difference is the scale of resources available to each group. Unlike necessity-based entrepreneurs, opportunity-based entrepreneurs rely on class-based resources (Min and Bozorgmehr 2000). These class-based resources, such as education, language skills, and pre-migration business experience, likely help opportunity-based entrepreneurs to establish and operate businesses that are much larger in scale than those established by necessity-based entrepreneurs (Min and Bozorgmehr 2000).

Conversely, many new immigrants face obstacles in obtaining work in the mainstream job markets in their new host countries. These obstacles include lack of appropriate skills, discrimination, and/or cultural differences. Therefore, necessity-based immigrant entrepreneurs choose self-employment as a means of economic survival (Chrysostome and Arcand 2009). Necessity-based immigrant entrepreneurs own and operate small and profitable businesses that require smaller capital and face fewer startup barriers. They serve—and, indeed, their own survival depends on—ethnic clients with whom the entrepreneurs share their ethnic heritage (Pisani et al. 2012).

**Immigrant Grocery Stores and the Diaspora: A co-dependent relationship between immigrant businesses and ethnic clientele**

Scholars of ethnic economy depict a co-dependent relationship between ethnic entrepreneurs and their co-ethnic customers (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990). Co-ethnic communities provide the key factors for the success of ethnic businesses. In return, ethnic businesses provide access to cultural products that are often unavailable at general markets. In other words, immigrant entrepreneurs commercialize their ethnic niches and
Ethnic-based community resources guarantee their success (Shinnar et al. 2011, Min and Bozorgmehr 2000, Chrysostome and Arcand 2009).

Ethnic entrepreneurs benefit from cultural knowledge about their co-ethnic peers’ preferences and tastes, which enables them to better identify their customers’ market demand and to offer services in a culturally acceptable way (Shinnar et al. 2011). This is especially true in the food industry, where preferences are culturally referenced. Immigrant entrepreneurs of ethnic food stores use their ethnic niche to stock, prepare and sell foods in ways that respond to their co-ethnic clientele. Ethnic entrepreneurs use this knowledge as a competitive advantage to differentiate themselves from entrepreneurs in the general market (Shinnar et al. 2011). The ethnic community not only functions as a source of loyal customers but provides ethnic entrepreneurs with access to a trustworthy and low-cost workforce in the form of family members and co-ethnic employees (Chrysostome 2010). Co-ethnic employees are willing to work flexible and longer working hours and, in turn, have an opportunity to secure jobs in an otherwise difficult mainstream job market.

Ethnic communities and consumers rely on ethnic entrepreneurs as a bridge to the past and a means to preserve their cultural identity. Scholars have demonstrated how consuming familiar products helps immigrants to maintain their ethnic identity and preserve specific traditions of their countries of origin (Mankekar 2002, Sen 2016, Wang and Lo 2007). Additionally, being able to interact with co-ethnic entrepreneurs in their native language is a tremendous advantage (Shinnar et al. 2011). Ethnic customers who are not fluent in English face challenges when shopping at nonethnic grocery stores where they need to communicate with staff in English (Vahabi and Damba 2013).

**Immigrant Grocery Stores and “Cosmopolitan Consumption”: A complex relationship between immigrant businesses and non-immigrant clientele**

Co-ethnic clientele are not the only visitors of immigrant businesses. There is an increasing popularity of ethnic food products among non-ethnic populations (Everts and Jackson 2009). Immigrant grocery stores have become a topic of interests for scholars – especially those in sociology, anthropology and cultural studies- as spaces that facilitate “cosmopolitan consumption” (Wise 2013, Duruz 2005, Germann Molz 2007). Cosmopolitan consumption refers to the use of goods and services offered by “other cultures” (Parzer and Astleithner 2018). Researchers focus on cosmopolitan consumption as it provides opportunities for different groups to engage and interact who may otherwise remain separate (Duruz 2005, Hiebert et al. 2015).

Interethnic interactions can help the integration process of immigrants and increase tolerance among non-immigrant populations. Sociologists argue that such relationships speed up the process of immigrant integration (Everts 2010). Everts (2010) argues that interaction between minority and majority populations results in a “positive classification of immigrants and dissolved ethnic boundaries” (Everts 2010). Similarly, exposure of non-immigrant customers to immigrant owners and their cultures increases tolerance and forms interethnic relationships which ultimately contribute to more acceptance of multiculturalism and diversity (Peters and de Haan 2011).
Not all scholars, however, agree in the positive outcomes of cosmopolitan consumption (Valentine 2008, Blokland and Van Eijk 2010). Blokland and van Eijk (2010) point to one major pitfall of interethnic interactions that occur at immigrant businesses; they are short, temporary and limited in content to form meaningful and long-term relationships and contribute to overall social cohesion (Blokland and Van Eijk 2010). Other scholars (Parzer and Astleithner 2018, Parzer et al. 2016) uncover the meanings associated with cosmopolitan consumption and argue that both dissolution or reinforcement of ethnic boundaries through this mode of interaction have an effect on strengthening ethnic stereotypes, hence overshadowing the positive impacts of such relationships.

While these studies point to the potential of immigrant food businesses in building relationship across different social groups, their findings should be interpreted with caution. Most of these studies are based on European countries, where their history of immigration, race/ethnic relationship and their neighborhood structures differ significantly from those of the US.

Immigrant Businesses: a community phenomenon

The multifaceted effects of immigrant entrepreneurs in community and economic development (CED) have received little attention, mainly due to overemphasis on individual gains and economic aspects of their businesses (Liu et al., 2014). Scholars argue for a need to understand entrepreneurship as a “community phenomenon” that creates societies (Steyaert and Katz 2004, Anderson and Gaddeffors 2016).

Entrepreneurship as a community phenomenon points to various assets that entrepreneurs generate for a community that can be leveraged to improve the quality of life. These assets include the ways that immigrant businesses shape physical, economic, and social fabrics of communities. A few studies have examined the multifaceted roles of entrepreneurship in community development. For example, Sutton (2012) presented small business owners as civic leaders and important stakeholders within the community whose benefit to society goes beyond their contributions to the economy and include social, physical and political changes (Sutton, 2010). The remainder of this section elaborates on various ways that immigrant businesses contribute to community and economic development.

A. Economic Dimensions of Immigrant Entrepreneurship

Immigrant-owned businesses are important players in the local economy. These enterprises provide jobs -especially for groups who may not be able to enter the mainstream economy- generate wealth and offer opportunities for upward mobility (Light et al. 1994, Liu et al. 2014). In return, receiving communities benefit from increased tax revenue, vacant properties being occupied, and revival of commercial corridors (Vigdor 2017). Immigrant businesses also contribute to economic development through an indirect pathway: providing training and workforce development. Light et al (1994) describe how ethnic businesses function as “school for entrepreneurs” (Light, Sabagh et al., 1994) by training workers who could later establish their own business. The regeneration of entrepreneurs not only increases the community’s accumulated income, but also begets the establishment of new businesses which continue the cycle of revival and revitalization of commercial corridors. Immigrant businesses generate the same outcomes that community and economic development professionals and policy makers
seek to achieve through policy intervention; they ultimately contribute to stabilization, revitalization and sustaining of low-income communities by the community residents themselves.

B. Physical Dimension of Immigrant Entrepreneurship

Physical dimension of immigrant entrepreneurship is one of its most visible features. The growth of immigrant-owned businesses manifests itself in the physical transformation of neighborhood landscapes (Liu, Miller et al., 2014). Immigrant businesses often use names, signages and colors that represent their culture which help them to stand out. In homogenous urban areas or places that have experienced years of decline, the opening of immigrant-run enterprises can significantly change the street landscape. These new changes add to the street life and increase urban vibrancy which helps to attract visitors and investment to the area over time (Schuch & Wang, 2015). Schuch and Wang (2015) also argue that there are societal messages intertwined with the signages and physical presentation of these businesses; it is a sign that these businesses are not temporary, they are “here to stay” (Smith and Winders 2008).

The physical aspect of immigrant-led revitalization is not limited in reviving commercial corridors. The overall physical improvement of neighborhoods attracts new residents, who are essential in supporting the neighborhood-base businesses. As such, immigrant businesses, their customers and new residents continue the cycle of revitalization and neighborhood development. For example, a study of Vietnamese entrepreneurs in Boston showed how they have helped to bring in new population to a neighborhood that used to be “dangerous” and “underutilized.” The research demonstrated the ways that immigrant entrepreneurs – many of them in food business- changed the reputation of the neighborhood by transforming an abandoned area into a thriving one, fulling the needs of the residents, and creating a safer environment. As one Vietnamese storeowner shared:” [My business] makes the neighborhood more beautiful. The community ignored this neighborhood before. People did not want to move here because it was desolate and unsafe. Now, people want to come here” (Watanabe 2009). This type of change in a neighborhood, however, is different from gentrifying low-income communities. In this case, the agents of change are from the community, and their services reflect and meet the demands of the surrounding community.

C. Social Dimension of Immigrant Entrepreneurship

The ethnic enterprises generate a series of social processes that connect the individual growth and mobility to larger changes at the community (Zhou & Cho, 2010). First, the clustering of businesses forms an identity for the neighborhood (Liu, Miller et al., 2014). Entrepreneurs used this social identity to market their neighborhood/corridor for a larger customer base who are drawn to these neighborhoods for their cultural goods, festivals and events. More importantly, these businesses provide a space for face-to-face social interaction which could further help to strengthen social ties, networks and eventually capital (Liu, Miller et al., 2014; Zhou & Cho, 2010). Last but not least, ethnic enterprises facilitate creation of other types of community-based institutions (e.g. ethnic organization, religious centers, civic organizations). These ethnic and community-based organizations play a significant role in advocating for immigrants’ right, and assist the settlement, incorporation and integration of the newcomers (Zhou & Cho, 2010).
Since power and wealth go hand in hand (Bradshaw 2007), immigrant entrepreneurship can be a vehicle to boost immigrants’ control over their own community (Walcott 2002). Community control and ownership are particularly important in community and economic development (Peterman 2000) as they give more power to residents over the flow of capital and investment in their communities (DeFilippis 2001). For example, immigrant business owners act as political actors in their communities by running successful political campaigns (or, provide funding), participating in decision-making processes and representing their communities (Liu, Miller et al., 2014; Sutton, 2010). Their position as both generators and beneficiaries of neighborhood development leverages their ability to be politically active in their communities and present themselves as intermediaries between the government and their local community (Lui and Fernando 2018).

**Immigrant Grocery Stores: a pathway toward community wellbeing?**

Immigrant grocery stores provide a setting to understand the multifarious effects of immigrants on their new communities. Sociologists, anthropologists and scholars of cultural studies have paid explicit attention to immigrant groceries. These scholars recognize immigrant food businesses as spaces with potential for interethnic interaction and forming social connections and networks. Public health scholars have started to take into account the role that ethnic groceries play in provision of healthy foods in their studies. Local and regional development scholars pay attention to immigrant food groceries as a community phenomenon and their potential to build communities and make places. Each strands of research – from sociology to planning- point to one important feature of immigrant food groceries. However, these studies do not directly speak to one another to provide a holistic and comprehensive understanding of various ways immigrant food stores shape communities. This dissertation suggests that a community wellbeing framework of analysis may be a more suitable way to truly capture the value of immigrant food stores as community assets that can improve the life of receiving communities in multiple ways.

The concept of community wellbeing is an extension of quality of life and subjective wellbeing research that measure human progress beyond economic growth (Deaton 2008). These notions emerged to address the shortcoming of solely economic-based measures of human development, such as GDP (Hojman and Miranda 2018). In the past two decades, scholars across disciplines such as behavioral, social, economic and health sciences, provided different definitions and indicators to measure quality of life and wellbeing. These concepts are mainly centered around individuals’ perception of variety of indicators (e.g. health, happiness, safety, life satisfaction) that could enable them to meet their full potential (Stern and Seifert 2013).

Scholars argue that community wellbeing is not an individual-level phenomenon and is greater than sum of individuals’ subjective wellbeing. Community wellbeing, rather, refers to (a) the interaction between individuals and their build and natural environment and (b) the interaction between individuals in a community that can support/hinder their wellbeing (Roffey 2013, White 2008). Scholars emphasize on a need to adopt an integrated and ecological understanding of wellbeing to promote inclusive community participation and inform local governments and policy makers (Wiseman and Brasher...
Consequently, governments across the globe have adopted community wellbeing as an overarching framework to inform policies and guide the orientation of future development locally or at national scale (Atkinson et al. 2017).

This dissertation’s conceptual framework connecting entrepreneurship to community wellbeing is novel, but existing research has identified some key elements of this connection such as roles of entrepreneurship in gaining social mobility, wealth and political power (Hosford 2009). Governmental agencies, also, realize that there are more benefits in promoting immigrant businesses than a mere economic growth and development. For example, the City of Philadelphia Office of Immigration Affairs has a mission statement to “promote the wellbeing of Philadelphia’s immigrant communities” (City of Philadelphia Office of Immigration Affairs 2019). This statement — and similar ones used across immigrant receiving cities — often refer to integration and incorporation of immigrants as the ultimate measure of community wellbeing. Filomeno (2017) also provides a similar example from City of Baltimore where wellbeing can be achieved by enhancing “service capacity and receptivity of city agencies, nonprofit and community-based organizations to better address the needs of immigrants and facilitate inclusion and mutual understanding among immigrant communities, service providers, and receiving communities” (Filomeno 2017).

This dissertation argues that immigrant food businesses can contribute to community wellbeing through multiple ways. This study offers a multifaceted framework to evaluate the impact of immigrants on their new communities through their operation and management of food enterprises. Recent integrated frameworks – such as community wellbeing – inform this work and allow for a more comprehensive approach wherein I simultaneously investigate the impacts of immigrant food entrepreneurs on community nutrition as well as community and economic development. In this analysis, I focus on immigrant food stores as my unit of analysis to offer a full story of the ways that these spaces, their owners, their customers and their products shape societies.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL
The conceptual model of this dissertation aims to identify various mechanisms through which immigrant food entrepreneurs can improve the wellbeing of communities, and to explore how they contribute in shaping these mechanisms. The main premise of this dissertation is that community actors such as immigrant food businesses have more than a single way in shaping communities. To identify these diverse mechanisms, I consult three main models: community wellbeing, the ecological model and social determinants of health. I use the literature on ethnic (food) entrepreneurship to modify these models in order to understand how immigrant food businesses contribute to the conversation and conceptualization of community wellbeing.

Below, I briefly introduce each model, its components and contributions to the proposed conceptual model. This dissertation pursues a model that provides multidimensional pathways to community wellbeing, while accounting for community and economic development elements, social processes and individuals’ interactions with their communities. It also considers community features important for community wellbeing that are beyond individuals’ experiences, health status and/or wellbeing.
Community Wellbeing
Community wellbeing evaluates humans’ progress beyond economic growth. The popularity of these ideas in the past decades has led to development of many instruments and tools to measure subjective and objective well-being of individuals (Deaton 2008). Philosopher Martha Nussbaum and economist Amartya Sen developed and promoted a framework known as “capabilities approach” to move away from the focus on psyche of individuals to argue that individual wellbeing increases with the expansion of freedom and opportunities (Hojman and Miranda 2018). Capabilities approach is the center piece of community wellbeing framework as it opens room to account for a diverse range of variables that affect individuals’ wellbeing beyond their perception or satisfaction with life and help individuals’ capabilities to be realized.

Community wellbeing models argue for a broader frame of analysis where health, economy, social relations, safety, and more are considered in evaluating the wellbeing of individuals (Atkinson et al. 2017). Many scholars and studies define community wellbeing as “combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential” (Wiseman and Brasher 2008). Several studies conceptualized community wellbeing. Despite the many variation of frameworks to evaluate community wellbeing, most measures stem from the 2009 Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress led by Sen and Stiglitz that identified 8 main domains of capabilities approach (Stern and Seifert 2013). See Table 1. Of these 8 domains, health, economy, services and infrastructure, social relations and security have been repeated across most measures (Atkinson et al. 2017).

Table 1. Eight Domains of Community Wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material standard of living</td>
<td>Income and inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Mortality, morbidity and access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and skills</td>
<td>Attainment and achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal activity</td>
<td>Working conditions, leisure, housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political voice</td>
<td>Voting and participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social connection</td>
<td>Institutional structure and face to face relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Threats to assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Physical security and crime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Ecological Model of Health
Community wellbeing framework has similarities with the recent ecological model of health that has come to dominate public health research and interventions. The ecological model of health models – emerged from the behavioral sciences and public health-emphasizes that multiple levels of factors (e.g. individual, social, environmental, and political) shape one’s health outcomes and behavior (Glanz et al. 2008). Ecological model of health considers individual life-style (e.g. behaviors, preferences, mobility), social and community networks (e.g. social support, cultural values), physical environment (e.g. living and working conditions), as well as broader socio-cultural and...
political factors to determine one’s health outcomes. At the core of this model, age, sex, race/ethnicity and other individual socioeconomic status (SES) factors act as moderating factors that define one’s interaction with all other layers of variables (Glanz et al. 2008). This model advocates for multilevel interventions at all levels to achieve improved health outcomes. Research shows that multiple interventions (e.g. in-store nutrition education and opening of a new store) often have more likelihood in promoting healthier choices (Wedick et al. 2015).

Social Determinants of Health
This model, for the most part, shares similar pathways with conceptual models focused on social determinants of health. Social determinants of health have gained momentum in public health due to the global urgency of addressing social justice and health disparities (Marmot et al. 2012). Similar to the previous models, Schulz and Northridge (2004) conceptualize three main levels of factors that determine health and wellbeing outcomes: fundamental (macro), intermediate (meso/community), and proximate (micro/interpersonal). The macro level includes natural, social and political processes that produce inequalities through distribution of wealth, power, employment and education. Intermediate factors show how the broader inequalities are mirrored in the built and social environments and impact all features that are essential in human health such as housing, transportation, public resources, and regulation. This model also pays special attention to the political power of the communities in decision making processes that could impact their health. The interpersonal level encompasses immediate stressor, behavior, and social supports and networks (Schulz and Northridge 2004). Despite previous models, the social determinants of health for environmental promotion by Schulz and Northridge (2004) presents the complexity of achieving healthy communities and offers a more specific relationship between community and economic development dimensions to one’s health and wellbeing (Schulz and Northridge 2004).

There are two main reasons for incorporating these three models to propose a framework for this study. First, each model has its own audience. Community wellbeing appears to be appealing to sociologists, economists and local governments across the globe, evident from numerous efforts to customize the indicators based in different localities (Wiseman and Brasher 2008). Ecological and social determinants models speak more directly to public health and planning scholars. Separate models, definitions and measurements inform fragmented responses and interventions, whereas there are more similarities between these concepts than there are differences. An integrated and comprehensive approach to conceptualizing human health and wellbeing is not a new concept. The World Health Organization guidelines for Health in All Policies is an attempt in bringing professionals from across disciplines to work toward similar goals: a healthier community (World Health Organization 2014). An integrated model that can speak to both development and health professionals can be a step toward creating more effective interventions and policies.

Second, each model – while informative on its own- comes up short in one way or another. The community wellbeing model lacks precision, is static, and does not account for the interactive relationships among different levels and variables. Community wellbeing models, often, offer a list of variables and indicators in each domain of wellbeing without specifying how they impact one another. The ecological model of
health comes up short in truly incorporating the impacts of environmental and political factors, and those interventions that consider environmental changes often focus on a mere change in the physical environment. In other words, this model has a simplistic understanding of various and long-term effects of environmental factors on individuals’ health. Social determinants of health, on the other hand, provides a clear pathway between built, social and economic contexts and health outcomes and wellbeing. However, this model fails to incorporate individuals’ preferences and agency in their interaction with their environment.

**Proposed Conceptual Model**
This study conceptualizes the roles of immigrant food entrepreneurs on their receiving communities at three distinct levels: community, interpersonal and individual. The community-level factors have many similarities with pathways suggested by the literature regarding the impact of ethnic businesses on economic, physical, and socio-political aspects of a community. In other words, the community-level factors account for various ways that immigrant food businesses contribute to community and economic development. The interpersonal factors account for relationships between individuals (here, consumers) and their environments. The interpersonal factors act as moderating variables that can modify the ways that individuals perceive and respond to the community-level factors. See Appendix 1.1. The individual-level factors point to variables that are personal and have a more immediate impacts on individuals’ behaviors.

*Figure 1. Conceptualized relationship between immigrant food businesses and community wellbeing*

Immigrant food businesses impact community-level factors by shaping community infrastructures, economy, education (skills), and political opportunities within a community. Immigrant food businesses function as a community infrastructure necessary for individuals to access essential services such as food (Short et al. 2007). They also contribute to economic development and community investment by paying taxes, providing access to jobs and earnings (for workers), and income and wealth (for owners) (Light 1984, Liu et al. 2014). While immigrant food businesses are commercial enterprises, far from being educational institutions, they play key roles in providing workforce development opportunities for employees and family members (Shinnar et al. 2011). In this model, I interpret the “Education” domain of community wellbeing loosely to account for workforce development and training offered at ethnic food businesses.

In this model, environmental characteristics such as neighborhood level of safety, livelihood or social relations can mediate the degree to which individuals use ethnic food
businesses. Research shows how immigrant businesses contribute to place-making by bringing vibrancy back to commercial streets by occupying vacant properties and establishing businesses (Schuch and Wang 2015). Concentrations of ethnic food businesses can provide more enjoyable shopping experiences and help to increase (perceived) safety. Public health scholars have demonstrated how perceived safety - especially among women- helps determine individuals’ shopping behaviors (Fish et al. 2010). Lastly, immigrant food businesses, as social spaces, can facilitate, establish and strengthen relationships among customers, workers, and shopkeepers (Zhou and Cho 2010), which may shape the ways individuals make decisions about shopping at certain businesses. Cannuscio et al (2010), for example, demonstrate how negative social interaction with shopkeepers forces individuals to bypass their closest stores to shop elsewhere (Cannuscio et al. 2010).

At the end, the individual-level factors take into account people’s dietary patterns, preferences, tastes, income, mobility and other attributes that can define what types of food people access, purchase and consume. In this model, ethnic food businesses have an immediate impact on what types of food individuals can access. They also may have long-term impacts in shaping food preferences and tastes over time, especially for non-immigrant clientele who use these spaces regularly.

The various pathways where immigrant food entrepreneurs may effect a change ultimately define individuals’ health (through dietary patterns), quality of life (through health status, safety, social connections and neighborhood conditions), and material wellbeing (through income, jobs, skills, and food budgets). This dissertation focuses on how immigrant food businesses shape these pathways, and how their contributions at multiple levels impact the ways that individuals interact with their food environment and make decisions about their food shopping and consumption behaviors. See Figure 1.2.

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

This study evaluates the multifaceted impacts of immigrant food entrepreneurs on their communities. This research hypothesizes three main mechanisms through which immigrant food businesses impact community wellbeing: 1. Immigrant food businesses are community assets that contribute to community and economic development by shaping physical, social and economic fabrics of the community 2. Immigrant food businesses shape the community and consumer food environment by providing healthy and affordable food 3. Immigrant food businesses impact how individuals navigate their food environment by diversifying their choices.

The following questions will investigate these propositions.

Q1: How do immigrant food entrepreneurs contribute to community and economic development?

Q2: How do immigrant food entrepreneurs impact community and consumer food environments through availability, affordability and accommodation of food?

Q3: How do immigrant food entrepreneurs impact food shopping and consumption patterns of different groups in a diverse food landscape?
Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-method approach to provide a multidimensional analysis of the ways that immigrant food entrepreneurs contribute to the wellbeing of receiving communities. As the conceptual model presents, this study explores the role of immigrant food businesses through at three levels: their impacts on community and economic development (community-level); their role in shaping the consumer food environment (interpersonal-level); and their role in shaping individuals’ perceptions of and preferences regarding their food stores available in their environment (individual-level).

This study uses a case study approach to explore and examine the identified pathways. Case study is a suitable approach for this research. This approach allows me to (1) test, examine and modify well-accepted theories common in food access and immigration studies (2) provide an in-depth analysis of an understudied topic (the roles of immigrant food businesses in shaping a suburban food landscape) and (3) to build new theories/foundation of knowledge to understand the health and wellbeing aspects of immigrant-led revitalization (Gustafsson 2017). In short, this study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of diverse ways that immigrant businesses shape their communities and focusing on one locality – instead of reaching for a breadth of analysis- provides more opportunities to reach this goal (Yin 2017).

The remaining of this dissertation unfolds in Upper Darby PA, a first-ring working class suburb adjacent to Philadelphia. Upper Darby PA is a great setting for the posed questions for the following reasons: 1. Upper Darby resembles key characteristics of a “global neighborhood” where there is a large concentration of diverse foreign-born residents living adjacent to and among African-American and white residents (Logan and Zhang 2010). 2. Upper Darby shares a similar trajectory to many other metropolitan suburbs in the US that experienced recent revitalization and stabilization after years of decline. Some scholars attribute the recent growth to increased immigrant population in these communities. 3. Upper Darby represents the new face of American suburbs (especially in metropolitan areas) with a concentration of low to middle-income residents. In other words, Upper Darby – similar to many other first-ring suburban communities-experience challenges similar to those of “urban” areas. Chapter 2 elaborates on how Upper Darby represent the 21st century US metropolitan areas.

The research design has three main components: historical and background research, multiple case studies of immigrant food businesses, and surveys of shoppers and residents. The analysis of community-level impacts of immigrant food businesses (either for community development or the food environment) is intertwined in all three research components. The historical research highlights the ways that immigrant food businesses have transformed the commercial and food environment of Upper Darby over time. This analysis relies on historical parcel data to examine how such businesses contributed to community revitalization and stabilization through opening and maintaining food enterprises. Content analysis of local newspapers and interviews with community stakeholders complement the historical research. The community stakeholders consist of the township governance, the county planning commission, and community organizations. This inquiry provides a vivid and detailed narrative of the ways that these entrepreneurs have shaped the community over time. In addition, maps analysis joined
with field observations illustrate the current food landscape in Upper Darby. This analysis highlights the roles of small businesses and immigrant-run food stores in the community food environment.

I examine the **Interpersonal-level impacts** through case studies and surveys to provide an in-depth analysis of people’s lived experiences related to their own food shopping practices and preferences, other customers/shopkeepers, and their neighborhoods. This study selects a representative sample of immigrant food stores along with an American supermarket (as a point of comparison) to explore the roles that these businesses play in food provision for different individuals. By auditing the food inventory of each case study, surveying the shoppers, interviewing the storeowners and observing their relationships, this section analyzes the roles of immigrant food businesses in shaping the consumer food environment, establishing relationships (interpersonal) and shaping social and economic contexts of neighborhoods (community).

I examine the **individual-level impacts** of food businesses on people’s food-related experiences (i.e. food shopping and consumption) using a survey of residents. This survey illuminates how different groups (foreign vs. native born) navigate their food environment and make decisions around food resources available to them. This section relies on a purposive sample of residents to identify their shopping and consumption patterns, and to understand the reasonings that determine residents’ decision-making processes. The survey also helps to understand another community-level impact of immigrant food stores by parsing out what effects (e.g. primary, secondary, complementary) such businesses have on the overall shopping patterns of households.

**Dissertation Outline**

This dissertation contributes to the literature on food environments and immigrant revitalization. Mainly, the dissertation presents the diverse ways through which immigrant food businesses contribute to community wellbeing. The research offers evidence that highlights the roles that the immigrant food businesses play in increasing walking access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate foods. Immigrant food businesses have built a diverse and dense food environment where residents – both foreign- and native-born- have a variety of options to procure foods beyond shopping at national chain supermarkets. In addition, the research points to the ways that immigrant food businesses create spaces for inter and intra-ethnic interaction in a suburban community where opportunities for face-to-face interaction is limited. The findings demonstrate how immigrant food businesses have contributed in creating a vibrant commercial district not only by opening businesses and maintaining them but also through training workers and developing a new generation of entrepreneurs.

**Chapter 2** describes the demographic and economic transformation of Upper Darby as it has revitalized and diversified in recent decades. This chapter relies on Decennial Census and American Community Survey to construct a demographic and economic profile of Upper Darby, complemented by historical business data retrieved from a private vendor (Reference USA). Interviews with community stakeholders (e.g. township governance, community organizations and the county planning commission) and review of local newspapers helps to provide a more detailed analysis by demonstrating how the local
government, community organizations, and the public perceive recent changes and the roles of immigrant businesses in this community.

**Chapter 3** offers a detailed portrait of the food environment in Upper Darby, highlighting the roles of small-scale and immigrant-run food stores. This chapter revisits several well-accepted wisdoms about the food environments of low-income and minority neighborhoods and checks them against the realities of this community using current and historical business data as well as field observations and store audits. Reference USA provides access to both current and historical business data. I use maps as illustrations to visually demonstrate how different food resources – including the immigrant food stores – are distributed across the community. This chapter argues against some of the misconceptions about food access in low-resource communities and illustrates how immigrant food businesses have stabilized and revitalized the community while providing consistent access to food over a two-decade period.

**Chapter 4** explores the role of immigrant food businesses in shaping the consumer food environment by analyzing multiple components of immigrant grocery stores: owners’ perceptions of their businesses and their positions in the community; customers’ experiences with the stores; availability, affordability and healthfulness of the food stock; and roles of the stores in forming social connections and influencing neighborhood environments. I use interviews with the storeowners, short semi-structured surveys of shoppers, store audits and observation to examine the multifaceted impacts of these businesses on their customers and their surrounding communities.

**Chapter 5** takes a broader approach to examine how different groups (foreign and native-born) make use of the existing food retail in their community, and what roles immigrant food businesses play in shaping people’s access to food. The chapter relies on a purposive sample of residents to investigate their shopping and consumption patterns, and their perception of their food and neighborhood environments. The results from this chapter make a case for the importance of individual preferences and agency in utilizing community resources, as well as comparing how different ethnic groups navigate the dense and diverse food environment of Upper Darby.

**Chapter 6** brings together the findings from the prior four chapters to explore how the collective evidence points to ways that immigrant food businesses contribute to community wellbeing. The chapter examines the policy implications of these findings for local governments and civil society programs that work toward immigrant incorporation, community and economic development, and healthy food access.
Figure 1. Mechanisms through which immigrant food businesses contribute to community wellbeing

Immigrant
Food
Businesses
(IFB)

Community level

Interpersonal level

Individual level

Community wellbeing

Built Environment
Infrastructure
Access to services (food)

Social & Economic
Economy
Community investment (tax revenue)
Access to income and wealth
Access to jobs and earnings
Reduce vacancy
Education
Offer workforce development opportunities
Political Voice
Political influence

Social Environment
Neighborhood condition
Build active and vibrant neighborhoods
Security
Increase safety

Social Integration and Social Support
Social Connection
Social networks, supports and community trust

Health Behaviors
Health
Dietary behaviors
Dietary tastes and preferences

Quality of life
Material wellbeing

IFBs provide food, contribute to community and economic

Health Behaviors
Health
Dietary behaviors
Dietary tastes and preferences

Community level

Immigrant Food Businesses (IFB)
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CHAPTER 2: UPPER DARBY; GROWTH, DECLINE, GROWTH RESUMED

INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 2018, I took the train from West Philadelphia to the end of Philadelphia and start of Philadelphia suburbs nearly every day; Millbourne first, Upper Darby (69th station) second. The distance between the Millbourne and where the official boundary of Philadelphia ends are a few feet; the differences, however, are stark. There is a sudden change of scenery from the 63rd station, the last stop inside the city, to Millbourne, the first suburban station and the first Indian-majority municipality in the US. The walk over Cobbs Creek – or, where the city officially ends- goes through a green and picturesque landscape. A Community garden along Market street is part of this green landscape. Right off 63rd station, a group of elderly Korean and African-American gardeners run a relatively large community garden; an elevated garden that is covered by trees and bushes and invisible to the eyes of passersby. A few feet away from the community garden, a low-rise, windowless, cemented structure stretches over an entire block. The structure belongs to the Astra Foods headquarter, a meat manufacturer and distributor that provides more than 100 jobs and $40 million in revenue every year.

There is barely one vacant business parcel in the long stretch from the start of commercial area in Millbourne well into Upper Darby. There is a great concentration of South Asian businesses and institutions that meet the daily needs of the South Asian residents of Millbourne; from a beauty salon to a Sikh temple, Millbourne has it all. Some of the businesses along Market street are similar to those found a few feet earlier in West Philadelphia such as auto-related shops, mini markets, and smoke shops. In between these stores, however, there are variety of groceries and restaurants with names that suggest they offer ethnic dishes; Moojin Jang, El Sazon De Nova Eva, Sabzi Mandi, Taj Mahal Halal Meat, and Chun House are food businesses that embrace both sides of Market street from beginning of Millbourne to the 69th Terminal Station. The same diversity and assembly of businesses continue through Upper Darby and its shopping district.

Many local residents call the area around the 69th Terminal Station, 69th Shopping Mall and its surrounding commercial district “downtown Upper Darby.” However, downtown Upper Darby is not a central business location to a region as many planners or social scientist may expect it to be. Downtown Upper Darby is mixed-used where the residential row houses, single families and multi-family apartments are located immediately beyond the first row of commercial uses along the main streets. In Upper Darby, residents identify their place of residents based on the name of their neighborhoods rather than their township. To these residents, Upper Darby and Downtown Upper Darby are synonyms; they both indicate the dense, diverse and vibrant area around the 69th and Market street. In this study, I use Downtown Upper Darby to distinguish its socially and economically diverse core from the rest of the neighborhoods with concentration of middle to upper class, white residents. In this definition, I include Millbourne as part of Downtown Upper Darby. Millbourne and Upper Darby have two different governing systems, but the geographic, social and economic boundaries between the two are minimal. In fact, until 1909, Millbourne was part of Upper Darby township, but was separated and incorporated into a Borough (Borough of Millbourne 2019).
The township had executed a public project a few years ago to “clean up” the shopping district by painting the storefronts and placing benches along 69th street. The township is desperately trying to make Downtown Upper Darby an attractive place not only for the nearby residents but for the rest of Upper Darby population who deem this area too “unsafe” and “dangerous” to spend their money there. None of these efforts, however, are as effective as what the downtown offers organically. The downtown is vibrant because of its residents, shoppers, passengers, businesses and activities. The vibrancy of downtown derives from the convenience of buying a wig at one shop; getting your hair braided at an Ethiopian hair salon next door or your nail done at the neighboring Vietnamese nail salon; having your iPhone fixed at an Indian-own mobile shop; buying a pair of inexpensive sport shoes for your children; trying on some clothes at H&M; grabbing a quick bite at a pizzeria; picking up some groceries at H-Mart, a Korean-owned supermarket; and then taking a trolley or a bus right across the street and heading home to a working-class neighborhood in the city or one of various suburbs nearby in Delaware county.

Living in Upper Darby is not as romantic as the above picture. In fact, downtown Upper Darby and its struggling neighboring urban community share a few similar economic characteristics; both communities have a large proportion of renters who live below poverty line. More than half (53%) of the Downtown residents are renters, and about 50 percent of them are poor or struggling. Other economic characteristics, however, point to a higher median household income and employment rate in Downtown Upper Darby compared to those of its surrounding communities; Downtown residents annually make $9,000 more and their employment rate is two times greater than West Philadelphia residents. Upper Darby, once a mill-town turned into a first ring suburb, is different from its urban neighbors as it has not suffered from the same systematic disinvestment trajectory of West Philadelphia. Upper Darby represents the realities of many old industrial suburbs in the US metro regions; small to medium township that has received a renewed source of diverse and working-class populations while simultaneously has faced increasing social and economic difficulties once known as “urban” issues.

Suburbanization of immigration and suburbanization of poverty are not unique to Upper Darby. Many suburbs in the US metro region have experienced both phenomena. By the end of the Great Recession, a majority of the US poor in the 100 largest metropolitan areas lived in the suburbs. Given the fact that 85 percent of immigrants live in the 100 largest metros, there is no surprise that many poor immigrants live in metropolitan suburbs (Suro et al. 2011). Suburbanization of poverty is not because of nor exclusive to the foreign-born population. In fact, broader economic and social changes that have transformed US metropolitan areas are responsible for impacting and diversifying immigrant destinations; immigrants are following the departure of affordable housing, jobs and employment centers to suburbs. Poor people in suburbs include both native-born and foreign-born individuals; the number of native-born poor individuals in suburbs grew by 39 percent from 2000 to 2009, accompanied by 31 percent increase of suburban immigrant population (Suro et al. 2011).

Toward the end of the 20th century, immigrant destinations spread beyond traditional gateways including large cities such as New York, Los Angeles or those in the Southwest (Singer 2008). Today, every region in the US – from America’s Heartland to the US
south – has gained unprecedented numbers of foreign-born population. For example, North Carolina, Georgia, and Arkansas were among 10 states that experienced more than 280 percent growth of their immigrant population between 1990 and 2010 (Migration Policy Institute 2010). While some immigrants – especially the Latino population- found home in rural America (Miraftab 2012), metro regions still absorb large portion of the newcomers (Zhang and Logan 2016). However, many newcomers in the metro regions now bypass central cities to locate in the suburbs.

Urban scholars have written about suburbanization of immigration for nearly two decades. Most of the scholarship focuses on the diversification of immigrant settlements, including emerging and re-emerging immigrant gateways (Massey 2008). Researchers have shown how immigrants have built their own community or reshaped previously homogenous, white neighborhoods across the US (Singer 2008). For the most part, however, urban scholars are more fascinated with a particular type of immigrant place-making in suburbs, one that explains how educated, high-skill, high-income foreign-born individuals have given birth to “ethnoburbs” such as Monterrey Park (Li 2009) or suburbs of Silicon Valley CA (Lung-Amam 2017). Similarly, and not so far away from Upper Darby, immigrants – mainly from Asia – who work at multiple educational complexes and lucrative pharmaceutical companies have built a unique “ethnic” landscape in the otherwise homogenous suburbs of New Jersey. Their place-making in suburbs have not been without backlash and resistance from established residents, either in New Jersey or across the country (Lung-Amam 2017). However, the ways that the working-class immigrants of Upper Darby shaped their new environment does not fit into this predominate picture of suburban immigrant destinations.

A “bimodal pattern of immigrant suburbanization” explains the differences between place-making of immigrants in suburbs of New Jersey and that of Upper Darby (Johnson 2017). Johnson suggests that suburbanization of immigrant destinations typically follows a bimodal pattern, in which high-skilled immigrants settle in more affluent suburbs and away from central cities while working-class immigrants occupy housing and neighborhoods in the inner-ring, old and industrial suburbs especially in the metropolitan regions. One scholar characterizes places such as Upper Darby a “one-step up” suburb, or a working- and middle-class community that is a destination for upwardly mobile immigrants and refugees similar to the ways that many post-World War II suburbs were for earlier European groups (Chung 1995, Johnson 2017). A common characteristic of these one-step up communities is their long history of industrial development that attracted earlier wave of European immigrants. Since 1980s, these communities have become a population destination by newer immigrants who have helped to revitalize and transform these aging suburbs (Johnson 2017).

Upper Darby is one of these inner-ring and industrial working-class towns and suburbs in metropolitan America that has received significant numbers of foreign-born population since 1990s. There are a vast number of small to medium sized towns and suburbs that have received significant numbers of immigrants in recent years. In 2016, 61 percent of the US foreign-born lived in municipalities with a population less than 200,000; 33 percent in cities and town of 20,000 to 99,000 (Katz and Ginsburg 2017). These towns and suburbs are not limited to coastal metro areas but spread across the US. For example, immigrants and refugees of Dekalb county GA – part of Atlanta Metropolitan Area- have
economically and socially transformed Atlanta’s inner ring suburbs and provided a boost to the local economy (Odem 2008). In places such as Phoenix AZ, where Hispanic population has had a long presence, the growth of knowledge-based industries has made the Asian immigrants the fastest growing foreign-born population. While the Latino and Asian immigrants of Phoenix differ socioeconomically, their businesses, community hubs, association and festivals changed the suburban landscape of Phoenix AZ (Oberle and Li 2008a).

In the new and emerging gateway, immigrants mainly contributed to the rapid growth of the metropolitan areas; whereas, in older metropolitan areas such as those of the Northeast and Midwest, immigrants have had a major role in revitalizing declining suburbs. These newcomers have contributed to revitalization of the working and middle-class suburbs through their multiple roles as residents, workers, consumers and business owners (Vitiello and Sugrue 2017). For instance, Johnson shows how the new wave of immigration to older industrial suburbs such as Paterson of New Jersey, Bridgeport of Connecticut, Cicero and Skokie of the Chicago metro area, and Malden and Quincy of the Greater Boston have boosted population, grown labor market, revived housing markets and revitalized commercial areas (Johnson 2017). Upper Darby, a first-ring suburb with a population of 82,829 is one of these small municipalities in a US metro region where immigrants and their children have transformed it in the past two decades.

Most of Upper Darby immigrants, in fact, are Asian immigrants. However, the Asian immigrants of Upper Darby differs significantly from the predominant view of Asian-Americans which generalizes all Asians as wealthy, highly-educated population. The diverse Upper Darby Asian immigrants, which includes but not limited to people from Cambodia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, and Korea, are a working-class population; many arrived as refugees, without formal educational degree or ability to speak English. Upper Darby immigrants are those who drive a cab in Philadelphia, work at a Dunkin Donut, or run a small grocery store in the township. In most immigration literature – and in the public perception- Asian immigrants differ from other groups of immigrants especially from the Latin American immigrants (Oberle and Li 2008b, Harris et al. 2008). While Asian immigrants, overall, are better educated and have higher incomes, there is a wide variances between and among Asian communities. The public and policy makers perceive Asian immigrants as the model minority with successful trajectories of upward mobility, high rate of employment, education and homeownerhip. This misrepresentation has been harmful both to the diverse groups of Asian Americans as well as other minority groups; politicians often use the “model minority” argument to pit and compare minority groups to one another. Such argument ultimately takes a blind eye to experiences, challenges and needs of lower income Asian immigrants(Wing 2007, Chou 2008).

Upper Darby embodies a particular type of suburban revitalization. While the Upper Darby immigrants did not inject significant wealth and money into the community, they have left their footprint on the township in major ways. Before the rise of immigrant population in Upper Darby, the township experienced two decades of gradual devitalization. Devitalization is the process of “depopulation, dying downtowns, vacant stores, disappearing theaters and restaurants, bank closings, rising crime rates” that sucked the “life and vitality out of older American cities” (Katz and Ginsburg 2017).
Upper Darby’s new residents managed not only to slow down the process of 
devitalization, but also they preserved and revitalized this small township. Similar to 
many other diverse suburbs and small to medium-sized towns saved by immigrant-led 
revitalization, immigrants of Upper Darby help the township to regain a new life by 
increasing population, business activities, stimulating business growth, offering social 
services and promoting safety.

This chapter describes the “growth, decline, growth resumed” trajectory of Upper Darby 
from late 19th century to present day. In doing so, the chapter demonstrates how 
immigrants shaped and continued to shape a first-ring working-class suburb over the 
course of a century. The goal for this chapter is to provide a rich context of Upper Darby, 
of the place, and its people. This chapter presents the variety of ways that immigrants 
have transformed and shaped Upper Darby including but not limited to running small 
food businesses. This context is necessary to facilitate interpretation and discussion of 
roles of immigrant food entrepreneurs in community wellbeing in the following chapters.

METHODS

This chapter presents data from a historical research. I used a combination of 
administrative data, interview with community stakeholders, and review of local 
newspapers to offer a narrative of Upper Darby’s past, change over time and present 
status. All data collection procedures were approved by the Institutional Review of 
University of Pennsylvania.

Secondary data: The secondary data sources included historical federal census data 
obtained from Delaware County online archives, administrative data accessed through 
data portals such as Social Explorer and American Fact Finder, and historical business 
data obtained from a private business vendor (Reference USA). I also consulted 
previously published books and dissertations to complement the missing information on 
the history and trajectory of the township.

Interview with community stakeholders: I conducted semi-structured in-person interviews 
with community stakeholders to understand the position of immigrants and their roles in 
community revitalization. I identified the key stakeholders based on consultation with 
community informants. The stakeholders included the leadership team at the township 
Community Development division, director of Multicultural Commission Board, director 
of a Welcome Center for immigrants, directors of a community organization, and director 
of the Delaware County Planning Department. The interview questions explored history 
of Upper Darby, its community and economic development initiatives and plans, the 
commercial activities and business environment, and roles of immigrant businesses in the 
community. See Appendix A for interview instruments. The interviews lasted an hour-
long on average. Most interviews were conducted on-site, at the interviewees’ place of 
work. In two occasions, the interviews were conducted at a public space used for 
community meetings. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. I used NVivo – a 
program for analyzing qualitative data- to code the interview transcriptions. The names 
are not changed in this chapter, as the interviewees (mostly public officials) shared 
information about their works and the township and not their personal experiences.
Newspaper review: I conducted a review of Philadelphia Inquirer entries from 1982-2018 to collect evidence of various ways that immigrants have been shaping the township in the past few decades. I used various combination of three keywords (“Upper Darby”, “immigrant”, and “immigration”) to retrieve articles relevant to Upper Darby contexts and its foreign-born population. I reviewed all 233 search results, excluded the irrelevant articles (e.g. death announcements), and coded the remaining entries. Of all the codes, a few were fundamental in shaping the following chapter including variations of “redevelopment/growth”, “business/business development”, “demographic transition”, as well as codes that helped to identify which social group was the subject of the report (e.g. Greek, Korean, Irish, Indian etc.).

UPPER DARBY: PAST
Upper Darby changed from a primarily farming community to a populous suburb in less than a century. During 18th and 19th century, Upper Darby consisted of mill towns and farmlands that produced crops for livestock and human consumption. The mill industry played a critical role in the transition of Upper Darby from a rural community to a factory town. By the mid-19th century, the most skilled and resourceful mill owners replaced their small mills with larger factory systems. Some of these mills continued well into the 20th century; the last one closed in 1955. The growth of mill industry required heavy labor and more workers, which ultimately led to the growth of Upper Darby as a factory town with a large working population (Rorer 2011).

Upper Darby residents, up until the 1970s, were largely European immigrants and their descendants. During the 19th century, immigrants from Ireland and England were the largest groups of foreign-born residents. In fact, English Quakers were the first permanent settlers in 1684 (Rorer 2011). The earliest available Federal Census that documented places of origin shows that 43 percent of Upper Darby residents were born outside of the US in 1860, of which 80 percent were from Ireland and 18 percent were from England (Federal Census 1860). Most of these immigrants worked as “day laborer, weaver, spooler, twister, beamer”, at factories, mills and other industrial sites that relied on their manual labor (Federal Census 1860). However, not all the immigrants were laborers. Some of the mill owners were Irish immigrants who mainly hired Irish laborers who fled Ireland’s famine. For example, an Irish millowner built 41 tenement homes for 500 workers from Ireland, which explains the large presence of Irish immigrants in Upper Darby during the 19th century (Rorer 2011).

Similar to many first-ring suburbs, transportation advancements in early 20th century shaped the foundation of today’s Upper Darby. Until the 20th century, people still depended on horse carriages for transportation which limited people’s mobility and dictated where people could live and work (Ujifusa 2005). In 1907, however, Upper Darby became a transportation hub with the opening of a terminal at the intersection of 69th and Market Streets. The terminal was a place where trains from Philadelphia, interurban trolleys, trains and buses to suburbs met. The growth of transportation options made Upper Darby and the surrounding towns, such as Millbourne, more accessible, especially to working- and middle-class populations. The increased accessibility expediated the growth and expansion of population, small businesses and housing development in Upper Darby. The population of Upper Darby was 5,385 in 1910 and grew rapidly to 47,145 in 1940 (Rorer 2011).
Developers were responsible for the fast growth of Upper Darby’s population; they bought acres of lands around 69th terminal street area, quickly built houses, and sold them to people who wanted to live in a suburban area with access to center city Philadelphia. One developer in particular, John McClatchy, had a major role in the transformation of Upper Darby. John McClatchy took advantage of the open farmlands around the 69th terminal area and constructed large numbers of affordable suburban homes. These houses were mostly twins or row houses built on a pedestrian-oriented layout rather than one oriented toward automobiles, a practice that was predominant in shaping newer and post-World War One suburbs (Ujifusa 2005).

McClatchy began the development of the 69th shopping mall and district in 1928 to meet the demand of the growing middle-class population. The four-story mixed-use commercial buildings – located right in front of the terminal- resembled the common format of suburban shopping districts of the time with one major difference: its Art-Deco inspired façade. The building has been a “superior example of Art Deco” for historic preservationists until today (Ujifusa 2005); many older residents of Upper Darby still take pride in this building even after years of experiencing damage and deterioration. The shopping mall was, in fact, a major shopping destination outside of Philadelphia, yielding the second highest retail sales in the region toward the end of 1960s (Herr-Cardillo 2018). In 1920s, McClatchy also built the Tower Theater, a movie theater one block south of the shopping mall. In doing so, he used the neighborhood walkability, its ease of access to shops, cultural attraction and connectivity to Philadelphia as major selling assets of the township to attract new residents (Delaware County Planning Department 2018); assets that still are attractive to many newcomers and residents a century later.

Upper Darby, as an inner ring suburb, was a destination for upwardly mobile earlier European immigrants. Construction of highways and roads in years following the World Wars also facilitated this out-migration of working- and middle-class families who were seeking their American Dream of owning a home in a neighborhood with good schools, safe communities and easy access to a metropolitan region. After World War II, in a period where the Immigration Act of 1924 dampened the source of incoming (foreign-born) residents to the community, one ethnic group, in particular, had a fundamental role in preserving Upper Darby as an immigrant destination: Greeks. After World War II, the population of Greek immigrants steadily grew in Upper Darby. The outmigration of Greek immigrants from Philadelphia during 1950s as well as direct migration of post-1965 Greeks to Upper Darby shaped a Greek enclave in Upper Darby known as a “New Greektown” (Kitroeff 2017). The Greek immigrants made their presence known to the established residents mainly through ethnic businesses, social organizations and clubs, and Greek Orthodox churches. Greek immigrants opened a range of small businesses that offered Greek products. Multiple delicatessens carried “feta cheese, honey-coated pastries and other Greek specialties” throughout the township (Fine 1982). Some Greek entrepreneurs established Greek diners in Upper Darby and in the region that are still in business today.

The significant population and concentration of Greek immigrants meant that life continued on the streets of Upper Darby. In 1982, Upper Darby had Greek “coffee houses on every block” where men argued politics, played cards, discussed soccer and drank coffee. Daily reminders of Greek heritage included newspapers stands that sold the New
York Times in Greek, newspapers imported directly from Greece, cultural and social organizations serving Greek residents. Community organizations, churches, food businesses and coffee shops all functioned as a social nodes or Greek immigrants, where they contributed in building and preserving the township social life (Fine 1982).

Greek churches were important in attracting new and established Greek immigrants to Upper Darby. Many churches followed the upwardly mobile Greek immigrants who had left Philadelphia for Upper Darby in 1960s. A 1988 Philadelphia Inquirer report called churches the “cornerstone of Greek community,” quoting a Greek pastor, Father Gregory, who shared that “to Greeks, the church is considered to be part of the home. The church is a religious institution, a cultural institution, an educational institution…it groups all of these people into one unit and gives them identity” (Kanaley 1988). What Father Gregory explained was the multifaceted roles of churches in the community. Greek Orthodox churches played a significant role in helping the new immigrants adjust to their new home, especially those with language difficulties. At the same time, Greek churches were critical in introducing the Greek community to non-Greek residents by organizing fund-raising annual festivals to showcase Greek foods, customs, and music, hold the Greek community together, and introduce their culture to non-Greek residents (Kanaley 1988).

Role of religion institution as a pull factor in attracting new immigrants is not exclusive to the Greek immigrants. The Irish Immigration and Pastoral Center, opened in 1998, was a refuge and a safe place for many Irish immigrants who have entered the country without proper documentations. Similarly, many Punjabi Sikh immigrants migrated to Upper Darby for the presence of Sikh temples, especially the Philadelphia Sikh Society in the early 21st century.

Upper Darby population peaked in 1970 with 95,910 (Rorer 2011). From 1970 to 1990, Upper Darby lost 15 percent of its population. While Upper Darby was experiencing a consistent population loss, Greek immigrants helped to replace population to some degree. In 1982, residents of Greek descent made up the township’s largest single ethnic group; the Mayor’s office estimated the population of Greek immigrants and their children at between 10,000 to 12,000 or about 1/10 of Upper Darby’s population (Fine 1982). However, the strong presence of the Greek community in Upper Darby lasted for two decades before upwardly mobile Greek households left Upper Darby for more affluent and further away suburbs in search of higher quality of life, better housing and schools.

Outmigration of the population, deindustrialization, and diminishing of manufacturing jobs left Upper Darby with an aging housing stock, infrastructure and an insufficient tax base to provide services (Kitroeff 2017). A prime hallmark of devitalization was closure of Sears departmental store in 1988. The store closed in 1988 in Millbourne, but did not immediately leave the area. It was relocated to the 69th shopping district in Upper Darby as an attempt to revitalize the township shopping area. The original Sears store opened in Millbourne in 1920s, on a large parcel next to the Millborune station which has stayed unoccupied since 1980s. For 60 years, the Sears store brought visitors and shoppers to the small borough, provided jobs and contributed to the tax revenue. In fact, for the small borough of Millborune, the Sears store was the economic backbone of the community. Its closure, eventually, pushed the borough to bankruptcy. In 1993, Redevelopment Authorities officially identified Millbourne as distressed. (Lazarski et al. 2019). The
Sears store in Upper Darby also closed in 2011 as part of the nationwide downsizing of stores by the retail chain. No other department stores have taken on the vacant lot in Upper Darby yet. The departure of this department store which many customers had a fond memory of shopping and spending time at was a major loss for both Upper Darby and Millbourne.

Upper Darby, similar to many other small to medium size suburbs, fell short in attracting and retaining residents as more prosperous communities strategically offered amenities, commercial and office parks, educational and medical services, and new suburban malls that outcompeted old town centers and pulled the wealthier residents away from these communities (Katz and Ginsburg 2017). From 1970 to 1990, Upper Darby struggled with shrinking tax base, difficulties selling houses, and with “blighted” residential and commercial areas (Downs 1999). Greek Orthodox churches, their annual festivals, Greek restaurants and diners all played a significant role in preserving the township in a period when Upper Darby started to deal with consequences of outmigration of White residents to neighboring suburbs. Even with the increasing numbers of Greek immigrants, Upper Darby’s total population declined significantly from 1970 to 1990. Had it not been for the Greek immigrants and the vibrancy they brought to the community, Upper Darby could have had experienced a more severe devitalization. As Greek immigrants began to leave the township in 1990s, Upper Darby received a renewed source of population.

With the loss of population, the housing values declined in Upper Darby. With the outmigration of more affluent residents and availability of affordable housing stock, Upper Darby started to receive a more diverse group of residents. Table 2.1 shows that as the white population left Upper Darby, other racial and ethnic groups increased in numbers. In 1970, African Americans made up only 0.16 percent of total population; this number increased to 2.99 percent in 1990 and observed a steeper growth by 2000. Similarly, while the foreign-born population gradually increased from 1970 to 1990, the years from 1990 to 2000 experienced the largest growth. In 1970, Cuban immigrants were the largest group of foreign-born population by making up 0.1 percent of the total population. Their population, however, did not change significantly in the next two decades. Korean, Indian, and Chinese immigrants experienced the largest growth from 1970 to 1990; the population of Korean, Indian and Chinese immigrants grew 35, 18 and 10 times larger from 1970 to 1990, respectively. Vietnamese immigrants as well experienced a sudden growth; the population of Vietnamese residents increased from 0 to 811 from 1970 to 1990. While Upper Darby was on the way to become a multiethnic community, with Korean immigrants as the largest and fastest foreign-born group, the township was still a majority white community in 1990.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1 Racial and Ethnic Profile of Upper Darby Residents: 1970-1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Origin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chinese | 75 (0.08) | 110 (0.13) | 703 (0.85)  
Filipino | 42 (0.04) | 78 (0.09) | 159 (0.19)  
Japanese | 57 (0.06) | 137 (0.16) | 115 (0.14)  
Korean | 32 (0.03) | 419 (0.49) | 901 (1.09)  
Vietnamese | - | 134 (0.16) | 807 (0.98)  
Mexican | 37 (0.04) | 110 (0.13) | 135 (0.16)  
Puerto Rican | 103 (0.1) | 99 (0.12) | 141 (0.17)  
Cuban | 101 (0.1) | 81 (0.09) | 82 (0.10)  

*Source: Longitudinal Tract Data Base Census Data for 1970-2010, Prepared by Spatial Structures in the Social Sciences (S4) Brown University, 2017*

**UPPER DARBY: REVITALIZATION**

Foreign-born families and individuals from a diverse range of countries were the new source of population for Upper Darby. Affordable housing stock, access to transit, better schools and safe environment were the reasons that attracted many immigrants and upwardly mobile immigrants and refugees to this township. Upper Darby new residents were diverse, not only in their places of origin but also in their migration patterns. Upper Darby was both home to new immigrants who directly settled in the township upon their arrival in the US, and a place that many Philadelphia’s established immigrants and refugees chose to move to. To these established newcomers – such as Korean immigrants, West African and Vietnamese refugees- outmigration to Upper Darby moved them one step closer to their American Dream.

The newcomers transformed Upper Darby in multiple ways. “I used to live and operate in a bubble and you never realize just how much immigrants and people who are not born here touch your life,” said Raya, an African-American employee of the township who works at the Welcome Center with new immigrants. “[Immigrants] bring family, they bring closeness, they bring heritage, they bring culture, food, clothing…they enhance the life that is already here in Upper Darby.” Raya has lived in Upper Darby for 22 years. She gains her personal insights from her day-to-day interaction with newcomers at work who come from India, Bangladesh, Morocco, Vietnam, and Somali to name a few. She also lives in a neighborhood with a large concentration of newcomers; some of her immediate neighbors are from Pakistan and Liberia.

The diversity of Raya’s neighbors and clients is the result of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 which increased migration from countries previously absent in Upper Darby and to a great extent in the US large, particularly from Asian, Latin American, and African countries. The diversification of Upper Darby’s population was a gradual process; in 1970, the racial make-up of the township is similar to that of 1950’s. Nonetheless, the 1970 census shows that the share of foreign-born population from places such as India, China, Philippines, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba consistently increased from 1970 to 2000.

The new immigrants, mainly from Asian countries, were a major population source for the township which had been struggling with attracting and retaining businesses and population. As Katz and Ginsburg explained, immigrant-led revitalization in small and medium-sized towns is more than just population and economic growth. In fact, this process is not accompanied by an immediate decline in poverty rates or increases in real
The immigrant-led revitalization in working-class towns is “residential, driven by newcomers who increase population, form new communities, establish small businesses and services” (Katz and Ginsburg 2017). Unlike neighborhood changes in urban areas, the opening of businesses and moving-in of new residents do not cause gentrification. New residents and businesses are simply replacing population lost and offer neighborhood-based services.

**Population Growth**

The official records show population growth was resumed from 1990 to 2000, in the same decade where the foreign-born population increased by 52 percent. See Table 2.2. The foreign-born population continued to grow in the following decade (2000-2010) by 29 percent, however, this growth was much larger in the 90s. The demographic changes and transformation of Upper Darby mirrored that of the country at large; the number of foreign-born in the US reached its peak in 1990 with 1,535,872 immigrant permanent residents in more than a century. Within the same decade (1990-2000), the unemployment rate for Upper Darby dropped slightly. For this industrial suburb that had lost its major employers and jobs, the slight increase in employment rate was a signal of a new beginning. Another sign of this change was the reduction of vacant housing units. The poverty rate, on the hand, did not follow the same direction of change as employment and vacancy did; persons in poverty increased by 12 percent from 1990 to 2000. The increase of immigrants, refugees or native-born African Americans who came from a low to middle-class income background could explain the increase of poverty. As explained earlier, suburbanization of poverty and immigration did go hand-in-hand in many cases. From 2000 to 2010 and during the Great Recession, all economic measures such as vacancy, employment and poverty rates increased significantly. See Figure 2.1-2.3 for the historical changes in population and poverty.

**Table 2. 2 Demographic and Economic Profiles of Upper Darby Residents: 1970-2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1970 Count (%)</th>
<th>1980 Count (%)</th>
<th>1990 Count (%)</th>
<th>2000 Count (%)</th>
<th>2010 Count (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>97,877</td>
<td>85,596</td>
<td>82,721</td>
<td>83,382</td>
<td>84,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>97,342 (99.45%)</td>
<td>82,466 (96.34%)</td>
<td>75,450 (91.21%)</td>
<td>62,950 (75.50%)</td>
<td>45,013 (53.19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>158 (0.16)</td>
<td>1,105 (1.29)</td>
<td>2,476 (2.99)</td>
<td>10,204 (12.24%)</td>
<td>23,554 (27.83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>6,396 (6.53)</td>
<td>6,949 (8.12)</td>
<td>7,880 (9.53)</td>
<td>12,041 (14.44%)</td>
<td>16,635 (18.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing units</td>
<td>33,335</td>
<td>34,492</td>
<td>34,640</td>
<td>34,865</td>
<td>34,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant housing units</td>
<td>612 (1.83)</td>
<td>1,490 (4.32)</td>
<td>1,407 (4.06)</td>
<td>1,868 (5.36)</td>
<td>3,128 (9.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>990 (2.3)</td>
<td>2,497 (6.06)</td>
<td>2,136 (4.93)</td>
<td>1,784 (4.20)</td>
<td>4,413 (9.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons in poverty</td>
<td>4,505 (4.6)</td>
<td>5,462 (6.39)</td>
<td>5,912 (7.17)</td>
<td>7,669 (9.22)</td>
<td>10,745 (12.73)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Longitudinal Tract Data Base Census Data for 1970-2010, Prepared by Spatial Structures in the Social Sciences (S4) Brown University, 2017*
The rise of immigrant population and their impacts on the community is most visible in
the borough of Millbourne, a small town that became the first Indian-majority community
in the US. The town is small; in 2000, it only had 943 residents with 40 percent of them
being Indian. This small borough became a top destination for many Indians, and
especially Punjabi Sikhs, who were seeking a safe refuge post 9/11 away from racial
profiling, threats and discriminations. Many of these immigrants moved to Millbourne to
be near the Philadelphia Sikh Society. Most of these immigrants have a working-class
background; the median household income in Millbourne is $30,185. While many of the
second generation Indian-Americans were able to move upwardly, join colleges and find
careers, the town has stayed a working-class community; as the children of earlier
immigrants leave the community, new immigrants with similar backgrounds have
arrived, occupied the same houses, opened businesses and frequented Gurdwara. Family
ties and existing of an established South Asian community were important factors in
attracting the newcomers to this borough (Melwani 2005).

By the beginning of 21st century, the public and policy makers in Upper Darby have
realized the vast impacts of immigrants on their communities. The Philadelphia Inquirer
reporters reflected on the ways that Upper Darby had received a boost because of the
immigration. One reporter demonstrated how the township policy makers are “planning a
strategy to lure immigrants” for their impacts on local economy and their ability to save
“neighborhoods edging toward decline” (Downs 1999). The perception of newcomers
was not always as positive. In fact, many media entries wrote about challenges associated
with the rise of minority and low-income population as “the problems of the inner city
are cropping up in the suburbs” (Downs 1999). With the rise of foreign-born residents,
there came concerns about provision of social services and welfare including providing
funding and assistance for public schools dealing with increasing challenges serving a
multi-lingual community (Matza and Duchneskie 2011, Bustos 1992, Holmes 2012). Of
these issues, public safety and poor performance of students at public schools were

Repopulating the township, occupying vacant properties and increasing employment base
were not the only ways that immigrants shaped Upper Darby. As Raya suggested, the
newcomers of Upper Darby enhance and contribute to the quality of life of residents of
all backgrounds; they do so mainly by offering cultural foods, products and services.
Immigrant-run businesses are some of the most visible ways that the newcomers have
impacted their new community. These businesses have brought back life and vibrancy to
downtown Upper Darby. Not only these businesses improved the quality of life for
residents by providing their needed products for sale, they also contributed to the
community wellbeing at large by offering services essential for their overall health and
development. The immigrant social entrepreneurs offered these services through
community organizations and various types of congregations. These immigrant-run
community and religious organizations played critical roles to ensure that new and
established residents can access essential services.
Figure 2. African-American Population in Delaware County PA 1970-2000
Figure 2. Foreign-born Population in Delaware County PA 1970-2000
Figure 2. 3 Families with Income Below Poverty in Delaware County PA 1970-2000

Source: The U.S. Decennial Census
Social Explorer
Author
Business Development

The new immigrants, for the most part, resided in the same walkable and mixed-used developments that McClatchy built. Consequently, the new immigrant entrepreneurs populated the same shopping district that had lost vibrancy post 1970s. A report in Philadelphia Inquirer in 1986 described how Korean businesses revived the 69th shopping area. The reporter took note of the various ways that Korean immigrants have shaped Upper Darby: “Korean businessmen have been quietly setting up shop in Upper Darby's 69th Street shopping area, selling produce, fish, jewelry, athletic shoes, children's clothing - even hoagies. In addition, the township now has at least three Asian food stores, a Korean restaurant and three Korean churches” (Stecklow 1986). Korean businessmen brought a new life and revitalized the shopping district with their small-scale businesses, services and places of worship. Korean immigrants moved to Upper Darby for similar reasons that earlier Greek families had chosen this township to live. The population of Korean residents had the largest growth in 1980 to 1990 and started to decline at the start of the 21st century. At the time, Upper Darby was a one-step-up community for many Koreans who lived in Philadelphia. Inexpensive houses, ability to be homeowner, better schools, and potential for running businesses were reasons that attracted Korean residents of Philadelphia (Bowden 1997).

Immigrant-run businesses were small, but their accumulative impacts were significant. The expanding demand from the diverse immigrant populations and the increasing number of small businesses stimulated growth in the community. Justin, a White resident of Upper Darby since 2002, expressed how small Korean businesses were a precedent for the arrival of H-Mart to the township: “I feel like the H-Mart was pretty transformative…there was a very tiny Korean grocery store in that space only in the first floor at the time…I moved in and that was such a huge development with multi story and much sleeker and cleaner…more professional design. Other things have come and gone and stayed sort of the same.” H-Mart opened in Upper Darby in 2006. While the population of Korean residents has declined in the township since 2000, the supermarket and its neighboring small businesses still serve the community and surrounding suburbs. H-Mart and its accompanied businesses became a regional shopping hub for Koreans who have left the community, those who still lived in Philadelphia, and others who lived in areas without an access to Korean foods. Other H-Mart/Korean shopping areas exist in Cherry Hill NJ and Cheltenham PA that are not as accessible by public transit as the one in Upper Darby.

With the departure of Korean immigrants, Indian immigrants became the largest foreign-born residents and the major contributors to development and maintenance of businesses in the township. The continuous arrival of immigrants was essential in preventing business vacancy, offering service and keeping the storefronts open. “I feel like there [used to be] a huge Korean population…there are still some stores around but not as many Korean residents and maybe more South Asian and African and Central and South American and businesses sort of changing toward that…I think they are still neighborhood commercial businesses for the most part.” Justin characterized the changes in the business environment of Upper Darby based on the populations who have lived in and left the township. He continued to explain, “ever since I moved here, there has been a lot of swap where businesses come and go…there is not a lot of stability but for the most
part businesses are being replaced by other businesses...there is not tons of vacancy.” Justin shared his observation of how the businesses have changed in the past two decades. To Justin, the short life of immigrant businesses is a sign of instability in the community. However, he continued to clarify that the continuous business turnover limited vacancy in the township. Vacant business districts are one of the main signs of decline in any neighborhood. Closed storefronts signal a lack of investment and purchasing power. In Upper Darby, neither of them appeared to be an issue.

A reporter in 2003 shared how the built environment illustrates the ways that ethnic businesses have taken over each other’s space over time. He described the sign at 33 Garret Road: “It shows a laurel-crowned Greek tilting his head back to savor a bunch of grapes above the words "Elegance Without Extravagance." Across the middle, wrapped like a toga around what was once the name of a Greek diner, is a banner that reads: Sabor Latino.” This detailed description is a literal manifestation on how ethnic succession in Upper Darby has shaped the community or has helped to reduce vacancy in the township.

The same reporter listed a few Greek eateries that were closed recently, but explained how “Korean restaurants, Indian groceries, and eateries serving Vietnamese, Peruvian, Thai-French and Mexican cuisines” have maintained the immigrant-rich food landscape of Upper Darby (LaBan 2003). Today, the Ecuadorian owners of Sabor Latino still serve the Upper Darby residents and visitors at 33 Garret Road.

Community Organization
Business development and physical preservation of the commercial district was only one way that immigrants shaped Upper Darby. Other less visible, yet impactful, mechanisms included the establishment and revival of community organizations which provided a range of services to meet the demand of growing population. In Upper Darby, places of worships and community-based organizations particularly played a significant role in supporting health and wellbeing of residents. Some organizations such as Philadelphia Sikh Society (gurudwara) and Multicultural Community Family Services have had a more direct role in shaping the residents’ diets and access to foods. Others – such as various Greek and Irish churches or medical community centers – played a role in supporting the wellbeing of the residents through offering services that either help the newcomers to adjust to their new life and/or access health cares.

To Upper Darby’s immigrants, and to the community at large, places of worship in the township are beyond mere religious institutions. These organizations – who often were a magnet for attracting new immigrants- have had multiple roles in the community. A prime example of that is the Philadelphia Sikh Society or Gurudwara. Gurudwara - established in 1997 – played a significant role in expansion of the Indian Millbourne community; post 9/11 Millbourne received an influx of Sikhs who had left New York city because of racial profiling and terror attacks. Not only the gurudwara has been essential to the lives of many Sikhs who are devoted to their faith, but also it has been instrumental in securing foods by offering Langar. Langar is the communal meal shared by Sikhs and all visitors to the gurudwara regardless of religion, caste, gender, economic status or ethnicity. Langar is an important part of Sikhism principle to express equality of and service to humankind. The kitchen of gurudwara offers a plate of hot meal, often accompanied by milk-tea, to visitors and prayers seven days of week. While the concept of free food at a religious institution may mirror soup kitchens of churches, obtaining
food at gurudwara is free of stigma. Lack of stigma attached to receiving free meals helps many low-income families and individuals to have an easier time accessing food. In addition, this service is especially important in food access of elderly immigrants. To many elderly immigrants, with limited mobility and language difficulties, gurudwara is at the center of their lives where they may spend most of their days praying and socializing with their community. Chapter 4 will describe other roles that gurudwara play in the community and its relation to food.

Multicultural Community Food Services (MCFS) also has a significant role in food provision for Upper Darby elderly residents. Portia and Gore, both immigrants from Liberia, founded Multicultural Community Family Services (MCFS) in 2003. MCFS is a non-profit organization that hires immigrants and their children and offers a range of services mainly to the immigrant community in Upper Darby. MCFS supports wellbeing of immigrant population through variety of programs. As Portia shared, Upper Darby and surrounding towns have an increasing aging population who needs care. MCFS initiated the home care services to provide care for home health care for the elderly population.

The health home workers – often immigrants and their children – are responsible for ensuring their clients are food secure. Based on mobility and physical ability of the elderly, the health home care givers do their grocery shopping, order food online, register them for federal benefits such as SNAP, and/or prepare home-made meals for them. Portia added that diversity of food businesses in Upper Darby also enable the home care givers to provide culturally appropriate foods for their clients. For example, since most of their clients are West African elderly immigrants, MCFS order regularly from two African-owned restaurants in Upper Darby and West Philadelphia.

MCFS also offers a range of other services that support the wellbeing of the immigrant community. The organization first started as a response to the educational needs of African teenagers and youth who just arrived in Upper Darby and had difficulties adjusting to the US education system; this was especially more challenging for students who were coming from war-torn countries and were dealing with multiple levels of trauma. Over time, with the diversification of the community and their needs, the directors expanded their programs to offer a wide range of services including education and job readiness, behavioral support services (e.g. counseling, family-based services), outreach programs (e.g. Soccer programs, the Elder’s Circle, citizenship classes), and home and community-based services (e.g. home care services). The main mission of the organization is to improve the wellbeing of the immigrant population in a variety of capacities and at different stages of their lives, from children to senior citizens. While MCFS does not offer medical services, in reality it plays a fundamental role in the wellbeing of residents by focusing on residents’ development, emotional wellbeing, and social supports.

Providing medical services to the diverse residents of Upper Darby is another way in which immigrants have shaped the township. Some immigrants opened medical centers serving immigrants and refugees. For example, in 1975, the Philip Jaisohn Memorial Medical Center opened a branch office in Upper Darby to serve Koreans; a handful of Korean doctors started the Memorial Medical Center in Elkins Park, north of the city, but expanded their services to Upper Darby as the Korean population grew there, too (Bergen
1983). Similarly, a Vietnamese physician set up a special, twice-weekly clinic for Vietnamese patients in 1986 (Stecklow 1986).

Religious institutions— which are found in abundance in Upper Darby— also contribute to wellbeing and quality of life of immigrants and refugees by offering a range of social services. Some of these services help the newcomers to adjust to their new lives and others protect vulnerable immigrants who are in the country without proper documents. For example, the Irish Immigration and Pastoral Center opened in 1998 in Upper Darby to help undocumented Irish immigrants. These places provide a range of services such as organizing English classes, sponsoring refugees, finding housing, helping newcomers find work and connecting them to resources. For example, during a Friday service at a mosque in Upper Darby, I met Aminah, a recent immigrant from Morocco. Aminah, who was in her mid-50s and spoke little English, lived in a township adjacent to Upper Darby. On that Friday, she traveled by bus to get to the service as she had heard through word of mouth that the mosque’s Imam and his wife assist the new immigrants finding jobs.

The religious diversity of the residents and Upper Darby gave life to various types of congregations. There are at least 16 churches, temples, and mosques located in a short distance between Millbourne and the area around 69th street. The diversity of places of worship represents the diversity of residents: Philadelphia Sikh Society, Philadelphia Korean Baptist Church, Sree Narayana Guru Deva Temple, and Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Philadelphia are a few examples of diverse religious institutions serving residents of Upper Darby and surrounding towns. The proximity of these diverse places of worship to Greek Orthodox and Catholic churches is a reminder that other immigrants from Greece and Ireland lived and still live in the same neighborhoods. In some instances, these new religious institutions took over buildings and organizations established by earlier immigrants. For example, a Buddhist temple in Lansdowne serving Vietnamese residents took over a building that used to house an Italian-American club in 1984 (Stecklow 1986).

The presence of various places of worship is also important in maintaining a connection between the earlier residents who left the community and those who still live in the township. In 1986, the Philadelphia Inquirer described how the Buddhist temple in Lansdowne drew Vietnamese families across Delaware Valley to Upper Darby for services every Sunday (Stecklow 1986). This sustained relationship is mutually beneficial for both the current residents and those who have left. The returning residents are loyal customers who spend their money in Upper Darby, supporting local businesses and economies. In return, they are able to access services and products likely not available in suburbs further away from the township. Not all the time, however, does their support have monetary value. Portia, the director of Multicultural Community Family Services, explained how the returning residents, especially young individuals who have left for college and jobs outside of the township, help with mentoring the youth, offering services and running classes. In other words, places of worship and community centers cultivate a sustained relationship which has both fiscal and social benefits for the community.

One block away from MCFS, there exists another community-driven social enterprise. Two American-born entrepreneurs who lived in Morocco for 15 years have opened a
multi-purpose coffee shop that runs as a non-profit organization that mainly serves international students, immigrants and refugees. The owner shared, “We knew what it was like to be an immigrant in another country, and we wanted to be engaged in helping the immigrant community here.” These entrepreneurs found Upper Darby an ideal place to use their cross-cultural experiences. The couple renovated a building across from the township hall and opened their multi-purpose coffee shop. The coffee shop has been a regular place for community members to meet, for students to practice English conversation with native speakers, for SAT tutoring, and for the township Multicultural Commission meetings – a township-supported board of community members to address racial/ethnic conflicts in the community (See “Upper Darby: Present” for more information on the Commission). To Mayor Thomas Micozzie, places like Five Points Coffee is the type of revitalization he had envisioned for the main retail area of the township. In reality, the already revitalized retail area, the diverse immigrant community, and the residents in search of a peaceful meeting place made the existence and maintenance of Five Points Coffee possible (McCrystal 2014).

UPPER DARBY: PRESENT

Today, Upper Darby is home to a large population of immigrant and African-American, renter, and (self) employed residents who make more than the most impoverished communities in Delaware County (e.g. Chester) but not enough to compete with the most affluent areas. This 8-square-mile town with 82,829 people has a higher proportion of foreign-born population (19%) compared to Philadelphia (13%). See Table 2.3. Upper Darby also has a higher proportion of African-American residents compared to the other townships in Delaware County except for Chester PA. In fact, majority of African-American population in the county is concentrated in two townships of Upper Darby and Chester. However, Upper Darby residents have a slightly larger median household income compared to that of Chester population. See Figure 2.4 - 2.6. However, it should be noted that American Community Survey uses a sample to estimate characteristic distributions. As such, the reported characteristics – especially in small-areas such as census tracts- may have large margin of errors, and the results should be interpreted with caution. While Upper Darby residents make less than the rest of the Delaware County households, especially from the more affluent townships further away from Philadelphia, they have the highest rate of employment in the entire county. Similarly, Upper Darby has the highest rate of self-employed residents compared to the rest of the county. With 52 percent of renter-occupied housing, Upper Darby also has the largest share of renters in the county.

Table 2. 3 Economic Profiles of Upper Darby, Philadelphia and Delaware County PA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Upper Darby PA</th>
<th>Philadelphia PA</th>
<th>Delaware County PA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>82,829</td>
<td>1,559,938</td>
<td>562,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born population (%)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income ($)</td>
<td>50,615</td>
<td>39,770</td>
<td>66,576</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Upper Darby is a multi-ethnic community not only because of its large presence of immigrants, but due to newcomers’ diverse places of origin. Immigrants in Upper Darby represent more than 80 nationalities, many of which include countries in South and Southeast Asia such as India, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. Immigrants from Asian countries are the largest ethnic group in this township, making up 51 percent of all foreign-born individuals. After Asians, newcomers from Latin American and the Caribbean (36%) and African (18%) countries are the largest immigrant groups in Upper Darby. See Table 2.4. Each ethnic group migrated from/was forced to leave their home country for different reasons and at different time in the history, but they found Upper Darby an ideal place to settle for similar reasons. Accessibility to mass transit, abundance of affordable housing, existing immigrant communities and religious institutions – from the Greek orthodox churches to the Sikh gurdwaras - have impacted the decision of newcomers to locate in this township.

Table 2.4 Top Ten Places of Origin for the Foreign-born Population in Upper Darby

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries of Origin</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>% Foreign Born population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1632</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Foreign-born population excluding population born at sea; 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Figure 2. African-American Population in Delaware County PA 2010-2017

African-American Population in Delaware County PA 2010-2017

2010

Black/African-American Population (%)

- 0 - 7
- 7 - 17
- 17 - 29
- 29 - 60
- 60 - 95
- Upper Darby PA

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Social Explorer
Author

2017

Pennsylvania
Delaware
New Jersey

0 1.5 3 6 Miles
Figure 2. 5 Foreign-born Population in Delaware County PA 2010-2017
Figure 2. 6 Families with Income Below Poverty in Delaware County PA 2010-2017
Most of the immigrant population resides in and around downtown Upper Darby where there is a smooth transition from an ethnic enclave to a global neighborhood. While Millbourne Borough resembles an ethnic enclave with a majority Indian population, Upper Darby is more akin to a global neighborhood. The demographic profile of residents becomes more diverse in Upper Darby where there is a mix of US-born – mainly African-American- and immigrant residents living alongside each other. Figure 2.1. shows how different racial and ethnic groups are distributed in the township. In Upper Darby, most of the residents who live further away from the downtown area are white. The difference between downtown Upper Darby and remaining of the township does not only pertain to the diversity of their residence; the two parts of township also has a different physical layout. While the downtown area resembles a walkable urban environment, the neighborhoods further away are more akin to typical suburban landscape where wide roads, separation of uses, and missing sidewalks discourage walking as a mode of transportation.

The division between two parts of the township is a major fiscal and cultural challenge for the township government. Most Upper Darby residents with high incomes and wealth live, and shop, away from where most of the commercial activities occur, in downtown Upper Darby. “A lot of times people don’t know what is here and it is because of location and lack of marketing and visibility…there are some Latino restaurants that are little holes in the wall and if you are not driving down the street you would never know about them…food is amazing but they are really struggling and they are selling mainly to their community, but if the larger community knew then, you know, you are gonna maybe go to that restaurant.” Tamara, the director of Community Development Division, points to an example of how a division between two parts of the township perpetuates the invisibility of immigrant-run food businesses which largely concentrate in the downtown.

Invisibility of immigrant food businesses is not only a business challenge for immigrant entrepreneurs, but an economic issue for the township at large. “They call it [Upper Darby] a bedroom community, we don’t have our own industry…it was not built that way, it was built for people to live and raise their families, it was a lot commercial…geared toward residents.” Jeff, the director of the Licensing Division, elaborates why small businesses are a major part of Upper Darby economic development scheme. As he explained, “small mom and pop shop” is what Upper Darby can offer, and what many immigrants can start. Tamara also reinforces this point by acknowledging the opportunities that immigrant food entrepreneurs offer to Upper Darby “[…] we don’t have tons of commercial areas, they are all concentrated here in 69th Street where you find African food, Mexican food, Indian food, Chinese food, American food, Italian food and Greek. So how do we get that out, how do we let people know what’s here?”

The township governance is aware of the potential of immigrant food businesses and has made efforts to incorporate them within their economic development plan. However, the township does not fully recognize and take advantage of the role of Upper Darby as a potential regional shopping destination that serves other immigrant groups residing nearby. One of the main priorities of the Community Development division is the strategic planning and development of the downtown Upper Darby area through advertising downtown businesses to a broader and general population. To Tamara, general population means the more affluent, wealthy white residents who live in the
neighboring townships; she believes the invisibility of these businesses along with lack of desire of nearby white residents to shop at these places do not allow the entrepreneurs and the township to fully benefit from their potentials. The township recently has come up with a plan to increase the visibility of immigrant businesses to the local residents and bring more revenue for the township: an annual international food festival.

The food festival is on its way for the third time in September 2019. The township hopes to achieve three main goals by organizing the food festival: (1) Give ethnic food businesses more exposure to the rest of the community; (2) Educate Upper Darby residents of various cultures and groups who live in Upper Darby; (3) Change residents’ perception of the 69th Street area so they see it as a family-friendly environment. Raya shares that even if people know what downtown has to offer, “there is a perception that it is dangerous.” The township hopes that the festival can change the perception of the residents, so they know that it is a safe place, “it is a walkable area, a fun area, there are a lot of kids.” In other words, the township is capitalizing on the diversity and vibrancy of immigrant-run businesses to reintroduce 69th area as a welcoming place where people could slow down and shop rather than seeing it as “a transient place that everyone is getting off the SEPTA buses.” In addition, exposure to other cultures is a secondary goal for the township. Raya shared enthusiastically how a turban wrapping activity at the festival brought many groups of population together: “you could see White kids, African-American kids, and Asian kids walking down the street with turbans…it was an opportunity for people to sort of try something that is maybe different.”

Prior experiences organizing street festivals that celebrated different cultural has prepared the township to successfully execute the festival. The township host Sikh parade every year which runs down the 69th street, the main shopping area. The township had run into some problems with the business owners as they were concerned they would lose customers when the street was shut down; they have called the process “unfair.” As Raya explained, the problem was less about profits that it was due to underlying cultural issues. The township asked help from the Multicultural Commission Board to assist with the process. The Commission was tasked with engaging with business owners and finding ideas/strategies to include them in the parade, so the township could appease both business owners and the Sikh community.

The Multicultural Commission Board was originated initially to address concerns around racially stimulated violence especially around treatment of African-American men by the police officers. The Commission consists of community members who are part of different ethnic and religious groups. The main role of the Commission is to be a bridge between the government and the diverse community residents. For the most part, the Commission has an advisory role to inform the township leaderships about challenges and issues raised by the community members. Whenever there is a concern, the mayor reaches out to the Commission to help facilitate discussion and share information with the community. As Raya shared “the government cannot be involved with everything but Multicultural Commission keeps their pulse on the community, so they can fill in both positive and negative comments to the township.”

Suburbanization of immigration- and consequently, suburbanization of a diverse food landscape, has given Upper Darby many opportunities. Suburbanization of poverty, on
the other hand, has challenged the township for a few decades. Shrinking tax base, decline of housing values, and increased demand for rental housing are not challenges particularly associated with the rise of immigrants. They are, however, a predecessor for and accompanied with arrival of working-class residents, both African-American and foreign-born population. To the township, the shift from majority owner-occupied to renter-occupied neighborhoods appeared to be a major challenge as a result and sign of the spread of poverty and lower purchasing power in this suburb. The shift is not merely a financial challenge; it also reveals some of the racial tensions that exist in a diverse suburban community.

Jeff, a white resident of the township, explained the changes in Upper Darby in the past 20 years: “It has gotten more diverse and it has been improvement...one issue that we have a problem is some of our neighborhoods is going from owner-occupied to renter...it hurts the fabric of the neighborhood because you have a block owned by 7-8 people that don’t live in the townships, folks that are in transient nature.” While he did not specify who the transient residents are, it was evident the message was targeted toward the African-American renters of the township: “they [transient residents] are here for a year and then they move on so they do not plant a root...immigrants move in they want to plan a root usually they want to buy a lot of times.” Raya, an African-American homeowner, did not appreciate the distinction that Jeff made. She interrupted him to explain there are many African-American owners in the township by saying when she first moved in to the neighborhood she was “the first of the two Black families in the block.” She shared how with the old residents passing away or moving out, the neighborhood became more diverse: “there are a lot of transient people in the neighborhood but those who do own the houses are those who have decided to establish a root...we take pride in our neighborhood.” She did, however, agree that arrival of immigrants helped with “turning around” the neighborhood. She explained how her immigrant neighbors “may have a little bit of more pride because they are buying their first American house...it seems to trickle down the block because you can have those persons show you up so let me go outside and sweep, let me go outside and take care and see children play together.” As Raya has shared earlier, immigrants in her neighborhood and in the township enhance the life that already exists.

**CONCLUSION**

Upper Darby has been home to many groups of immigrants. In 17th century, the township was a refuge for English Quakers seeking religious freedom in the new colony of Pennsylvania. In 19th century, it was a center for the Underground Railroad and Abolition movement as well as home to Irish immigrants fleeing famine. Today, it is home to a diverse group of immigrants surviving civil wars, religious persecution, or simply home to those who seek a better future in America. Immigrants of Upper Darby have contributed to building, preserving and revitalizing the township for over a century. Greek immigrants helped to slow down severity of decline in the era of deindustrialization and urban crises across the US. Recent immigrants from Asian, Latin American and African countries gave Upper Darby a boost in a period when the US overall experienced major influx of immigrants (1990s-2000s), and when most immigrants began to settle in the suburbs. Today, Upper Darby is a suburban that is socially and economically diverse. It is home to many communities and groups of
population. Immigrant social and business entrepreneurs have shaped the community for the better; they have revived the dying downtown, stimulated growth, and offered social services. At the same time, the small township deals with increasing demand for affordable housing, cultural differences, and lack of a strong economic base. Upper Darby is the face of metropolitan America in 21st century; suburbs that more and more resemble diverse urban neighborhoods – with all of their opportunities and challenges and move further away from early racially and economically homogenous suburbs.

REFERENCES


Delaware County Planning Department. 2018. Downtown Upper Darby Vision Plan Media PA.


[https://grapplepodcast.atavist.com/millbourne-](https://grapplepodcast.atavist.com/millbourne-).


APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTS

Interview with the Community Development leadership team

Question about Upper Darby township

1. Can you please tell me a little about your involvement with the Upper Darby Township?
   a. What is your current position and role at the township?
   b. How long have you worked for the township?
   c. What are your main responsibilities in your current position?
2. Can you briefly talk about the recent or ongoing planning or development efforts in Upper Darby?
   a. Ask about updating the comprehensive plan and funding
3. I believe the Upper Darby has control over the CDBG funding. Would you please tell me what types of programs and efforts are being covered by this source of funding?
4. What are the overarching community and economic development vision and strategies in Upper Darby?
   a. How does your organization come to decide on this vision/strategy?
   b. Who is involved in the decision-making process?
5. Can you describe your working relationship with the DCPC? How does their plan/program shape Upper Darby development efforts?
   a. What was your funding or grant for the downtown vision plan?
   b. Besides the Downtown Vision Plan, can you name any other instances of the collaboration that your agency had with DCPC in the past couple of years?
   b. How does the “growth from within” the county economic plan has impacted or directed your work?
6. Besides DCPC, who else may have an impact in planning/development efforts in Upper Darby?
7. What are some of the pressing issues that the township or your department is dealing with? What are the issues that get the priority of attention from your agency?
   a. In the past XX years that you have been at the township, have these issues/priorities changed? If yes, in what ways?

Questions about business environment

1. How do you describe current commercial activities in Upper Darby?
2. How do you think this has changed overtime?
3. What do you think small businesses, or particularly immigrant businesses, do for Upper Darby?
   a. Refer to the vision plan with focus on strengthening local businesses
   b. Do you know what products they offer? Whom they serve?
4. Does your jurisdiction have any particular plans or strategies to promote small businesses, particularly among immigrant communities? (where does small
business development fall in your economic and community development vision/strategy?)
   a. If yes, please explain.
   b. If no, what do you think the barriers are in developing such policies/programs?
5. How do you evaluate the potential of your jurisdiction for promoting self-employment and small-businesses?
   a. What are the resources?
   b. What are the challenges?

Questions about immigrants and immigrant businesses

6. How do you think the growing immigrant population has impacted your work at the township?
7. How do you reach out to or help potential and current immigrant business owners?
8. Are you aware of the common challenges or needs of immigrant entrepreneurs in your jurisdiction?
9. Is there anything I missed?

Interview with the director of the Delaware County Planning Commission

Personal Information

1. Can you please tell me a little about your involvement with the Delaware County Planning Commission?
   a. How long have you worked at the county department?
   b. How do you describe the role of county department in general?
      i. I realized your agency offers variety of services from historic preservation to storm water management. Does the role of county department in all of them is advisory?
      ii. For example, does county planning commission has any authority over the county land use plan or farmland preservation?
   c. In the past XX years that you have worked at the county department, have you noticed any major change in the ways that communities approach your department?
   d. What are your main funding sources?
      i. Do these funding sources cover the services/inventories/surveys that communities need? (in other word, do they need to pay for these services?)
2. What is the overall approach of your organization to promote economic development in [Delaware County]?
3. How did your organization come to decide on this vision/strategy?
   a. What are the most influential factors in promoting economic development in your jurisdiction?
4. Can you name some of the most common financial and economic tools used in your jurisdiction to achieve the aforementioned vision.
5. Does your organization have any particular vision to promote small-business ownership? Please explain.

Questions about the township and county relationship

1. Besides the Downtown Vision Plan, can you name any other instances of the collaboration that your agency had with the township in the past couple of years?
   a. Did the township approach you with need to assist them in developing such plan?
   b. Who was in charge of running the community outreach meetings?
   c. Can you talk a little more about the process or the nature of that collaboration that created the vision plan?

6. I reviewed the farmers market application…would you mind telling me that how that application came to be?
   a. Why the Upper Darby Farmers Market Coalition did not approach the township?
   b. Also, I could not find any online information about this coalition. Are they still in place?

Questions about the business environment

10. How do you describe current commercial activities in [Upper Darby]?
11. How do you think this has changed overtime?
   a. What role do you think the growing immigrant population have played in recent changes?
12. What do you think have been underlying reasons for the recent changes in [Upper Darby]?
13. How do you evaluate the potential of your jurisdiction for promoting self-employment and small-businesses?

Questions about immigrants and immigrant businesses

14. How do you describe your relationship with the growing immigrant communities in your jurisdiction?
15. How do you reach out to the immigrant communities or potential immigrant investors/entrepreneurs?
16. Are you aware of the common challenges or needs of immigrant entrepreneurs in your jurisdiction?
17. Does your organization have any explicit or implicit policy or program to support the immigrant businesses?
   a. If yes, please explain.
   b. If no, what do you think the barriers are in developing such policies/programs?

Interview with the director of Multicultural Commission Board

Questions about Upper Darby township
8. Can you please tell me a little about yourself?
9. Can you briefly talk about the history of the multicultural commission?
   a. When and how it has been started?
   b. Who is involved with the commission?
   c. What types of issues are addressed by the commission?
   d. Can you provide some examples?
10. What are some of the pressing issues that the township or your department is dealing with? What are the issues that get the priority of attention from your agency?
    a. In the past XX years that you have been at the township, have these issues/priorities changed? If yes, in what ways?

**Questions about business environment**

18. How do you describe current commercial activities in Upper Darby?
19. How do you think this has changed overtime?

**Questions about immigrants and immigrant businesses**

20. What do you think immigrant businesses, particularly food businesses, do for Upper Darby?
21. Are you aware of the common challenges or needs of immigrant entrepreneurs in your jurisdiction?
22. How do you think the growing immigrant population has impacted your work at the township?
23. Is there anything I missed?
CHAPTER 3: UPPER DARBY FOOD ENVIRONMENT: EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES

INTRODUCTION
For the Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani residents, the short stretch from Millbourne to Upper Darby might be a food heaven. In a few feet from one another, several small but full-service grocery stores offer cultural foods and fresh produce. From a market perspective, these small businesses that more or less offer similar products should not survive because of the existing competition; but, they do. Competition does exist. However, each store has its own niche. Sabzi Mandi, an Indian grocery store, has a large and fresh stock of fruits and vegetables. Right across the street, Khamarbari, a Bangladeshi grocery store, carries Halal meat products. More importantly, the distance between the grocery stores is short enough that shoppers can visit more than one store in one trip. In other words, the small grocery stores act as a supermarket, deconstructed. Whatever supermarkets offer in one place, Upper Darby’s residents access by visiting a combination of food stores.

Small and ethnic grocery stores is not the only food retail that Upper Darby offers to its residents. In downtown Upper Darby and across the 69th Street terminal station, the Korean-owned supermarket, H-Mart, offers a wide selection of foods in the typical fashion of Western supermarket with different divisions for fresh produce, frozen fish, meat and poultry, fresh seafood, and precisely defined aisles for each type of products. H-Mart is only one of the four supermarkets in the downtown. The other three “American” supermarkets spread across the downtown, in the shopping district and in the heart of the residential areas. These supermarkets not only provide a convenient access to a large selection of food products, they also have a separate catering section where they offer prepared and relatively inexpensive foods to the shoppers.

Upper Darby food environment is also an attractive place for visitors and regional shoppers. A flock of young professionals and students who visit Upper Darby in their scrubs during lunch time shows that the food environment of Upper Darby is a food destination for those who live and work in the surrounding towns. The various take-outs in the downtown has something for everyone; the visitors can shop for a slice of Pizza, Halal chicken wings, home-made Vietnamese sandwiches, tacos, Chinese fried rice, or chicken biryani. These food stores also serve and appeal to the regional shoppers who visit Upper Darby to shop for clothing and/or other services. Dining in downtown Upper Darby is not only about fast and quick bites. In fact, visitors and shoppers have more options for full-service and sit-down dining where they can enjoy a meal with family and friends.

All of these food retails and activities happen in downtown Upper Darby, a first-ring working class suburb. Downtown Upper Darby is mainly a community of African-American (51%), foreign-born (32%) and working class populations; 44% of the households made less than $35,000 in 2018. As the review of the literature showed in chapter 1, we should expect the food environment of this low-income and minority neighborhood to promote “unhealthy” diets. Similar to many other low-income and minority communities, downtown Upper Darby should be “deserted” and have limited access to supermarkets; the residents should be exposed to unhealthy foods more than
they are able to access healthy foods especially fresh produce; the neighborhood should be filled with corner and convenience stores that carry high-calorie and low-nutrition food. Besides, the business and economic development literature suggest that the various immigrant-run small businesses do not survive competition and are unable to meaningfully lift the community. The realities of Upper Darby food environment, however, are more complicated than these predominate expectations.

On the surface, Upper Darby has all the ingredients that the public health scholars and policy makers use to identify areas of focus for interventions; places that can benefit from having a new supermarket or incentives to bring fresh produce to the shelves of the small and convenience stores. These interventions do not appear to be relevant to the realities of Upper Darby. Not because Upper Darby did not need support in lifting and shaping the community and its food environment; because, it has been receiving a different source of change. The food environment of this old industrial suburb has been receiving a more organic, community-led, and bottom-up source of intervention: immigrant entrepreneurs who have established and maintained food businesses. As chapter 2 explained, Upper Darby is not an anomaly. Many other first-ring and multiethnic suburbs and small towns in and around metro regions have a food environment similar to that of Upper Darby.

The food environment in Upper Darby, also, resembles that of many metropolitan cities and suburban communities with a large concentration of immigrants. The USDA Food Environment Atlas shows that metropolitan counties with a large presence of immigrants (13% and more) have a higher concentration of Grocery Stores. Grocery Stores, however, is a term used by the USDA Food Environment Atlas to identify both supermarkets and smaller grocery stores that have a general line of food. As a result, the high number of grocery stores may not be a direct indication of the presence of small-scale grocery stores. Nonetheless, the comparison between metro counties with and without significant presence of immigrants controls for this data limitation. See Table 3.1. In 2015, the median number of grocery stores for metro counties with a high presence of immigrants was 122; whereas, the median numbers of grocery stores in metro counties without a large presence of immigrants (less than 13%) was 12.

Table 3.1 Grocery Stores Concentration in the US Metro and Non-metro Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of counties</th>
<th>Grocery stores (min-max)</th>
<th>Grocery stores (median)</th>
<th>Grocery stores (average)</th>
<th>Median HH income</th>
<th>Average poverty rate</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Metro counties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with high presence of immigrants</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>(1 – 2,429)</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>60,047</td>
<td>14.6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Metro counties</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>without high presence of immigrants</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>(0 - 635)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47,591</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to differentiate between national chain supermarkets and grocery stores, Table 3.2 offers examples from four main regions in the US. Take Passaic County NJ for an example; 27 percent of Passaic residents are immigrants. Many municipalities in Passaic, including Paterson, used to be an industrial hub. However, these communities are now a destination for a diverse group of immigrants from Southeast Asia, South Asia, Middle-East and Latin America. Passaic has 209 Grocery Stores; 19 national chain supermarkets such as ALDI and Shop Rite, and 190 grocery stores with names that suggest they offer ethnic food products: Al-Madina Grocery and Fish; Bangla Town supermarket; Esperanza Pueblo Grocery. To be sure, there are variances in the distribution of these small grocery stores across the counties. For example, of all the 190 grocery stores in Passaic, 109 of them (57%) are located in Paterson which has the highest population of immigrants compared to its neighboring municipalities.

The large number of small ethnic grocery stores is not exclusive to metro region in the northeast. Cities and suburbs of the South, Midwest and West with a concentration of immigrants have a similar food environment. El Paso TX is a county in the US south that shares a border with Mexico, with a 20 percent foreign-born population. El Paso is home to a city of the same name (El Paso) which more than 80 percent of its population are Hispanic or Latinx. El Paso County has 112 Grocery Stores, of which only 16 of them are chain supermarkets. Not surprisingly, the remaining 96 grocery stores are geared toward the large Hispanic population; the grocery stores often have a Latino name such as Amigo Market, El Segundo Market, La Esperanza Grocery, and La Tienda. This story – the few chain supermarkets and large numbers of small ethnic food markets – repeats itself in Macomb County in Michigan as well as Yakima County in Washington.

USDA Food Atlas identifies some of these counties, such as Yakima, as places where residents have low access to healthy food. For example, the number of supermarkets in Yakima County is surprisingly small, and about 32,417 individuals did not have access to a supermarket or large grocery stores within a mile from their homes in 2015. However, Yakima – home to Yakima Indian Reservation – has a significant foreign-born (17%) population largely from Latin American countries. While not all the 116 small stores are geared toward the foreign-born population, business names suggest that immigrants run and own many grocery stores, produce and meat markets. See Table 3.2. What these examples illuminate is that the food environment of immigrant-dense communities, either

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-metro counties with high presence of immigrants</th>
<th>49</th>
<th>(0 – 25)</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>47,915</th>
<th>16.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-metro counties without high presence of immigrants</td>
<td>1,926</td>
<td>(0 – 47)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43,818</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: USDA Food Atlas 2015
Note: HH= Household
Upper Darby, Paterson, El Pastor or Yakima, is dense and rich with small-scale grocery stores.

This chapter aims to understand the degree to which Upper Darby food environment follows the prevalent depictions of low-resource and minority communities in food environment studies. The following section examines four central assumptions (or, “Accepted Wisdom”) that dominate the discussion in the literature. The chapter has three main sections. First, I present the four prevalent accepted wisdoms in the literature. Two groups of literature form the four assumptions: food environment studies (mainly from the public health literature) and community and economic development studies. The community and economic development studies are relevant as they focus on commercial activities that ultimately shape the food enterprises available in the food environment. Second, I provide an overview of the Upper Darby food environment and its various food retails. In the third and last section, I revisit the four Accepted Wisdoms using the current and historical business data (Reference USA) and field observations. In the conclusion, I discuss all four assumptions and the evidence in support and/or against them to provide a more accurate and vivid picture of the food landscape in Upper Darby.

Table 3. 2 Grocery Store and Supermarket Distribution in Four Metro Counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>FB (%)</th>
<th>Median HH income</th>
<th>Grocery stores</th>
<th>Supermarkets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Passaic NJ</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55,723</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket examples: Shop Rite, C-Town, ALDI</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store examples: Al-Madina Grocery and Fish; Bangla Town supermarket; Esperanza Pueblo Grocery; Latino supermarket</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso TX</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43,101</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket examples: Big 8 Food Stores</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store examples: Amigo Market, El Segundo Market, La Esperanza Grocery, La Tienda, Los Alamos Grocery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Macomb MI</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54,939</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket examples: ALDI, Kroger, Meijer, Shoppers’ Market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store examples: Aladdin Spice &amp; Grocery, Asian Groceries LLC, Hankuk Oriental Market, India Town LLC, Meghna Supermarket, International Food Inc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yakima WA</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>46,891</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket examples: Grocery Outlet, Winco Food, Safeway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store examples: Antojitos Los Michoacanos, Buena Vista Mini Market, Carniceria Los Amigos, El Mercado, Estudillo's Food Store, Tienda Del Pueblo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The USDA Food Environment Atlas and Reference USA
Note: FB= Foreign-born ; HH= Household

In studying how the food environment impacts individuals’ food shopping, consumption and ultimately health outcome, scholars and researchers mainly analyze the quantity and quality of the existing food resources in a community. While the available food resources could define where and how people shop for food, it does not account for the changes in the food environment over time. By disregarding how the food resources in a community
have changed over time, many important determinants of the ways that individual make decisions around their food purchasing cannot be observed and evaluated. It is especially important according to the recent literature on the importance of social processes within the food environment that can shape people’s perception and use of food resources. For example, passage of time is needed for the community members to shape and establish relationship with their shopkeepers and consequently use their available food resources. The cross-sectional evaluation of a food environment limits our ability to account for such processes and/or to understand the value of the existing resources in their context.

Given the fact that immigrants have a higher rate of business formation compared to their native counterparts, the historical food landscape could allow us to more closely evaluate whether or not immigrant food entrepreneurship have had a significant role in shaping the food environment in this community. In addition, the historical food landscape could provide insight on the contribution of small businesses in the community. The general assumption about small businesses, especially those run and owned by minority entrepreneurs, is that they are not successful meaning they have a high rate of failure a few years after opening. To that end, the following section provides a historical landscape of food resources in the Downtown Upper Darby to address three main goals (1) to understand how the food resources in the community changed over time and provide a context to better understand the role and value of the existing resources (2) to understand the role that immigrant food businesses have played in shaping the food environment (3) to evaluate the role of small businesses in shaping the food environment over time.

METHODS
This chapter provides a description of the historical changes and the current status of food environment in downtown Upper Darby. Three sources of data are the foundation for the analysis in this chapter: current business data, field observation and historical business data.

Current business data: I used a private business vendor (Reference USA) to obtain a list of all food retails, eating and dining establishments in Upper Darby in 2018. The database provides a listing of all businesses by their North American Industrial Classification (NAIC) and its predecessor, the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes, as well as detailed information about each business including registered names, locations, cuisines, numbers of employees, annual sale, credit score and more. I used two major industry groups – Food Stores and Eating and Drinking Places – to compile a list of all food-related businesses. While a comprehensive list of food businesses may include wholesalers and distributors, I intentionally excluded these businesses from the analysis as they do not provide a direct sale to customers for consumption. The Food Store industry group contains grocery stores (SIC code 5411), meat and fish market (SIC code 5421), fruit and vegetable markets (SIC code 5431), candy nut and confectionary stores (SIC code 5441), retail bakeries (SIC code 5461), miscellaneous food stores (SIC code 5499). The SIC codes for eating and drinking places are 5812 and 5813, respectively. Each SIC is broken down to different categories. For example, grocery stores category (SIC code 5411) differentiates between convenience store, take-out places and food markets and others.
Reference USA does not offer the data products at the census level, and the pre-defined neighborhood names and boundaries are not as accurate. Therefore, I used ZIP codes as a geographic boundary to retrieve the business information. The ZIP code of 19082 covers 8 census tracts in and around the downtown. The search listed 190 food retail, drinking and eating establishments in downtown Upper Darby.

Field observation: To check the accuracy of online business listing, update and complement it, I conducted a field observation of the 190 food businesses. To check the accuracy of the listing, I visited every single business found for the 19082 ZIP code. I found only three discrepancies in the data; a clothing store listed as a food market, and two closed restaurants that were listed as active businesses. In addition to checking the name, location and category of the listed businesses, I conducted an in-store observation for a sub-group of businesses (n=30). Since this study focuses on small businesses and their role in food provision, I visited all the independent (i.e. non-chain) grocery and convenient (including deli) stores. Using a simple instrument, I took note of food items available at the small, non-chain, food stores; in particular, I checked whether or not the stores carry fresh produce. The field observations helped to provide a more nuanced evaluation of the degree to which small-scale businesses contribute to healthy food provision in downtown Upper Darby.

Historical business data: Reference USA also provides access to historical business data. The earliest year where business data is available for Upper Darby is 2003. Using the same criteria for downloading current business information (e.g. food categories and the ZIP code), I retrieved business data for downtown Upper Darby for every year since 2003 to 2018. I compared the listing for every two-year to evaluate how the food environment had changed since 2003. I categorized all of the businesses into one of the following groups: no change (i.e. businesses who continued to the next year without a change); closed businesses (i.e. businesses who were not listed in the following years); new business (i.e. businesses opened that were not listed in the prior years); business transfer (i.e. same address with a new business taking over the previous one); ownership transfer (i.e. same address, same business but a new owner taking over the business). To account for reporting errors, a business was considered “closed” if it did not show up for 3 consecutive years in the record. There were a handful of businesses that were not reported the immediate next year but were included in the following years. At the end, I compiled a list of all business addresses that existed in downtown Upper Darby since 2003 and tracked the transition of every business based on the designated categories.

LIMITATIONS
Using ZIP codes as a geographic boundary helped to bypass some of the barriers in accessing relevant data. However, the selected ZIP code (19082) is much larger than what the community considers downtown Upper Darby. Nonetheless, this limitation does not significantly impact the analysis for two main reasons (1) the socioeconomic status of the residents in the 8 census tracts covered by ZIP code 19082 does not differ significantly from those who live in the heart of the downtown (2) most of the food retail,
dining and establishments retrieved for ZIP code 19082 are concentrated in the downtown.

The historical business data, available through Reference USA, does not capture business opening/changes prior to 2003. The unviability of earlier business data limits the scope of a historical comparison. For example, having had the business data for 1970-1990, when Upper Darby experienced great population loss and business closure, the argument for the role of immigrant in food business development could have been much stronger. As chapter 2 showed, the foreign-born population increased significantly from 1990 to 2000. The current historical comparison cannot capture those businesses that immigrants opened (or, may have closed) in 1990s. However, since it takes a few years for entrepreneurs to establish a business, it is reasonable to assume that the early years of 21st century (i.e. 2003) experienced the impact of immigrant businesses that may have started a few years earlier.

ACCEPTED WISDOMS (AW) ABOUT FOOD ENVIRONMENTS OF LOW-INCOME AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES

AW 1: Low-income and minority neighborhoods are “deserted” if they lack a national chain supermarket

Supermarkets are the primary source of healthy and affordable food, where their absence from a community challenges and limits residents’ access to healthy food (Rose and Richards 2004, Moore et al. 2008). Policy makers and scholars’ attention to the geographic distribution of supermarkets increased dramatically in the past 15 years, as awareness of “food deserts” or disparity in access to healthy and affordable food increased. Policy agencies, scholars and community groups embraced this concept to bring attention to environmental impacts on population health. The early references to “food desert” in governmental documents and scholarly works, the emphasis was on availability (or, lack) of healthy and affordable food (Cummins and Macintyre 2002). However, the increased need to measure and quantify food access drifted the attention away from access to healthy food and reduced it to a mere proximity to supermarkets. Despite recent development in research paradigms in assessing food environment, the predominant perception is that is a community lacks access to a national chain supermarket, it is “deserted.” This perception still runs strong among public health and governmental studies (Lytle and Sokol 2017).

AW 2: Low-income and minority neighborhoods are typically “food swamps”, or places saturated with energy-dense and low-nutrition food stores

Low-income and minority communities have access to more junk foods than healthy foods. Scholars describe unhealthy food environments as a “food swamp”, or places that are saturated with unhealthy food outlets and limited presence of healthy food retails (Ver Ploeg et al. 2015). Public health studies often operationalize “food swamps” by categorizing food retail into healthy and unhealthy outlets, measure the density, the ratio, and its relation to people’s health outcomes (Franco et al. 2008, Larson et al. 2009). These studies suggest temptation and exposure to “fried chicken” – or, unhealthy food-
higher for the low-income and minority residents as they live in an environment where there are more fast-food chains, take-outs, corner and convenience stores than there are healthy foods or “fresh apples” (Kwate 2008). Researchers point to targeted marketing, segregation and discrimination, low cost of processed foods, and demand for affordable foods to explain the concentration of fast-food chains and convenient stores in communities of color (Williams et al. 2012, Kwate 2008).

The rigid and dichotomous categorization of food retailers (healthy vs. unhealthy) cannot account for nuances in communities’ food environment. There might be other types of retailers that are not entirely healthy nor unhealthy. However, the previously validated tools used to audit stores and their healthfulness might not be able to do the justice in conveying the degree to which other retailers can contribute to healthy eating. This is especially important when evaluating the healthfulness of retailers that carry cultural foods, as the existing tools are not designed to accommodate for various and different types of foods that ethnic food businesses may offer.

**AW 3: Small Businesses have a minimal role in healthy food provision**

Small businesses have a small and inadequate stock of fresh produce and healthy food options. Studies indicate that small businesses play an important role in food exposure especially for the low-income individuals (D’Angelo et al. 2011). However, these studies have demonstrated that small stores have a limited stock of healthy foods (Laska et al. 2010), offer lower-quality fresh produce (Andreyeva et al. 2008) and sell them at a higher cost (Hendrickson et al. 2006). Besides, other studies have demonstrated a correlation between the space dedicated to fresh produce and sale of fruits and vegetables (Caspi et al. 2016). Thus, scholars and policy makers cast doubt on the potential of small stores to make a meaningful contribution to food security of residents (Short et al. 2007). Studies have attributed cost, infrastructure and lack of customer demand as the reason for unavailability of healthy foods at small stores (O’Malley et al. 2013).

**AW 4: Immigrant-owned small businesses have a high rate of failure and their contribution in community and economic development is minimal**

Immigrants have a higher rate of business formation than their US-born counterparts (Kauffman Foundation 2016). Many scholars point to this fact as an indication for the significant role of immigrant entrepreneurship and their contribution to the economy. However, other scholars argue that a higher rate of business formation does not necessarily translate into a successful business (Fairlie 2012). New businesses often face a range of challenges on their first few years that can ultimately push them into closure. Research shows that immigrants move into and out of business ownership at a much higher rate than non-immigrants (Fairlie and Robb 2010). These studies explain that the rate of business closure is higher for minority-owned small businesses as they may lack wealth, negotiation power, a business plan, good credit, face discrimination and/or do not have access to loans and other incentives that could help them to survive their first few years (Åstebro and Bernhardt 2003).

Ironically, funding agencies use the same arguments (e.g. lack of credit, business plan, etc.) as evidence for the high risk of lending money to minority-owned businesses, further limiting their access to financial capital. As research has showed, access to
financial capital or personal wealth are the major predictor for the success of new small businesses (Bates and Robb 2013). In other words, the same challenges that lead minority-owned businesses to face closure prevent them from securing loans, and a lack of financial support predicts their failure, ultimately forcing them to closure. In the absence of support from formal financial institutions, alternative financial institutions, credit unions, ethnic banks and/or local government small business grants have been addressing this gap.

This argument mainly derives from the way that economic development professionals and lending institutions define success and failure. Too often than not, policy makers and funding agencies evaluate the success of small businesses using traditional economic development measures used to evaluate success of large-scale investment and projects (Servon 1997). For example, quantitative measures such as jobs created, revenue generated, and tax paid are some of the major criteria to gauge whether or not investment in a particular business is worth the risks. Thus, there is no surprise that using such criteria, small-businesses fall short in offering a convincing argument for their true worth. Most small businesses have an employee size from 1-10, and their revenue and tax paid are not comparable with large-scale companies. Quantitative evaluation of small business development cannot capture other roles of these businesses in community building, workforce development, and providing a path for upward mobility that can be better evaluated using qualitative methods. In other words, the current evaluation system does not account for “nonmonetized wealth” generated by small businesses that includes increasing choices, opportunities, quality of life or self-esteem (Servon 1997, Shaffer et al. 2006).

THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT OF UPPER DARBY: AN OVERVIEW

Food Environment of Downtown Upper Darby: a historical perspective

The changes in food environment of downtown Upper Darby mirrors the revitalization trajectory of the township. As Chapter 2 showed, the downtown – where most of business activities are located – received a new life with the arrival of new immigrants. In early 21st century, when the newcomers were adjusting to their new lives, the downtown food environment had the lowest number of food establishments with 150 businesses. As more immigrants settled down in the community and opened businesses, the downtown experienced a sudden growth in the total number of food establishments; food businesses in the downtown grew by 25 percent from 2003 to 2006. See Figure 3.1. However, many food establishments went out of businesses during the Great Recession. In fact, the only time that the township experienced a major loss of its food retails since the turning of the century was from 2007 to 2011, when economic recession affected all cities and communities across the US. Since then and with the growth of food businesses, the township has been able to regain and surpassed the numbers of lost retails. With recent rise in the number of establishments, the township is on the way to reach its highest numbers of food retails in 2013 with 206 businesses.
Figure 3.1 Rise and fall of food retail, eating and dining establishments 2003-2018

The Current Food Environment of Downtown Upper Darby

The food environment in downtown Upper Darby is dense. The downtown makes up about 33 percent of all land area in Upper Darby, is home to 45 percent of the total population, but it has 57 percent of all the food retail and services in the township. Figure 3.2 presents the spatial concentration of food retails across the township. There is a total of 180 food businesses in this area, of which four types of businesses have the largest share (78%) of the food stores in this area: full-service restaurants, limited-service restaurants, grocery stores and convenience stores. Table 3.3 shows how the composition of the downtown food businesses compares to that of the township. Downtown Upper Darby has more than 70 percent of all the supermarkets, grocery stores and discount departmental stores, and is home to all the fish and seafood markets, caterers, and meat markets are located within the downtown.

Not only the food environment of downtown is dense, but also it is diverse. In just one block in the downtown, there is at least one full-service restaurant that represents the cultural foods of the residents. On the same block as H-Mart, 11 restaurants serve ethnic foods. Sa Bai offers Thai and Laos cuisines. A few feet next to Sa Bai is the well-known Little Saigon, a Vietnamese restaurant that has been in the community for more than two decades. Next to it stand Fanta and Kings and Queen, two West African restaurants. Right around the corner from Fanta is Inka Wall, a Peruvian restaurant. Sabor Latino sits next door and serves Pan-Latin foods and cuisines. Along the 69th street, local and regional shoppers can find multiple Western and ethnic limited-service restaurants such as Pizza House, New Delhi and Desi China Hut – an Indian-Chinese take-out, America’s Best Wings, and Maroosh Halal Cuisines.

Downtown Upper Darby is not only a place for those who want to dine out or pick up food. It is also a shopping area for the resident’s daily needs including their groceries. Downtown Upper Darby is home to 21 supermarkets and grocery stores, including both national chain and ethnic food markets. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth analysis of the
roles of these small-scale grocery stores in the township. Figure 3.3. shows how grocery stores and supermarkets are concentrated in the downtown.

The business establishments are not the only food resources in Upper Darby. Upper Darby residents also procure food from various non-retail food resources. Day cares, nursing houses, schools, religious institutions, community-based organizations, food pantries and community gardens play an important role in providing access to food, especially for those who may have limited financial and physical ability to purchase their food. The community residents benefit from two Sikh temples around the township, where a free meal is served to all the visitors, without distinction of religion, caste, gender, economic status or ethnicity. Of other community food resources is the Multicultural Community Family Services (MCFS) which is an immigrant-founded and run non-profit that offers a range of services mainly to the immigrant community in Upper Darby. The organization also impacts the access of residents to food through two main services (a) it functions as a drop-off and distribution center for Philabundance, the largest hunger relief organization in Philadelphia (b) it provides home care services where the aids assist the elderly in their food shopping, registering for governmental food assistance programs, providing (either looking or through catering) them with their cultural food and dishes. Church-based food pantries and a community garden at the edge of the township are of other non-business resources where one may access food. The community garden, in particular, has a close relationship with the MCFS as the main gardener, a Korean elderly, brings foods and harvest to the Elderly Circle, a program run by the MCFS to provide a support group for the senior immigrants who live by themselves.

Table 3. Share of the Downtown from the Township Food Retail and Eating Establishments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAICS categories</th>
<th>Township (count)</th>
<th>Downtown (count)</th>
<th>Share of the downtown of the township businesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fish &amp; Seafood Markets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caterers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat market</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supermarket and grocery stores</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>80.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other General Merchandise Stores</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Places Alcoholic Beverages</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack &amp; Nonalcoholic Beverage Bars</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience Stores</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited-Service Restaurants</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>55.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Service Restaurants</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>54.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food (Health) Supplement Stores</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit &amp; Vegetable Markets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REVISITING ACCEPTED WISDOMS

AW 1 revisited: Supermarkets are equally distributed in downtown Upper Darby and the rest of the township

Downtown Upper Darby does not have a shortage of national chain supermarkets. As noted earlier, Downtown Upper Darby has 57 percent of all food businesses. An equal distribution of food retails across the township means that downtown Upper Darby should be home to 57 percent of the township’s food retails of all kinds. As Table 3.4 shows, downtown Upper Darby has a higher concentration of supermarkets and grocery stores compared to the township at large. Even after separating grocery stores from supermarkets, downtown Upper Darby still has an almost proportional access to supermarkets. For downtown Upper Darby to have a proportional concentration of supermarkets, the area should be home to 5 supermarkets; downtown Upper Darby has four.

The existing supermarkets at downtown Upper Darby are a combination of national chain supermarkets (Fresh Grocer and ACME), an ethnic supermarket (H-Mart) and a discount supermarket chain (Save-a-Lot). The supermarkets are located within a close distance from one another (1 to 1.5 miles), however, the demographic profile of predominate shoppers at each store differs significantly. To be sure, all four supermarkets manage to attract a relatively diverse clientele, which reflects the composition of the township’s population at large.

Foreign-borns and African Americans frequent Fresh Grocer and H-Mart as they are located in areas with large concentration of foreign-born and African-American populations. Both supermarkets are part of the downtown shopping district. H-Mart is located along a commercial street, surrounded by food, services and other small businesses, near a regional transportation hub, and within a walkable neighborhood. In other words, the experience of shopping at this suburban supermarket is similar to shopping at an urban market including barriers to taking shopping carts to your car and difficulty finding off-street parking. While Fresh Grocer is only three blocks away from H-Mart, its structure and location resemble a typical suburban shopping experience; the supermarket is located in a commercial plaza, next to other chain shops and with a large parking lot.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Gasoline Stations</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>33.33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacies &amp; Drug Stores</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>56.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.2 Spatial distribution of all food retails and services in Upper Darby

Foreign Born Population (%)

0 - 5
5 - 9
9 - 15
15 - 30
30 - 55

Food Retail and Services

Upper Darby PA
PA

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Social Explorer
Author
Figure 3.3 Concentration of supermarkets and grocery stores in downtown Upper Darby
ACME and Save-a-Lot, on the other hand, are located within the more residential part of the township and further away from the core of commercial activities. ACME is located on the border of two neighborhoods with predominantly white and African-American residents; however, majority of the shoppers as well as the staff are white. Save-a-Lot is located in a predominately African-American neighborhood, in a commercial plaza and next to a middle school. The demographic composition of the staff and manager at Save-a-Lot reflects that of the surrounding neighborhood. Both ACME and Save-a-Lot resembles a classic suburban shopping styles where there are located along with a few other businesses, all facing an open-space large parking lot.

Table 3. 4 Concentration of the Food Retail and Eating Establishments in the Downtown: Expectation vs. Realities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAICS categories</th>
<th>Reality</th>
<th>Expectation (57% of the businesses)</th>
<th>Difference in percentage</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-Service Restaurants</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>-2.41</td>
<td>&lt; 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supermarket and grocery stores</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>&gt; 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited-Service Restaurants</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>~even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience Stores</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>-6.11</td>
<td>&lt; 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Places Alcoholic Beverages</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>~even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack &amp; N onalcoholic Beverage Bars</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>~even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other General Merchandise Stores</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>~even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacies &amp; Drug Stores</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>-2.45</td>
<td>&lt; 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish &amp; Seafood Markets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>~even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caterers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>~even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Gasoline Stations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>~even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food (Health) Supplement Stores</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>~even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meat market</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>~even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit &amp; Vegetable Markets</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>~even</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reference USA and Author

Note: If the existing food establishments are distributed proportionally around the township, the downtown should have 57 percent of businesses in each type of food retail. To understand if the downtown has a disproportionately higher concentration (or lack of) a particular food retail, the difference between the existing and expected numbers of the food retail in all categories is calculated. The comparison between the reality and expected numbers of businesses reveals that three types of food businesses – full-service restaurants, convenience stores, and pharmacies – have a lower concentration in the downtown compared to what is expected from a proportional distribution.
AW 2 revisited: Most of the “fresh apples” are located in the downtown Upper Darby

There are variety of stores in downtown Upper Darby that provide access to healthy foods. These stores come in all shapes and forms, from a full-service ethnic grocery store to a small produce market. Almost all of the grocery stores, fruit, vegetable, fish and seafood markets in the township are located in this area; of all the 18 grocery stores in the township, 17 of them are located in the downtown. Despite their size, all of these stores carry food products that enable the shoppers to prepare a meal including fresh produce, dry goods, beans, grains, fish and spices. What makes the presence of these stores more significant is the fact that they exist in contrast to how the literature describes the food environment of low-income and minority neighborhoods, where there is an easier access to “fried chicken” than “fresh apples.”

This description does not hold true in the diverse food environment of downtown Upper Darby. According to the predominant assumptions, the downtown Upper Darby should have a high concentration of convenience stores and limited-service restaurants, as two types of food businesses that exemplify inexpensive access to unhealthy food. However, neither limited-service restaurants nor convenience stores are disproportionately concentrated in this area. As Table 3.4 shows, limited-service restaurants (e.g. fast-food chains, take-outs) are proportionally distributed in the downtown Upper Darby and the rest of the township, while the downtown has even a smaller share of all the convenience stores compared to that of the township at large. In other words, the temptation for “unhealthy” foods in downtown Upper Darby where majority of minority households with lower incomes live does not differ significantly from the rest of the township where most of the higher-income white residents reside.

AW 3 revisited: Small food retail plays a significant role in food provision

The USDA classifies grocery stores in a way that limits our ability to fully understand the role of small stores in food provision. The USDA Food Atlas defines low access to food as being away from supermarkets, supercenters or large grocery stores. Based on the USDA criteria, food businesses are counted as supermarket/large grocery store “if they reported at least $2 million in annual sales and contained all the major food departments found in a traditional supermarket, including fresh meat and poultry, dairy, dry and packaged foods, and frozen foods.” While the grocery stores in this area do provide access to most of the aforementioned food groups, they do not pass as a supermarket nor a large grocery store since their annual sale is well below 2 million dollars. As Table 3.5 shows, the average annual sales of the existing grocery stores in Upper Darby ranges from 684,500-775,000 dollars with individual stores having a sale as low as $260,000. This is not surprising, as grocery stores are much smaller in size compared to supermarkets and departmental stores; the smaller the food stock, the smaller is the annual sale.

Immigrant entrepreneurs own and run most of these small-scale food stores in downtown Upper Darby; of the 17 grocery stores in the downtown, 15 of them are run by foreign-born individuals. The stores may be small in size, but they carry sufficient food products to enable the shoppers to cook/prepare foods. For example, an Indian grocery store owner
carried 27 varieties of fresh produce and dedicated 1/3 of his 1,499 Sf store to fresh produce. Similarly, a Vietnamese store owner offered 40 types of fruits, vegetables and herbs in her 1,499 Sf store. Their products are not limited only to fresh produce; these stores also offer a wide range of ingredients often found in the cuisines of various ethnic groups living in the township. Table 3.5 provides a brief profile for the existing grocery stores in Downtown Upper Darby per ethnic group.

Table 3.5 Brief Profile of Ethnic Grocery Stores in Downtown Upper Darby

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Total Sale</th>
<th>Average sale per retail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian and Bengali</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Full-service grocery stores with a wide range of fresh produce, dairy, dry, packaged and frozen foods. Bengali grocery stores also carry meat and poultry products. It holds true for some of the Indian grocery stores, but not all.</td>
<td>$7,810,000</td>
<td>$710,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Full-service grocery stores with a wide range of dry, packaged and frozen foods. African stores often carry a wide range of dry and frozen fish. Fresh produce is available, but not in a high quantity and quality. One of the grocery stores mainly carries traditional spices.</td>
<td>$2,594,000</td>
<td>$684,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Full-service grocery store with a wide range of fresh produce, dairy, dry, frozen and packaged foods. This store also has a butchery incorporated inside the store that provides access to a wide range of fresh poultry and meat as well as frozen fish.</td>
<td>$778,000</td>
<td>$778,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Full-service grocery store with a wide range of fresh produce, dairy, dry, and packaged foods. The store does not carry meat products. However, there is a catering section incorporated in the businesses where fast Mexican foods and bites are offered.</td>
<td>$778,000</td>
<td>$778,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reference USA and Author

The landscape of grocery stores in the downtown reflects the diversity of the population living in this area. As Chapter 2 showed, Indians, Vietnamese, Bangladeshis and Liberians are the four largest groups of immigrants in the township. Each ethnic group has established food stores that meet their demands for their cultural food products that may not be easily accessible or available at the mainstream markets. While the existing supermarkets – such as H-Mart and Fresh Grocer- have made efforts to diversify their food stock, they are not able to fully meet the demand of this hyper-diverse community. In this way, the ethnic grocery stores address the supply gap that supermarkets are unable to fill.
Indian Grocery Stores

The Indian and Bengali grocery stores meet the demand of the large south Asian population residing in Millbourne and Upper Darby. While many of the food products and ingredients are shared between these two groups of immigrants, there are still distinct differences between the grocery stores that mainly serve Indians, Bengali or Pakistani customers. Provision of meat and poultry products is the main feature that distinguishes the Indian grocery stores, which are mainly geared toward a vegetarian diet, from the others. In addition to the different food stock, loyalty to the shopkeepers and the accessibility by foot are the other elements that could explain the large numbers of grocery stores in this area. For example, one of the Indian storeowner recently sold his business to a Pakistani entrepreneur and moved a few blocks away to open a larger store. While the new Pakistani owner has kept the same business name and for the most part carries similar products, the loyal customers of the previous owner still prefer to shop from his store – even if that means commuting longer and travelling further. In other words, the large numbers of south Asian grocery stores helped the residents to choose the food stores that better fit their demand.

African Grocery Stores

African immigrants do not have the variety of choices that southeast Asian residents do in Upper Darby. There are only 2 African grocery stores and one spice shop in this area for the 3275 African immigrants and refugees who live in Upper Darby. Upper Darby is not the major shopping destination for most of the African residents, especially for those who have a better mobility and access to a private vehicle. The earlier formation of an African enclave in West and Southwest of Philadelphia may explain the lack of African businesses in Upper Darby. Woodland Ave, located in Southwest Philadelphia, is the mecca for African food and products. In the area known as “Little Africa” or “Diaspora Village” in the Southwest Philadelphia, there are numerous stores that sell West African foods and cuisines. The neighborhood has been traditionally the primary destinations for the African immigrants and refugees – mainly Liberians - who settled in Philadelphia. As the result, not only there is a wide range of grocery stores and cultural products available at this neighborhood, but there are other community organizations and institutions – such as churches- that still attract many of the African immigrants to this place. To these residents, Woodland Ave is a place where they can combine many different trips into one, seeing friends and family, attending church services, and purchasing food.

Southeast Asian Grocery Stores

H-Mart, the Korean chain supermarket, provides a range of food items that are common in East and Southeast Asian cuisines. Nonetheless, there is one small Vietnamese store that carries a varied selection of fresh produce, meat and poultry, as well as dry goods such as rice, noodles and flours. While the storeowners are Vietnamese, the food stock is appealing to the diverse residents from south Asian customers to African residents. The small store is essential in providing access to fresh produce, especially since many Vietnamese residents may be doing their larger grocery shopping either at H-Mart or other Asian supermarkets in Philadelphia. For example, a Vietnamese resident mentioned visit the Vietnamese supermarket on Washington Avenue in Philadelphia for his major shopping trips where he shops for a few weeks’ worth of food. He, then, relies on the
small Vietnamese store in Upper Darby to purchase perishable items such as fresh and vegetables that cannot be stored for such a long period of time.

**Mexican Grocery Stores**

Similar to the Asian and African groceries, the number of Mexican grocery stores are not reflective of the Latino and Caribbean population living in this area. There is one Mexican-owned grocery store in the downtown that provides access to a wide range of fresh produce, herbs, beans, and dry goods that are common in the diet of Latin American population. The Mexican grocery is distinct in its function as it also contains a catering section with a few tables and chairs where customers can grab a quick Mexican bite. Many ethnic grocery stores incorporate a catering section as part of their business to increase their profits and/or to promote their business; those who come for grocery shopping may end buying some food and those who visit to purchase food may end up buying a few grocery items. The incorporated food service in the grocery is especially important to Latino single men and/or workers who rely on these inexpensive and quick foods as a main part of their diet. During the multiple site visits to the Mexican grocery stores, there were a constant flow of Latino men coming to the store to eat than those who were visiting to shop grocery.

**Specialty Food Stores**

There are three different specialty food markets in Downtown Upper Darby that provide access to Halal meat, fish and seafood, and fresh produce. The Halal-meat market mainly serves the Muslim community – particularly those from Bangladesh and Pakistan. The fish and seafood markets largely serve the African community. The fresh produce market provides fruits and vegetables that meet the diverse demand of the Upper Darby residents, including Africans, Latinx, and Asians (including Chinese, Korean, Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani). The fish and meat markets provide products that are not available at the general supermarkets. For example, the fish store carries and imports products that are particular to West African diets and may not be available at chain supermarkets including H-Mart.

**AW 4 revisited: Immigrant-run businesses successfully stabilized the community**

Immigrant food businesses helped to stabilize the community in two major ways (1) immigrant food businesses took over historically vacant parcels¹, thus, reducing the vacancy rate (2) the constant business and ownership transfer limited the number of vacant properties and provided consistent access to foods and jobs. The establishment, maintenance and rotation of immigrant food businesses in Upper Darby refute the Accepted Wisdom that immigrant-run service businesses have a minimal role in community and economic development. In fact, these stores were fundamental not only in reducing and limiting the number of vacant properties, but also in stimulating growth and providing a consistent access to jobs and services. See Figure 3.4 for a schematic presentation of changes in the business environment.

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¹ Since the historical businesses data is only available since 2003, all parcels that have been vacant for more than 4 years are considered “historically” vacant.
Immigrant entrepreneurs have opened food businesses in downtown Upper Darby and have been successful in sustaining them. Of the 37 businesses that have stayed in business since 2003, 20 of them provided ethnic cuisine and dishes. Most of the immigrant businesses that stayed open were full-service restaurants. The persistency of immigrant food businesses contradicts the assumption about immigrant small businesses as unsuccessful and short-lived. To be sure, there were ethnic food businesses that had a life span of 1-3 years and once closed were never replaced by another store. However, the number of unsuccessful businesses were half of those that have stayed in businesses for over a decade.

Immigrant food businesses were also influential in revitalizing the community by opening the closed storefronts. Their impacts, however, were beyond a mere physical revitalization. Since 2003, 47 businesses have taken over a vacant property; 22 of them offered ethnic cuisines and food products and the remaining were a combination of chain stores (e.g. Subway, Wawa, Dollar General) and non-ethnic small businesses. This data supports the idea that the influx of immigrant populations – as well as working-class African Americans – gave a new life to the community. The growth of these businesses, in fact, was a signal to other (external) investors that downtown Upper Darby is on the rise and has a potential for growth, evident from the increasing numbers of chain and departmental stores. Community economic development scholars may raise concerns about the true value of corporate-led development in low-income and minority neighborhoods. Nonetheless, having access to businesses that are the staple of American suburban commercial landscape may be important to Upper Darby residents and their quality of life.

Opening a business on a vacant parcel was not the only way that immigrant food businesses revitalized the community. In many examples, immigrant entrepreneurs and businesses were essential in sustaining commercial activities of the township. There are variety of ways that business and ownership transfer helped to stabilize the community. The most common type of transfer was a business transfer, where another business opened up on the same commercial parcel imminently or shortly after the former business had closed. Ownership transfer is also another type of transfer where multiple storeowners took over the business over the years. In total, business and ownership transfer saved 14 commercial parcels from going vacant from 2003 to 2018. In some cases, there were 1 to 10-year gap between a time that a business had closed to the time that an ethnic food business opened up on the same location. All of the 14 stores have continued to operate in 2018, and most were grocery and specialty stores.
Establishment, sustainment and rotation of small businesses played a significant role in the service-based economy of the township by maintaining jobs and paying taxes. Food businesses in the downtown employed 1,797 workers in 2018, of which 279 worked at an ethnic food business. Downton food businesses, which are often small-scale and immigrant-run, also contributed to the township tax base. The 2017-2018 annual sale for the ethnic food businesses in the downtown amounted to $34,226,000, or 17 percent of the total sale of all the downtown food businesses. What the ethnic food businesses made in one year is a considerable gain compared to the overall sale of large-scale businesses in this area; the supermarkets and departmental stores were responsible for 25 percent of the total sale of food businesses in the downtown. In addition, the total contribution of immigrant-run businesses could potentially be larger than 17 percent; the 17 percent only pertains to food businesses that offer cultural food products and does not include immigrant-run/own stores that offer Western foods such as various take-outs or convenient stores.
Table 3. 6 Employees and Annual Sale of Food Retail Establishments in Downtown Upper Darby

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAICS categories (modified)</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total employees</th>
<th>Total sale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-Service Restaurants</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>35,460,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited-Service Restaurants</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>18,891,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>12,996,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience Stores</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>37,262,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Places</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholic Beverages</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4,059,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack &amp; Nonalcoholic Beverage Bars</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4,692,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other General Merchandise Stores</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6,313,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>53,118,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacies &amp; Drug Stores</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>21,356,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish &amp; Seafood Markets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>758,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caterers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>808,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Gasoline Stations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,590,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food (Health) Supplement Stores</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>265,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat market</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>519,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit &amp; Vegetable Markets</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>778,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,797</td>
<td>2.02E+08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2018 Reference USA

CONCLUSION

Upper Darby food environment differed in more than one way from the predominant assumptions about the food environment of low-income and minority neighborhoods. First and foremost, downtown Upper Darby was not “deserted.” In fact, downtown Upper Darby offered a variety of national and ethnic chain supermarkets to the township’s diverse residents. The working class and minority residents of Upper Darby were able to support the business of not one but four supermarkets, debunking the assumption that low-income residents do not have the purchasing power necessary to support the business of big box stores.

It was not only for the presence of supermarkets that the downtown had sufficient access to food. In fact, the downtown Upper Darby still would not be a “food desert” even if no supermarket exists in the community. The downtown Upper Darby was home to a wide range of “healthy” food stores that provided access to a range of foods often available at supermarkets; these stores provided access to fish, meat and poultry, produce and other
food items necessary to prepare a meal. The small ethnic food markets of Upper Darby were essential in providing foods for the residents. The functions of small stores, however, differed for different social groups. For example, the numerous Indian grocery stores were able to meet the grocery demand of the Indian residents who live in the nearby enclave of Millbourne. For other groups such as Vietnamese and Africans, the small stores may not be their primary food stores as other locations have a larger and a more concentrated selection of their cultural foods. For Mexicans, the small grocery store served a different purpose; it was a useful stop for the Mexican men who wanted a quick and inexpensive bite before or after their work hours.

The immigrant-run small business not only played a significant role in food provision, but also helped to revitalize and stabilize the community. As the literature suggested, some of the immigrant food businesses did close after a few years of operation. However, there were plenty of other immigrant food businesses that managed to serve the community for a long term. In addition, the fast rate of immigrant food business development meant that the townships’ access to food stayed intact. The high turn-over of businesses and transfer of ownership helped the community to sustain its food retail and limit commercial vacancy.

REFERENCES


Ver Ploeg, Michele, Lisa Mancino, Jessica E Todd, Dawn Marie Clay, and Benjamin Scharadin. 2015. Where Do Americans Usually Shop for Food and how Do They Travel to Get There?: Initial Findings from the National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.
CHAPTER 4: ACTORS AND CO-ACTORS OF THE DIVERSE FOOD ENVIRONMENT

Immigrant grocery stores are a common, physically visible, feature of multiethnic communities. In fact, businesses are one of the most visible ways through which immigrants claim their space and identity in their new communities. Their true value, however, is invisible to researchers and policy makers focused on creating healthy food environments, building communities from the “inside out”, or pursuing community wellbeing. Immigrant food stores are moving communities toward the same goals that local governments and scholars hope to achieve, though their efforts are not always visible or appreciated. One reason for this omission may be the disjointed views scholars and policy makers have toward the roles of immigrant-run food stores in communities. As chapter 1 showed, scholars across disciplines often focus only on one aspect of immigrant food businesses, if at all.

Many ethnic studies and economic development researchers view immigrant grocery stores as places where newcomers offer cultural food products out of necessity to financially survive in a new country (Chrysostome and Arcand 2009). While this belief holds true for many immigrant entrepreneurs who run small service businesses, it reduces the perceived value of immigrant run businesses. It assumes immigrants only choose to operate a business when they are unable to join the general job market. This general depiction of immigrant service-based businesses hinders policy makers and researchers from fully understanding the multiple ways that immigrant food businesses contribute to community and economic development.

Sociologist and cultural studies scholars bring attention to the role of immigrant food businesses in promoting inter-ethnic relationships, especially in an era where “cosmopolitan consumption” has become a normality of diverse communities. These scholars are skeptical of the potential of cosmopolitan consumption because of its potential to reinforce racial and ethnic boundaries. While these arguments add another layer of understanding of the roles of immigrant food businesses, they may not be easily and readily adaptable to the context of American cities. These studies mainly stem from European countries with different immigration histories, racial and ethnic relationships, and city structures. The decline of great American cities toward the end of 20th century, their resurgence in early 21st century, return of immigration post 1965, and growth of multiethnic suburbs in the metro regions are unique to the American patterns of development.

Public health scholars consider the role of ethnic food markets in food provision to be minimal. The predominant methodologies to assess healthfulness of food environments often disregard the contribution of small and immigrant-run food businesses to food security. These studies mainly discount the value of immigrant food businesses as they compare them to that of supermarkets; with small food stock, unavailability, poor quality or high cost of fresh produce, they assume these stores cannot have a predominate role in food provision. However, this description is more akin to the environment of corner and convenience stores and does not accurately capture what ethnic food markets provide for their customers.
Moreover, most public health studies come short in understanding what these stores mean to the customers and what role they play in their food access. In other words, most studies assumed for customers that these stores do not have a meaningful role in their food provision. Lack of understanding of distinct foodways of different social groups may explain the use of generalized tools and benchmarks based on which scholars assess the value of ethnic food markets.

Contrary to these assumptions, immigrant food businesses play multifaceted roles in their community where their presence and offerings are intertwined with the economic, cultural, social, and food environment of cities. Consequently, these community actors impact the life and wellbeing of residents in more than one way. Immigrant food businesses are more than an economic survival tool for immigrants with limited skills or resources; they are an asset for the community. As chapter 3 showed, immigrant food businesses were fundamental in occupying vacant properties and limit vacancy of the township. While they physically (re)shape their community, they also provide a “school of entrepreneurism” where they train and help the next generation of entrepreneurs to start their own business. Not only do immigrant food businesses provide access to foods and cultural products, but they do so in a manner that encourages and shapes relationships among and between customers and shopkeepers. In this sense, customers are the co-actors of a diverse food environment; their loyalty to and preference for shopping at this store, their presence at these spaces, and the relationships they build with the shopkeepers make them an active player in shaping the food environment.

This chapter looks inward at the inside of immigrant-run food stores to understand what immigrant food entrepreneurs (actors) offer to their community, and how their customers (co-actors) perceive them. The remainder of this chapter contributes to the literature by demonstrating the multifaceted roles of immigrant grocery stores in multi-ethnic communities. Immigrant grocery stores diversify the food environment, offer spaces for social interaction, and provide benefits for community and economic development at large. Downtown Upper Darby, as shown in Chapter 3, has a diverse set of food retailers including but not limited to ethnic grocery stores, supermarkets, produce markets, and fish markets. This section investigates how ethnic grocery stores shape the food environment and people’s food-related experiences in a diverse community. I address this question in two sections. First, the chapter provides an overview of the positionality of the selected case studies in the community to offer a perspective of the people who run them, their food stock, and their role in the community. Most of the information in this section relies on in-person, semi-structured interviews with the storeowners, store audits and field observations. Second, the chapter presents the result of surveys from customers at the selected case studies to offer an understanding of customers and their shopping practices at diverse food markets in Upper Darby. I synthesize the survey results to describe who shops at these stores, what their shopping patterns look like, and why they choose to shop at the selected case study locations.

METHODS
This chapter uses an overall qualitative research design that includes a comparative case study of three ethnic grocery stores, one ethnic supermarket, and one national chain supermarket.
**Case study selection:** The sample case studies include three full-service ethnic grocery stores owned by immigrant entrepreneurs, one ethnic supermarket, and one national chain supermarket. In this study, I define immigrant entrepreneur as an individual born outside of the US who is self-employed by owning a business in the United States. By full-service ethnic grocery store, I mean a grocery store that stocks and sells a wide array of foods that are attractive to an ethnic clientele, including fresh food and dry goods. I used a multi-step process to select case studies. First, I compiled a database on the downtown Upper Darby’s food establishments obtained from Reference USA. The database provides a listing of all businesses by their Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes. From the listing, I selected one subgroup of food stores from the major industry group assigned by Reference USA: Grocery Stores (SIC code 5411). The Grocery Store industry group includes supermarkets, grocery stores, corner stores, convenience stores, meat and fish markets, fruit and vegetable markets, candy nut and confectionary stores, retail bakeries and miscellaneous food stores. To limit the sample to businesses that (may) provide food for meal preparation, I excluded candy nut and confectionary stores, retail bakeries and miscellaneous food stores. The resulting list yielded 35 food stores in the downtown Upper Darby.

Second, I conducted field observations to identify the ethnic food market owned and operated by immigrant entrepreneurs. The goal for the final sample (including both grocery stores and supermarkets) was to represent the diversity of the Upper Darby food environment, which mirrors its population diversity. As chapter 2 showed, India, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Liberia and Jamaica make up the top four places of origin in the township. The field observation, similarly, showed that existing ethnic grocery stores in the downtown include 11 Indian and Bengali grocery stores, three African stores, and one Vietnamese grocery store.

Lastly, I conducted a survey of residents (discussed in chapter 5) to understand the food stores that the foreign-born population visit frequently. I sought guidance from community members on the selection of case studies and facilitating communication with the potential storeowners. Based on the screening, survey responses, and the community members’ recommendations, I selected one full-service Indian, one African and Caribbean and one Vietnamese grocery store. In addition, the survey responses identified the supermarkets which resident frequent the most. The supermarket sample includes H-Mart, the only ethnic supermarket, and Fresh Grocer, a national chain supermarket.

**Interviews with the storeowners:** I conducted semi-structured interviews with the owners of three ethnic grocery stores, and managers of two supermarkets. See Appendix A for the interview instrument. Interview questions concerned the experience of storeowners as entrepreneurs, the operating procedures of their business, their food stock, their customers, their motivations for offering fresh produce, the challenges associated with owning and running their own business, and their relationship with the community. I piloted the interview instrument in a published study of two Middle-Eastern grocers in Buffalo, NY. After making adjustment to the instrument for the purpose of this study, I conducted another pilot interview for reliability with two Indian and Pakistani storeowners. Pretesting demonstrated challenges in conducting lengthy interviews with storeowners in their place of business. Moreover, the responses highlighted vague questions and terms in regard to the relationship of the storeowners with different
communities (e.g. immigrant community, business community, the township at large). As a result, I shortened the instrument and dropped the broad and vague questions to reduce confusion among the interviewees.

The interviews were conducted on-site at the case study stores in the summer of 2018. Interviews lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. The interviewees received an informational sheet with elements of consent and gave verbal agreement to participate in the study. Most interviews were conducted in English. However, a translator assisted with conducting and translating the interview with the Vietnamese storeowner. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The data collected from the interviews were coded and compared in NVivo to find consistencies and differences. I assigned pseudonyms to all the interviewees to protect their identity. I chose the fictional names based on the most common names in Indian, Vietnamese, Korean and American cultures. All data collection procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board of University of Pennsylvania.

*Survey of customers:* I conducted an in-person paper survey of a convenient sample of customers at the case study stores. The survey completion took approximately 5 to 10 minutes. The survey had two main sections (1) background information (2) shopping questions in relation to the case study store. The shopping questions included three close-ended questions about frequency of participants’ visit to the case study store, their modes of transportation, and average money spent during each visit to the store. The two open-ended questions concerned the participants’ reasons for shopping at the case study store and the food items they often buy from the store. In a few occasions when the participants could not recall what they frequently bought from the store, they were guided to list the food items they had purchased from the store on that day. The participants received $5 in compensation for their time and help. While I used a convenient sample, I collected all responses during a similar time and day of a week; all surveys were collected from 11am-2pm during on Thursday of each week.

Most participants filled out the survey without any help. However, some participants preferred the questions to be read to them. In those occasions, I filled out the paper survey based on the participants’ responses. I provided the interview instruments in eight languages including Punjabi, Bengali, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Korean, Khmer, French, and Arabic. None of the participants needed the Khmer, French or Arabic translation. Bilingual translators (i.e. community members, non-profit workers, and acquaintances) assisted with translating the survey instruments and responses and were received compensated for their time and help. The survey instrument included elements of consent. See Appendix B for the survey instrument. Participants gave verbal consent by filling out the survey.

*Store audit:* To supplement the interviews with storeowners, I documented the food inventory of the case study stores using a store audit tool. I developed the tool based on previously used and validated instruments for assessing in-store food environments. Rather than using an audit tool that checks for a pre-defined list of food products, I conducted a food inventory to document all the food products offered by each store. This was especially important to take account for differences and variances in the food stock of ethnic food stores. The tool is divided in eight sections (1) general store
information such as number of cashiers, SNAP/WIC acceptance, and availability of alcohol/tobacco products. (2) fresh produce (3) dairy products (4) grain products (5) bean and seeds (6) fat and added sugars (7) spices (8) and meat/poultry/fish/egg. I documented the name, quality, price per unit, shelf space, and placement of food products for each food group. If the store carried more than one variety of certain products, I only documented the details for that product and noted the number of varieties available. For example, if a store carried 15 types of apples, I documented the detailed information of the cheapest type of apple available. See Appendix C for the store audit checklist.

LIMITATIONS
This study has several methodological limitations. The cross-sectional surveys with a convenient sample of shoppers are likely skewed by the season and time of the day the data was collected. Stores are more likely to offer a larger selection of fresh produce in summer and may attract more customers. For example, the reasoning for shopping at the store, modes of transportation and food purchased may have been different if the data was collected in winter. In addition, the sample of population available during lunch hours on a weekday does not represent all customers who rely on the case study stores. It is likely that survey responses (from demographic composition to reasonings to visit the stores) would vary if the survey were conducted after work hours and/or over the weekends.

Recruiting both storeowners and participants was another challenge that limited the scope of this study. The initial research design included an interview and study of a Latino grocery store and its customers. Despite approaching the storeowner with a bilingual translator, the Mexican grocery storeowner would not agree to participate in the study. Eventually, I had to drop the Latino grocery store from the analysis and limit the case studies to three ethnic grocery stores. Similarly, many shoppers did not participate in the study as they were in a rush to complete their grocery shopping. In order to have an accurate description of the shoppers at each case study store, I documented the demographic profile of shoppers who disagreed to participate in the study. The information included estimated age, gender, ethnicity and mode of transportation (walking/driving).

The study is also limited in representing the experiences of those who own and run the supermarkets. Despite multiple visits, I was not successful in securing a meeting with the supermarket owners. Instead, I had brief conversations with the store managers. While the store managers were able to share general information about the customers and the food stock, they were not equipped to answer questions about the history of the supermarkets, and experiences of the storeowners.

ETHNIC GROCERY STORES AND SUPERMARKETS: AN OVERVIEW

Indian Grocery Store: A vegetarian oasis
Amrit, a middle-age Indian man, opened the Indian grocery store in 2001. The 1,499 ft² Indian Grocery Store (IGS) is located along a commercial strip in the northern edge of
the township. This strip is one of the major streets that connects the west and east of Philadelphia together and ends at a regional transportation hub, a few feet away from the store. The commercial strip, especially as it approaches the transportation hub, is home to ethnic restaurants, grocery stores and businesses. The businesses surrounding the IGS include but not limited to a Bengali grocery store, an Indian meat and grocery store, a Vietnamese grocery store, an Ecuadorian restaurant, and a Korean restaurant. The diversity of the businesses reflects the diversity of the population residing in this area; more than half of the population (55%) in the census tract where the store is located are foreign born, compared to 22 percent in the township overall. The majority of foreign-born population (78%) comes from various regions in Asia, with those from Bangladesh and India being the dominant countries of origins.

Despite its small size, the IGS offers a wide range of food products including dairy, fresh produce, grains, beans and nuts, frozen Indian foods, condiments, spices, sweets, and pastries. In other words, the store provides access to all food categories but one: meat, poultry and fish. Amrit, who is a member of Sikh community, explained that he provides food items that support a vegetarian diet: “a lot of people are vegetarians and they use [beans] instead of meat...we have all kinds of beans to get the protein...most Indian people are vegetarians and they use the beans daily...we do not carry meat some stores carry meat but we do not.” In addition, Amrit is well aware that the small size of his store limits his ability to provide a wider selection of food products. However, he uses this limitation as an advantage to offer only basic and essential products that can be used daily. “This is like basic food which people use daily...this is not a big store...it is compact size [sic] so we only carry what people need” he shared when asked how he makes decision on what to carry at his store.

While beans, grains and various types of flours occupy a significant portion of the store, it is the relatively large selection of fruits and vegetables that attracts the customers to this store. In fact, the translation of the store’s name in English is “Fruit and Vegetable Market”, a common general name used in Punjabi for food markets. The store carries 28 variety of fruits and vegetables, with a good mix of specialty vegetables used in Indian diet (e.g. Okra), East-Asian diet (e.g. Daikon) or used commonly across different groups (e.g. tomatoes, onions, peppers). Amrit shared that “produce and fruit combined with rice” are his best-selling items, emphasizing again that they are for “your everyday need”. He picks up his fresh produce directly from the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market in bulk and divides them in smaller bags, so one does not need to purchase large quantity of fruits or vegetables. Providing a healthy selection of food items is not accidental and a mere product of adhering to a cultural diet; it is intentional. Amrit stocks a wide variety of therapeutic spices used in traditional medicine. He explained “Indian spices are very healthy I mean like turmeric, cumin, even we have [turmeric] juices...everybody liked it and it is for controlling diabetes...these are good for immune system...and turmeric juice is good for a lot of things it heals stuff it is for health of the body.” In other words, the IGS not only functions as a food market but also as a traditional drugstore (or, an “Attrari”). Before modern medical knowledge and pharmacies had become prevalent, Asian and African countries relied on traditional medicine consists of spices and herbs to treat diseases. The practice of traditional medicine and its associated spaces such as Attaris are still commonplace in those regions. The benefit of these therapeutic spices,
however, is not limited to those familiar with the tradition. “Everybody buys this… I have African people, American people… when they find it cures certain things they come and get it again.” He added to clarify that Indians are not the only population demanding and pursuing these products.

The Philadelphia Sikh Society (or, Gurdwara), located on the other side of the street and across the store, plays a significant role in helping the IGS to survive in two major ways: one, Gurdwara supports the store through a business contract. Gurdwara has a kitchen that runs from morning to night and feeds whoever that walks into the doors of the temple. To supply this kitchen, Gurdwara has a business contract with three local Indian grocery stores in Upper Darby as a way to support the business of the community members; the IGS is one of these stores. Second, Gurdwara provides a consistent and reliable source of customers for the store. Most of the regular shoppers who visit the store are the Gurdwara Sunday visitors, of which many live outside of Upper Darby. Combining shopping and religious trips appear to be a common practice for some immigrant groups such as Africans, which I will return to it in the following sections.

While the IGS is small, it provides access to ingredients essential to prepare a vegetarian dish. Being located in Millbourne – a majority Indian community- and across Gurdwara mean that Babi has a constant and loyal base of customers. While Indian customers are the most frequent shoppers, other social groups also find the store to meet their need - whether they are in search of medical herbs, spices or a few vegetables. In addition, the support from Gurdwara has helped the business to survive competition between small businesses and stayed put in the community until today.
Figure 4.1 The Indian Grocery Store
Vietnamese Grocery Store: efficiently compact

Mai and Linh, two Vietnamese women, are the new owners of the Vietnamese Grocery Store (VGS). The initial owner established the business 1985. The store is located a block away from the IGS and on the same commercial strip. While the IGS is surrounded by several South-Central Asian grocery stores, the VGS is the only South-East Asian food market in this area. Strong competition from other Asian supermarkets may explain the scarcity of Vietnamese grocery stores in this area. There are multiple Vietnamese commercial plazas in Philadelphia that not only include Vietnamese-oriented supermarkets but also offer access to other cultural products. In addition, H-Mart, a Korean supermarket located a few blocks away from the VGS, offers a diverse food stock that meets the food demand of this population.

The inside and outside of the store present two different, if not contradictory, environments. The store is hardly noticeable to a stranger’s eyes from outside. The windows are covered with a fence from corner to corner. It is impossible to see through the fences as many advertisements and flyers block the view. This seemingly unwelcoming picture is in contrast with the vibrant environment of the inside of the store. The inside of the store resembles an environment akin to that of a public food market. Customers are chatting with one another or with Mai. Some people take their time and linger between the aisles to survey what the store has available. Others are staying in line, waiting and observing the exchange of conversation – mainly in Vietnamese- between the cashier and the customer at the check-out. In between, the female Hispanic worker moves between the customers to organize the shelves or add new products as the day goes by. All of these happen in a compact environment. This shopping environment might be pleasing to those who are used to shop at busy and vibrant food markets. However, for those individuals who would like to know where exactly to look for the item they need, stay in well-defined check-out lines, and/or have minimal interaction with the cashier or customers, this place might not be the ideal place to shop.

To be sure, there is an order to the way Mai and Linh display their products in this limited space. They managed to fit 5 aisles into 1,499 ft$^2$ store area. The total store area is twice as large as the IGS, but half of the store is allocated to a butchery where workers clean, cut and pack meat and poultry products. Each aisle is dedicated to a specific product: noodles and flours; beans, grains and nuts; sauces, condiments and spices; sweets and pastries; and produce. In other way, while the store may look chaotic on the first sight, there is an order in the food items placement which becomes clearer with each visit. Vertical and horizontal refrigerators surround the store and contain produce, fresh and frozen meat and poultry, frozen fish, and snack such as ice creams and imported beverages. The store has a significantly large selection of imported snacks, especially compared to the IGS. Mai and Linh have placed the snack (including prepared lunch boxes and sandwiches) and produce in front of the entrance which are easily accessible to the customers. The store also provides a small selection of typical American snacks (e.g. chips, Cheetos) but they are located at the back of the store.

Mai carries a large and diverse sets of fresh produce. Two vertical refrigerators contain the specialty vegetables which are bagged in small portions. Most of the products are not labeled assuming those who are seeking the produce are familiar with the types and the names. There are at least 40 types of vegetables available at the store. Mai shared that she
relies on both the Philadelphia Produce Wholesale Market and local farmers to pick up the vegetables she needs. She relies on local farmers to complement the produce available at the Wholesale Market. When prompted to share why she uses local farmers she explained “because there is no organic [at the Wholesale Market] …organic is the best for health…we cannot find the organic ones from the wholesale…they may have it but we have our own particular vegetables…they are unique.” In other words, she seeks locally grown produce not only because they complement her Asian-oriented specialty vegetables but also because she is seeking to provide “healthy” products.

While most of the food stock at the store is geared toward East-Asian and South-Central Asian diets, Mai and Linh carry other types of food products that meet the demand of their diverse customer base. For example, they carry six varieties of Plantain, coconuts, and green bananas used in African and Caribbean diets. The same diversification of produce is evident in other food categories; one can find African-oriented flours, Indian-oriented spices and rice, and Hispanic-oriented beans and sauces all in the same store. This diverse set of food stock also attracts and caters to the diverse Upper Darby residents. Some customers are aware of the diversity of products and that is their main pull to shop at this store. For instance, an African-American woman married to an African immigrant shared that she shopped here to find the “cultural fruits” for her children. Other customers, such as an Indian man who picked up cucumbers and onions, seem to be indifferent about the dominant or available cultural foods at the store. The Indian customer shared he shops at multiple stores, including Indian grocery stores, to buy what he needs. Today, he simply needed a few (common) vegetables.

Despite having strong competitors, the VGS appears to have a good business; the store had a constant flow of customers during the field visit (on a weekday around noon) in a way that the cashier had to ask for someone to fill in for her so she can take a break. Mai herself responded with a sign of confusion and disbelief to the fact that many customers choose her store over H-Mart. The popularity of the store may rest in its longevity. The VGS is the oldest food establishment among the case studies in this project. During its three-decade existence, the business has seen only three different sets of owners. Mai and her partner – two Vietnamese women- purchased the business from the previous owner who ran the business for almost two decades. The previous owner is still around and works as a cashier at the store. The current storeowners, who do not have any prior business experience, used to work in the same store for the previous owner to learn about the nitty gritty of running their own business. Mai shared that she chose to take over this business “because people know it…they had the system already.” This is also supported by many statements from the customers who shared that they, or their parents, have shopped at this store for decades; they know the (old) storeowner and that is why they come back. Lengthy conversations between Mai and customers show that she has been successful in maintaining and building off the already established relationships with the loyal customers.

Provision of a diverse set of food items is not the only way that the VGS serves Upper Darby. The store also provides and secures jobs for the community. There are currently 5 workers who assist Mai. Two of the workers used to work for the past owner and have continued to stay with the business. This is perhaps for the continuous involvement of the previous owner with the business. With the ownership transfer, Mai and Linh were able
to keep the jobs, and the income source, for the two workers intact. The other three workers, all with Hispanic heritage, have been seeking jobs, sought the advertisements and applied, and have been with the business for the past two years. In addition, the VGS provides opportunities for workforce development and training of new entrepreneurs. It was due to training with the previous owner that the two Vietnamese women were able to shorten their pathway to business ownership and run their own business within two years. Last but not least, the VGS has been contributing to tax revenue in this community, kept this parcel occupied, and provided persistent and continuous access to food for the residents since 1980s.

*Figure 4. 2 The Vietnamese Grocery Store*
African-Caribbean Grocery Store, “American” Style

The African-Caribbean Grocery Store (ACGS) is located at the southern edge of the downtown Upper Darby. The downtown area in Upper Darby becomes more residential as one moves away from the northern edge. The street where the ACGS is located is technically a commercial street, but the business activities are located sparsely throughout the strip. This might partially derive from the street design where the train rail divides the street to two separate sections that are only connected through walkways at intersections. Thus, the residential areas on the other side of the rails do not have a convenient access to the businesses and commercial activities on the aforementioned street. The commercial activities around the ACGS include auto-related shops such as auto-repair, car wash, and car rental; community services such as a laundromat and a pharmacy; and food businesses such as a deli, an Indian grocery store, an African grocery store, and a Chinese take-out. One block to the south of the ACGS is the township middle-school. Adjacent to the middle-school, there is a commercial plaza – typical to that of suburban commercial plazas- where businesses such as Save-a-Lot and Rite-Aid are located.

John and Uijin started this business as a last resort to overcome financial hardship. “2008 is when everything kinda fell…I lost my job and I was unemployed for about a year…we were about to lose our house” said John, the white storeowner. John owns this grocery store in partnership with his Korean wife, Uijin. John did not have any prior business experience; he used to be a software engineer until he lost his job in 2008. Uijin, on the other hand, has always been an entrepreneur and helped the household to bypass the recession-era financial hardship by opening the store. He shared that “…my wife said that I am an entrepreneur I’ve been doing my own thing…she had a variety store and dollar store and she did nails and then she decided to do insurance and she still does that but she crafted this portion…she is an architect by training…[this place] used to be a garage she laid the tiles herself.” John is referring to the remodeling they performed to merge three commercial addresses into one giant store. Today, two-third of the store runs as a grocery and their son runs a mobile and software-related business in the remaining one-third.

There are four aisles at the store where every single product is labeled manually with its name, quantity and price. John and Uijin carry a large selection of rice (right at the front of the entrance), beans (mainly provided by Goya), variety of oils and canned fish and tuna, African spices and sauces, grains and flours common in the African diet, and large quantity of beverages. The store has large refrigerators that cover an entire wall and are filled with various types of frozen fish. In addition, the store carries salted and smoked fish in a separate storage area. The back end of the store is where the fresh produce is presented. John believes that his efforts in keeping the business clean has paid off as customers started to realize the difference of his store compared to others and has shared with him that “you have a clean business your prices are reasonable and you treat us right” he followed up on that by sharing that “ I always pan out the money…I don’t like to give the people clump change back…do onto other people as you would have them do onto you” which alludes to a common conflict among immigrant businesses and their non-immigrant clientele.

The placement, quantity and quality of fruits and vegetables show that fresh produce may not be the most crucial part of this business. There are only 16 variety of vegetables and fruits available, with some in fair to poor quality, and all located at the back of the store.
in a small fridge. The lack and poor quality of fresh produce is surprising as John shared how important fresh vegetables are in the African and Caribbean diets “they like to mix their meat with vegetables...for Africans they like the hot peppers and they like to have it fresh and they like to have onions or scallions and yellow and red onions...we have to carry plum tomatoes for cooking and we have cabbage to mix with different dishes for Caribbean...they are gonna mix with their soup and meal...sometimes Americans don’t like to have vegetable with their meats but these cultures tend to try mix and match and try to blend it together so they have a little better healthier meal.” While he emphasizes on the popularity of certain items in these cultures, it appears that none of his produce are the best-selling items among the African customers. They mainly purchase rice, curry, Kani (a fish-based sauce), smoked fish and salted pig tails.

Lack of proper facility and lack of consistent demand are the barriers that have made John and Uijin adjust their food stock as the years go by. “Error and trial” have been their process of learning how to run a food market. John gave an example on how lack of access to a refrigerator made them to come up with their own solution to store green bananas “there were a lot of shifting and deciding where to put things like green bananas...we went through a lot of errors and trials with that...cause we do not have a cooler at the temperature of like 55-60 degrees which is ideal to keep them green longer cause as it gets hotter they ripe...they want it hard for putting in the Caribbean soup...so we got to the point that we put it in the box and covered them up cause the light changes them faster than any heat and we got a cool spot we kept them in between so it has been working pretty well since then but it was a learning process.” He added that learning to purchase from Produce Junction instead of the Philadelphia Produce Wholesale Market was another lesson to be learned “we could not sell [fresh produce] in bulk my wife is the smartest she says what if I go to the produce junction you can buy a bag of whatever as we need it and keep it in the fridge and fresh so that way instead of dropping things like a box...we just get a bag…”

His fish section on the other hand is expansive. John shares his error and trial of learning what types of fish the population likes, where to get them and how to store and sell them. For example, he used to pick up fresh fish from NYC with his personal van and having one full time employee to serve and clean it at the store “...you have to put [the fish] in ice and that takes one person to stay there all day showing the fish and if they want it you gotta scale it right?...That takes one person pretty much all day and if you don’t sell all of it the skin turns brown and it starts to smell and you are like this is a losing proposition for me.” He learned the process to be too costly and not financially beneficial. Today, he mainly offers frozen, salted and smoked fish, as they are some of the most sought-after products among Africans.

John understands the oddity of his store; American-Korean entrepreneurs running African-Caribbean grocery store. “my wife said we gotta be competitive we can’t do American store...people need groceries no matter what...people need to eat but if we go after Americans there is Save-a-Lot and we are not gonna make it” John explained. The store is surrounded by census tracts with largest share of African population; the three immediate census tracts are home to 45 percent of the African population and 30 percent of all Americas (Latin, Central and South) individuals in the township. Nonetheless, attracting the African clientele has not been easy as “Africans like to buy from
Africans…because you can talk the same language” John added. However, he believes his store offers something that other African (and, ethnic) grocery stores are not able to do so “When you go to an African store it isn’t really the most pleasant experience from what people tell me I haven’t been around but I was told stuff is on the floor stuff don’t get claimed or lots of smell…so we said we are gonna do an American style African-Caribbean store…we are gonna keep things clean, keep things on the shelves and so it is more American like but it is African and Caribbean.” To the owner, cleanliness and tidiness are “American” features which help to distinguish his store from other competitors in the area including the next door African-run grocery store.

John’s Korean in-laws are of other reasons that John and Uijin decided to offer African and Caribbean foods. Uijin’s siblings have a Caribbean grocery store and assisted them in starting up the business with sharing information about popular food products as well as a list of suppliers. The help, however, was mutual. John shared that Uijin not only helped her family to migrate to the states but also took a mortgage off their house to help them start their grocery store when they first arrived in the states. John expressed that while there are not as many Caribbean or Latin-American customers visiting the store anymore, their existence was essential during the first few years to sustain the business. He explained that “at first it was a lot of Ecuadorians and …different people from south America when we started out even though it was an African and Caribbean store we often catered to Mexicans and Porto Ricans cause there were a lot of them around working so that helped us to have a little bit more variety at the beginning as they moved out we had to phase that portion out but they helped keep us alive.”

The ACGS would have not existed if it had not been for Uijin’s entrepreneurial spirit and her siblings’ help and guidance. In other words, while the American and Korean owners of the store do not offer their own ethnic food products, other ethnic groups (i.e. African and Caribbean) can access their cultural foods for the contribution of immigrant entrepreneurs. John and Uijin have found a niche in the ethnic market that is unmet by the general supermarkets. After years of trying and learning-by-doing, they have finally realized what products to offer in order to maximize their profit, reduce their waste and loss, and stay away from competition with larger “American” supermarkets.
Figure 4. The African Grocery Store
Korean Supermarket, H-Mart

H-Mart, a Korean-owned supermarket, opened in 2006 in the heart of the downtown, along one of the main commercial areas adjacent to a regional transition hub. Prior to 2006, there were only a few small Asian businesses found in this area. Today, H-Mart and its surrounding businesses have created a vibrant shopping destination that caters to local residents and attracts shoppers and visitors from out of the township. The H-Mart building consists of two floors. The upper floor consists of a food court and non-food stores such as beauty salons, and stores that sell furniture and household items. An escalator connects the second floor to the first floor where the supermarket offers access to a variety of food products. The combination of these two floors creates an experience – beyond a mere food shopping - which helps the complex to benefit from serving a diverse (in terms of age, race, ethnicity and income) group of visitors.

On the first floor, customers walk into a large produce section upon their arrival. The produce section is similar to “American” supermarkets in terms of organization and size. The produce section offers more than 80 types of fruits, vegetables and herbs and a wide variety of single items. For example, H-Mart carries more than 17 types of apples, 12 types of potatoes, 13 types of peppers, and 8 types of cabbages to name a few. The large selection and variety of products meets the demand of the diverse clientele in Upper Darby. H-Mart is largely known as a Korean chain supermarket. In Upper Darby, however, H-Mart carries products for South Asian, Southeast Asian, Latin American and African customers, mirroring the demographic diversity of the Upper Darby residents. From staple products such onions, tomatoes, oranges to special ones such as Rambutan², Batata³ or Yu Choy⁴, H-Mart has something for everyone. In fact, judging by the labels and types of fresh produce, H-Mart does not look like a strictly Korean shop; it resembles a place where specialty products from all over the world sit next to one another, with no single ethnicity dominating the other.

The fresh produce section connects to the frozen and fresh seafood section. H-Mart, similar to other Asian supermarkets, carries fresh seafood. While “American” supermarkets also allocate a section to seafood products, H-Mart and other Asian supermarkets often carry live fish and crabs in water tanks. The water tanks, live fish, and the ability to choose your own seafood adds to the experience of shopping, attracting and tempting customers to purchase seafood products. The seafood section caters to customers who consume fish as large part of their diet and enjoy having access to fresh products. For example, observation shows that there are many different groups of customers such as Africans, Indians and Hispanic shoppers who linger in front of the seafood sections. In addition to fresh seafood, there are more than five refrigerators that carry over 70 varieties of frozen fish and other seafood products. These products are often cheaper compared to fresh seafood and appeal to those who with a limited budget.

The organization of dry goods and other products in H-Mart is similar to that of a typical supermarket. There are nine organized aisles, each dedicated to particular products. However, H-Mart in Upper Darby is smaller than a typical supermarket. As a result, H-

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² A Southeast Asian fruit  
³ A white sweet potato native to South and Central America  
⁴ A Chinese vegetable
Mart carries limited non-food items (e.g., pet food, hygiene products) with most space allocated to food products. Most of the dry food items are common ingredients in the diet of Asian customers. For example, two aisles offer variety of (Korean, Chinese and Japanese) noodles, rice and dried beans, another carries seaweed and dried mushrooms, and another aisle carries different types of (Japanese and Korean) pastes and pickled products. H-Mart also has one separate aisle for Hispanic foods, stocked with variety of Goya products. In addition to Goya products, H-Mart carries a variety of herbs and spices used in Latin American cuisines. However, since the store area is small, these products are scattered around the market and in dead places such as walkways between sections, next to cashiers and so forth.

On the way out of the market and next to the stacks of rice, there is an escalator to the second floor. Similar to other H-Mart stores, this branch makes room for food services and non-food businesses. The food court is small compared to other H-Mart branches. There are three vendors offering Korean, Chinese-Korean and Japanese foods. H-Mart stores typically have a bakery that offers products such as bubble teas and French-styles pastries. Next to the bakery, there is a beauty shop with a variety of skin care products. With the rise of popularity of Korean skin care regimes in recent years, this store and many others in H-Mart branches attract and serve customers of all backgrounds. The advertisements and flyers on the wall, however, are written exclusively for Korean-speaking customers. In front of the escalator, there are a variety of Korean flyers, handwritten and typed, announcing jobs, housing, and products for sale.

H-Mart is both a regional shopping hub for East Asian Philadelphians and a shopping and community center for Upper Darby residents. Diverse produce and seafood offerings attract many from the region. On weekends, H-Mart offers free food samples to advertise their products to unfamiliar products. Because of this, customers are more likely to try specialty products from other cultures. By providing space for, and demonstrating, different cultural products, H-Mart blends cultural borders.

American Supermarket: Fresh Grocer
Fresh Grocer resembles many characteristics of American (or, national chain) supermarkets. This supermarket is located at a commercial plaza along one of the major streets in the township. The plaza is home to a few businesses such as a car rental service, T-Mobile, Popeye Chicken and Carib Grill. Similar to typical suburban commercial areas, this plaza also provide access to a large parking area. Across the street from the supermarket, there exists a few businesses. Most of them are auto-related services such as gas stations, auto sales, and a car wash. However, there are two ethnic food stores on the same street that cater to the diverse immigrant population. One is a two-flour Indian supermarket, and the other is a Korean-run small fresh produce market that offers produce for African, Asian and Hispanic residents. Nonetheless, most of the population (62%) who lives in this area are Black/African Americans.

It has been only two years since Fresh Grocer opened on this plaza. Before that, a Pathmark served the community for more than a decade. After a two-year gap, Fresh Grocer took over the facility and opened its doors to the residents. While it is not clear why Pathmark left the community, it appears that Pathmark closed many of its branches in NJ and PA during the same period of time (2013-2015). Within the past two years,
Fresh Grocer has become one of the major shopping destinations for those individuals who live in and around this neighborhood. Many respondents mentioned Fresh Grocer as their main shopping destinations. To others, this supermarket is one of their multiple food stores. For example, observation shows that most of the individuals who shop at the smaller ethnic food stores across the street stop by Fresh Grocer to complete their grocery shopping.

The supermarket has line of food products similar to many other American supermarkets. Near the entrance are the wine and liquor selection, food court and fresh produce. Large refrigerators surrounding the market carry various types of meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, and beverages. There are 11 aisles, each carries specific types of products from cosmetic and personal hygiene products to baby food, diapers and gift cards. In fact, there are four aisles that carry non-food items. There is only one aisle that carries ethnic food products. The label shows that the aisle is a place where one can access “Mexican, can meat, prepared international cuisines, Goya.” Most of the products at this aisle are provided by Goya and adhere to a Latin American/Mexican diet. Other “international” food products are rare.

ETHNIC GROCERY STORES AND SUPERMARKETS: WHOM DO THEY SERVE AND HOW?
Ethnic food markets do not operate in isolation. A common factor in the existence and survival of Amrit’s, Mai’s and Linh’s, John’s and Uijin’s business is their customers. Without loyal customers who still return to the community to shop at the Vietnamese grocery store, Mai and Linh would have not been able to successfully kick off and maintain their business. Similarly, Latin American and African customers were essential in helping John and Uijin to survive their first few years of business and make profits. These customers still choose to shop at these markets when they also have options to shop at national and ethnic chain supermarkets.

As earlier chapters showed, the literature has revealed information about people who shop at supermarkets, or those who rely solely on corner and convenient stores, or people who prefer a more “local” and direct sale options such as farmers’ markets or Community-Supported-Agricultures (CSA). However, our understanding of the people who prefer and rely on ethnic food market for their food provision is limited. The limited understanding of the people who choose to shop at small grocery stores not only obscure the roles that such stores play in food provision but also ignore the agency of residents (often low-income and minority population) and their preferences. The remaining of this chapter focuses on the shoppers of ethnic food stores and supermarkets, or the co-actors who play an equally important role in shaping the food environment of diverse communities.

To provide a richer understanding of the ways that ethnic grocery stores and supermarkets shape people’s food experiences, I group the survey results in two categories, ethnic grocery stores and supermarkets. Doing so enables me to organize and compare the survey results for those who shop at ethnic grocery stores versus those who choose to shop at supermarkets. This section organizes this comparison by pursing three main questions: 1. Who are the shoppers? 2. How do they shop? 3. Why they choose to shop at the selected stores?
Characteristics of the sample population

The sample of supermarket customers is 1.6 times larger than the ethnic grocery shoppers (n= 56 vs. 35). The samples have a similar composition of female and male shoppers; most of the participants were women in both samples. The largest group of shoppers at the ethnic grocery stores (65 years old and more) is older than that of the supermarket shoppers (44-54 years old). This should be noted that both samples are more likely to underrepresent the working-age population, as all the surveys were collected on weekdays from 12-3 PM. The supermarket sample has a more racially diverse population but has a lower rate of foreign-born population. The average household size is larger for the ethnic grocery store shoppers (4.1) compared to the supermarket customers (3.1). This aligns with the nature of migrant populations that are often families with children. See Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Characteristics of the Survey Participants

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<th>Supermarkets (%)</th>
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<td>Black/African-American</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska native</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-born</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household size</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live within the same zip code</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vehicle ownership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of shopping</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once a month</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times a month</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times a week</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode(s) of transportation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving my own vehicle</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving a rental car</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a ride</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td></td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cab/Uber/Lyft</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average money spent during each visit</td>
<td>Less than 20 dollars</td>
<td>20-50 dollars</td>
<td>50-100 dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of two or more modes</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who are the shoppers?

The ethnic grocery stores serve both co-ethnic and non-ethnic customers, with the foreign-born population shaping the majority of their clientele. The sample of shoppers at the grocery stores is 94% foreign-born, compared to 46% of the supermarket shoppers. Nonetheless, the storeowners mentioned to have a diverse customer base in terms of race and ethnicity. The IGS owner has “…a lot of Indian, Pakistani, Bengali neighbors…even oriental cause we use similar stuff…Spanish customers we have [sic]….even American people.” Similarly, the shoppers at the VGS come from US, Haiti, India, Bangladesh, China, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The VGS owner complemented this list by adding “Hispanic and Lao” people as other groups who shop at her store. The American customers of the ethnic grocery stores are mainly African Americans; the sample of ethnic grocery shoppers has 0% white population. On the other hand, the supermarkets – especially Fresh Grocer- has a large Black/African-American (41%) and considerable white (16%) clientele.

The ethnic grocery stores do not attract the white residents, but the ethnic supermarket does. Ten percent of the shoppers at H-Mart are white. The white shoppers at H-Mart live within the same zip code and in a walking distance to the market. This implies that the ethnic supermarket is able to attract and serve the white customers if and when it is located within a convenient distance. This holds true for the non-East-Asian customers as well, such as those from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines and Sierra Leone, who all live within a walking distance to the store. This is in contrast to the co-ethnic customers where all of them travel from outside of the township (as far as New Jersey) or other neighborhoods to shop at H-Mart. In addition, proximity to the market familiarizes non-ethnic groups with the market and its food stock. For example, some of the Fresh Grocer shoppers have not heard about H-Mart, did not know where it is or what it sells. This case shows that when convenience and exposure are combined, it is likely that ethnic supermarkets can attract and serve non-ethnic, especially white, populations.

The ethnic grocery stores function as the “neighborhood” food destinations. Most of the ethnic grocery shoppers (74%) live within the same zip code as that of the grocery stores. This is distinct from the 35 percent of the supermarket shoppers who live within the same zip code as Fresh Grocer or H-Mart. The “basic and everyday” food stock of the ethnic grocery stores serves the need of the immediate population. The interviews with the storeowners support this statement. The IGS owner called his store a “neighborhood shop” while the VGS owner believes the nearby concentrated Vietnamese community supports her business. In contrast, supermarkets – with large and wide selection of foods – encourage longer trips as they can fulfill people’s weekly and monthly food (and, non-
food) supplies. It is unlikely for one to travel miles to purchase a few essential items for their daily need, but it is a common shopping practice to purchase weeks’ worth of food at a supermarket. In this case, customers can justify travelling long distances to shop at a supermarket.

Customers may also combine multiple shopping trips while visiting supermarkets. This is especially true for H-Mart visitors where the food-court and the neighboring Korean restaurants and services have created an entertainment hub. For example, six percent of the H-Mart sample were visiting the market on the day of survey to spend time and dine at the food court with family and friends. H-Mart customers – especially Chinese and South Korean- travel long distances to access a wide selection of cultural foods at a reasonable price; seventy-four percent of the H-Mart customers come from other neighborhoods or outside of the township. This number is much smaller for the shoppers at Fresh Grocer where half of the shoppers come from the same zip code. Nonetheless, combining multiple trips is not exclusive to H-Mart. A Fresh Grocer customer shared that she stops by the Grill House on the same commercial plaza, takes a walk down the 69th street and visits the nearby produce market whenever she shops at Fresh Grocer.

Ethnic grocery stores are a convenient destination for elderly immigrants without a vehicle. The sample of shoppers at the ethnic grocery stores consists of 20 percent elderly immigrants who do not have access to a vehicle, compared to 9 percent of the supermarket shoppers. Not having access to a vehicle, or inability to drive due to age, seems to be the determinant factor in reliant of the elderly immigrants for shopping at ethnic grocery stores. Some elderly immigrants completely rely on their children to do the grocery shopping; many residents have turned down the survey indicating that they are not aware where their children shop for food. However, this is not the experience for all the elderly immigrants. Some of them live without their children and/or do not have any children to take care of food shopping. To these immigrants, without assistance or a vehicle, neighborhood grocery stores are the only viable option to purchase food. None of the respondents indicated speaking the same language as one of the reasons to shop at these stores, however, observations and speaking with storeowners show that being able to communicate with shopkeepers in their native language might be another reason for the reliant of the elderly immigrants on the ethnic grocery stores.

**How do they shop?**

The customers visit the ethnic grocery stores for similar types of food categories available at the supermarket. The survey shows that customers at the ethnic grocery stores and the supermarkets purchase four food categories more than the others: fresh produce, grains, seafood and meat. See Table 4.2. Scholars question the ability of the small grocery stores in meaningfully contributing to food security and providing access to healthy foods due to their small size, limited food stock and difficulties carrying fresh produce. Meanwhile, the ethnic grocery stores in Upper Darby are offering “healthy” food products such as fresh produce and seafood to both co-ethnic and non-ethnic population. Not surprisingly, those shopping at the ethnic grocery stores look for cultural or specialty products (e.g. cassava leaves, egg roll wrappers) that may not be available at the supermarkets or are available at a higher cost. Nonetheless, all ethnic grocery stores carry commonly used products along with their line of specialty food items.
The small and compact size of the ethnic grocery stores may not be a limitation but an advantage. The small storage and display area mean that the storeowners have to only carry products that are essentials to their customers and used on a daily basis. None of the shoppers shared to be shopping for household and non-food items, prepared, processed or frozen foods, eggs or alcoholic beverages at the ethnic grocery stores. To be sure, the ethnic grocery stores do provide access to all the aforementioned categories except eggs and alcoholic beverages. However, their selection and price are not comparable with those available at the supermarkets. Similarly, the proportions of the customers who shop for snacks, sweets and beverages (e.g. soda, juices) at the supermarkets are twice the size of those who shop for similar products at the ethnic grocery stores. In short, the supermarkets are a destination for both healthy and junk food while the ethnic grocery stores focus on provision of essential food products.

Table 4. 2 Food Categories that Participants Purchased at the Ethnic Grocery Stores and Supermarkets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Categories</th>
<th>Ethnic Grocery Stores</th>
<th>Supermarkets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh produce</td>
<td>28.07</td>
<td>21.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain</td>
<td>26.32</td>
<td>15.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seafood</td>
<td>12.28</td>
<td>10.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>10.53</td>
<td>13.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacks and sweets</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>7.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts and beans</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condiments and spices</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverages</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>6.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household and non-food items</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared food</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed food</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frozen food</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The customers visit the ethnic grocery store more frequently. The survey shows that 57 percent of the grocery shoppers visit the stores on a weekly basis compare to 48 percent of the supermarket shoppers. See Figure 4.4. Given the fact that ethnic grocery stores are
“neighborhood” shopping destinations, it is not surprising to see that they shop more frequently at these stores. Frequent shopping carries advantages for both the owners and their customers. Frequent shoppers help the business of the ethnic grocery stores in two major ways. One, frequent shoppers contribute to a higher sale. The VGS shared that she carries fresh produce because it is a product that many like and “because of that people come everyday…it attracts customers.” A similar study shows that those who purchase fresh produce from ethnic grocery stores often end up purchasing a few other items, leading to a higher total sale for the business. For a business with low price and small food stock, frequent shoppers are necessary to keep the business alive. Second, frequent shoppers help the business save money by reducing waste. One of the main ACGS owner’s compliant was the amount of produce he used to dispose and referred to the time where he used to have more Hispanic customers, and more demand for produce, who helped the business survive its first few years. In small grocery stores without much storage area and large cooling facilities, a lack of demand leads to disposal of fresh produce and loss of money.

Figure 4.4 Frequency of shopping at the selected case studies in a month

Frequent shopping at ethnic grocery stores can be a healthier option for those with limited financial budget. The ethnic grocery customers shop more frequently but spend less on average compared to the supermarket customers. About 75 percent of the ethnic grocery shoppers spend less than 50 dollars on average during each visit compared to 54 percent of the supermarket shoppers. On average, the ethnic grocery shoppers spend 20 dollars less than the supermarket customers. There is not much in the public health literature on how frequency of shopping impacts one’s diet and/or consumption behavior. Nevertheless, the surveys show that those who spend less than 20 dollars at the ethnic grocery stores (28%) purchased the basis and necessity of their diets. For example, the African customers spend 20 dollars on rice and plantain while Vietnamese customers spend that amount on produce and frozen fish. On the other hand, the 20-dollar spender is a rarity in the sample of supermarket shoppers. The food purchased with less than 50 dollars at the supermarkets is distinctly different for H-Mart and Fresh Grocer shoppers. The Fresh Grocer shoppers spend less than 50 dollars to purchase items such as snacks (e.g. ice-cream, donuts, cookies, chips), frozen food, frozen vegetables, lunch meat, chicken and soda. Less than 50-dollar spenders at H-Mart mainly purchased fruit and vegetables, seafood and rice. It appears that since ethnic grocery stores do not store many
junk foods, they could be healthier food stores for those with limited financial budget compared to supermarkets where there is an abundance of affordable and unhealthy food items.

Shopping frequently can provide more opportunities for face-to-face interaction between storeowners and customers with implication for building community trust and relationships. Frequent interactions enable the owners and customers to maintain a simple, yet consistent, relationship. The consistent interactions have impacted the ethnic grocery businesses and their owners in different ways. For the VGS owner, maintaining a relationship with her customer has brought her a mutual trust which helped both her and her customers to feel safe. She shared that at the beginning of her business she feared for her safety “…but I am no longer worried because most of the customers who come here know me and the community so we have trust.” Similarly, The ACGS owner could recall his loyal customers by name and name of their children. He believes he has been able to gain the trust of the community he serves “…they send the kids often…they trust so much that they send the kids.” In addition, the interaction with his diverse range of customer has helped the ACGS owner to broaden his understanding of certain groups and cultures. “I learned a lot about Caribbean and Africans other than encyclopedia and it is more face to face you get to talk to people you get to see their views” shared the ACSG owner. To the IGS, a persistent presence in the community has created the ability to befriend his customers. He expressed that many of his customers have become his friends since he opened the business 17 years ago. In a suburban community where there may not be as many opportunities for interaction with “others”, these grocery stores have been able to fill the gap and provide spaces for social interaction.

The ethnic grocery stores also provide walking access to food. The percentage of customers who walk to and from the ethnic grocery stores are twice as large as those who walk to/from the supermarkets. The prevalence of walkers at the ethnic grocery stores is not related to (lack of) access to a private vehicle. The survey shows, in fact, that 79% of the customers at the ethnic grocery stores do have a private vehicle. The significantly high rate of vehicle ownership among the ethnic grocery shoppers show that customers walk to and from the stores not because they do not have any other options, but because they choose to. If all those who have a car drove to the ethnic grocery stores, the rate of walkers should have been down to 21 percent. On the other hand, the rate of vehicle ownership among the supermarket customers is lower (59%) but most of them (87%) drive to and from the supermarkets. These supermarkets play an important role in the food access of those without a vehicle; 43 percent of the vehicle-less customers named these markets as their main shopping destination. Those who do not have a vehicle walk or use a combination of modes (e.g. walking and public transportation, walking and a cab) to access the supermarkets. However, they are not able to make frequent shopping trips to these destinations or spend as much, compared to those owning a vehicle, likely due to difficulties carrying the products.

Why do they choose to shop at these stores?

Personal preferences and choices are the ultimate factors determining one’s shopping behavior. The survey of customers highlighted two facts about the Upper Darby food retail: 1. Both ethnic grocery stores and supermarkets serve foreign-born and US-born
populations 2. Both ethnic grocery stores and supermarkets provide access to essential food items for one’s diet. While there are variances in both facts, the community residents – for the most part- have access to both of these food markets. At the end, the ways that individuals make a decision on where to shop can determine the food they can access and consume, and the people and places they get to interact with.

A. Ethnic Grocery Stores

The ability to shop conveniently for cultural foods is the main pull that attracts the customers to the ethnic grocery stores. See Table 4.3. Responses such as “because they have my country food”, “for basic Indian grocery”, “for African food” were common among the ethnic grocery shoppers who explained why they choose to shop at these stores. Similarly, many respondents mentioned the ethnic grocery stores are close to their home and convenient to access. Convenience can have different meanings for different people. In this semi-structured survey, the customers often use “convenience” and “close to my home” together and as a combined reasoning. Thus, I implied that convenience here refers to the ease of access because of proximity of the respondents’ home to the grocery stores. The fact that most of the respondents live within the same zip code and in walking distance to the ethnic grocery stores supports this interpretation.

Table 4.3 Reasonings for which Participants Shopped at the Ethnic Grocery Stores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural food</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming environment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of food</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of food</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Customers also shop at the ethnic grocery stores for their welcoming and friendly environment. The literature on ethnic entrepreneurship and economy emphasizes the role of kinship and support of the co-ethnic community in the success of immigrant businesses. A Cambodian customer shopping at the VGS exemplifies the importance of the co-ethnic support. She shared that she shops at this store because of the “…nice cashier. We know them for a long time. My mom shops here for 30 years [sic].” While a close relationship between the shopkeepers and the co-ethnic customers is evident, the warm and friendly environment of these stores are not exclusive to the members of the co-ethnic community. An African immigrant shopping at the ACGS expressed her fondness of the White-Korean storeowners:” I like the couple, good communication, nice people…they laugh, try to be helpful...they pay attention to customers.” What the African customer points to is a humane experience of food shopping, a quality that might be harder to achieve at general supermarkets. An African-American customer at the VGS
explained this quality vividly:” People shop here because it is personal, she [the shopkeeper] takes her time and is kind…H-Mart is fast in and fast out…people wants to be welcomed, if they come in and are treated poorly they would not come back, especially in these days.”

The ethnic grocery stores can also provide access to quality food products at a lower cost. The respondents did not mention quality or affordability of food as frequently as the other reasons. However, those who shared these reasonings believe that they can purchase “fresh products”, “healthy food”, and “cheaper vegetables” at these stores. These responses challenge the common perception of the inability of small food stores in providing healthy and affordable food. The storeowners in this study manage to procure and offer fresh produce at a lower cost either by working with the local farmers or purchasing smaller quantity from alternative wholesalers such as produce junction. The ethnic grocery stores in Upper Darby position themselves as healthy and affordable neighborhood food markets where the customers, mainly foreign-born and African-American, can access essential food items, frequently and conveniently.

B. Supermarkets

The customers choose the ethnic and American supermarkets for different sets of reasons that have a minimal overlap. See Table 4.4. The H-Mart customers choose to shop at this place mainly for access to cultural food, quality of products, and variety and selection of food. At Fresh Grocer, accessibility, affordability, in-store environment and customer services are the determinant features that pull the customers to shop at this place. The reasons that Fresh Grocer customers shared are similar to those justifications that food and public health scholars use to advocate for the importance of supermarkets in improving food access. This is not surprising as majority of the Fresh Grocer customers are African Americans, similar to the target population of many public health research studying the shopping and consumption patterns of the low-income and minority population. On the other hand, H-Mart customers offer reasonings often absent from the discussion on food access in diverse communities.

Accessibility appears to be the most important factors for the Fresh Grocer shoppers. Most of the respondents indicated to live close to the supermarket. However, one customer shared that “this is the only market around.” This is important for two main reasons: 1. Distance and proximity to supermarkets do matter. The food access literature has evolved to broaden the definition of access beyond a mere physical availability of the stores. Nevertheless, convenience distance to the supermarket still enabled many to use this market as their main shopping destination. 2. Proximity matters most for those without a vehicle. About half of the Fresh Grocer shoppers do not have access to a vehicle yet shop frequently at this place since this is their most convenience (or, the only) option. For the individuals without a convenient mode of transportation, being in a proximity of a supermarket can play a significant role in their food shopping and consumption behavior.

Fresh Grocer is also an ideal place to shop for those on a tight budget. A few of the respondents shared that they choose to shop at Fresh Grocer to take advantage of “good deals” as it allows them to “save money.” This reasoning echoes those who argue that supermarkets are viable food markets for the low-income population to access healthy
food at lower cost. Supermarkets offer products at competitive prices, accept coupons, and have sales and deals. However, discussed in the previous section, healthy foods are not the only products that supermarkets provide at reasonable price; they also have an abundance selection of junk and processed food at much lower costs, always on deals and sales. Nonetheless, for those who seek to purchase healthy foods, or adhere to certain diets, the supermarket can be a viable option. A customer, who is a caregiver to her diabetes husband, shared that she travels from Philadelphia to this location since the differences in tax rates allows her to purchase the food she needs at a lower cost.

The Fresh Grocer customers care about the in-store environment and good customer services at this place. A few respondents use “nice” and “pretty” to describe why they like to shop at this place. Others refer to the friendly behavior of the staff and customers as a reason to prefer this place to other supermarkets. “They always have a smile on their face” said an elderly customer who works at another supermarket in the township (Giant) but prefers to shop at this place for its friendlier staff and customers. In addition, customer services such as delivery and/or free shuttles (for purchases above $100) are of other attractive features of this supermarket.

The food access literature may be on point in understanding why and how supermarkets can provide access to food for the low-income and largely African-American population. However, the assumptions about the functionality of supermarkets come short when applying to ethnic supermarkets. Besides access to cultural food, quality, variety and selection of foods seem to be of main reasons that attracts both ethnic and non-ethnic customers to H-Mart. The diversity and selection of food items at H-Mart fulfill different needs and demands of the customers. For example, the diverse food selection enables a Bengali woman to find her own food “it is convenient…it has all the things we normally need.” For a white shopper, “It is fun to look around because the produce is different.” Different produce selection, in fact, has a practical value and importance for those whose diet relies on that. An African-American customer shared about his experience as a recent vegetarian and the hardship that comes with preparing meals. Shopping at H-Mart has helped this individual to maintain his diet and make it interesting “it helps me to try new recipes.”

Table 4. 4 Reasonings for which Participants Shopped at H-Mart and Fresh Grocer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for shopping at Fresh Grocer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Reasons for shopping at H-Mart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cultural food</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Quality of food</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In store environment and customer services</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Variety of food</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of food</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of food</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION

*Supermarkets are not a substitute for ethnic grocery stores; they provide options and complement one another.* The Upper Darby residents sort the existing food markets – including ethnic grocery stores, ethnic supermarket, and American supermarket – for different reasons. The chapter shows that the ethnic grocery stores function as neighborhood food markets providing convenient access to essentials food products. This is substantially different from the supermarkets that respond to the monthly needs of the residents. The supermarkets also provide access to a wider selection of products including non-food items. This could be ideal for those who prefer to make fewer shopping trips and purchase in bulk. In addition, the humane, more personal and welcoming experience of shopping at the ethnic grocery stores are a few qualities not easily achievable at the supermarkets. Similarly, the combination of customers services, deals and sales offered at the American supermarket makes this place an ideal destination for those who deem to make the most of their food dollars. In other words, the diverse Upper Darby food environment provides options for the residents and enables them to optimize their shopping experience. This picture is far different from the general understanding about the food environment of low-income communities where residents have constrained food choices.

*Ethnic grocery stores are more than a mere “economic survival” tool for immigrants.* Choosing entrepreneurship as an economic option for those with limited class-based resources does explain the experience of some of the storeowners. However, the necessity-based entrepreneurship narrative reduces immigrant businesses to an economic survival tactic and misses the whole spectrum of benefits and opportunities that these businesses offer. This chapter argues that these immigrant businesses play a more critical role in the community by demonstrating a few pathways through which immigrant businesses serve their community: they create a healthier food environment; they shape interethnic relationship; and they contribute to community and economic development.

*Ethnic food stores contribute to health and wellbeing of both foreign-born and native-born residents.* The chapter demonstrates how the ethnic grocery stores contribute to the food access of some of the most vulnerable populations: the elderly immigrants. In addition, the convenient access to the ethnic grocery stores and their nature as neighborhood food markets promote walking among the customers. Moreover, the ethnic grocery stores in this study offer a healthier composition of food items. The provision of healthy food items is both intentional and blossomed out of limitation. The immigrant entrepreneurs need to constrain their food stock to the essential and basic food items which leaves out many unnecessary and processed food products. At the same time, the interview with the storeowners show that they are mindful and active in carrying healthier food products from healthy juice to organic specialty vegetables. As the chapter shows, the customers of such products are not limited to co-ethnic population but include the non-ethnic residents.

*The ethnic food stores are important social nodes in the community.* They create spaces for social interaction in an environment where different groups of population may not have many opportunities to mingle. The findings show how the interactions have led the storeowners to build community trust, make friends and broaden their understanding of different racial/ethnic groups. This is similar to the previous studies where tendency for
“cosmopolitan consumption” created opportunities for interethnic relationships and promoted more tolerance. Not all the non-ethnic customers in this study, however, shop at these places to purchase ethnic or exotic products. Some of the customers shop at these stores despite the ethnicity of the storeowners or the origins of the foods, resembling characteristics of “consuming for convenience” customers. The literature casts doubt on the ability of “consuming for convenience” shoppers in meaningfully forming inter-ethnic relationships. Nevertheless, despite the intention or the meaning associated to the shopping patterns of non-immigrant clientele at the ethnic grocery stores, they still benefit from the presence of such food markets at their community. In other words, the ethnic grocery stores create a healthier food environment regardless of the racial prejudices of some of their customers.

The immigrant food markets contribute to community and economic development.
They provide opportunities for workforce development and sustaining of jobs and income for the immigrant population. The research findings pointed to the ways that these stores helped training new entrepreneurs. Conversations with other immigrant storeowners in Upper Darby yielded similar stories. A Pakistani entrepreneur mentioned that he spent two months in the store he was about to buy to learn about the business from the Indian storeowner before he finally took over the business. The constant passage of information and knowledge benefits not only the immigrant population but the residents and whomever who visit these stores. In addition, these businesses have stayed in the community for a long period of time. The long presence of these community actors generated a perception of safety among the customers as well as the storeowners. Last but not least, the ethnic supermarket was successful in stimulating growth and drawing capital and investment to the area. In short, the ethnic food markets in this area have contributed to community and economic development through providing access to jobs, income, training; creating safer spaces; building community relationship and trust; stimulating business growth; and contributing to the overall local tax base.

This chapter shows how a diverse food environment shapes the shopping patterns and food-related experiences of both immigrant and non-immigrant population. It is important to understand how increasing diversification of suburban food landscape and growth of ethnic food markets shape and impact the people’s food shopping and consumption patterns. Next chapter will focus on this question to provide a detailed picture of the way that residents with different background (foreign-born and US-born) navigate their diverse food environment.

REFERENCES
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Toussaint-Comeau, Maude. 2008. "Do ethnic enclaves and networks promote immigrant self-employment??".


APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Interview with the storeowners

Background

1. **[Business history]** Can you tell me about the history of your business?
   1.a. Can you walk me through your experience opening this store?
       a. Why did you decide to be self-employed?
       b. When did you establish this business?
       c. Why did you choose to have a grocery store?
       d. How did you obtain the necessary information about establishing a business?
          i. Probe: information about licensing and formal procedures
       e. How did you select the site for your store/why did you choose this location?
       f. What was your initial financial capital to start this business?
          i. Probe: personal saving, borrowing from family members, formal and informal loans
       g. What do you like about being self-employed?
   1.b. How do you develop your business?
       a. How many supplies do you have?
          i. Do you know where they are located? (regional; national; international)
          ii. How did you learn about them?
          iii. How did this change over time?
       b. Who are your fresh produce suppliers?
          i. Do you know where they are located? (regional; national; international)
          ii. How did you learn about them?
          iii. How did this change over time?

2. **[Personal history]** Can you tell me a little about yourself?
   a. When did you move to the US?
   b. Where are you from?
   c. Did you arrive with your family members?
   d. What was the first city you moved to upon your arrival?
   e. Do you live in Upper Darby?
      i. If yes, why did you decide to reside here?
      ii. If no, do you live nearby/where do you live?
   f. Were you self-employed before coming to the US?
      i. If yes, what was your business?
   g. Did you have any other businesses in the US before opening this store in Upper Darby?
3. **[Challenges]** What were the challenges you faced when starting up and maintaining your business?

**Food Stock**

1. Can you describe what types of foods and products you provide at your store?
2. Can you describe how your food stock has changed overtime?
3. How do you decide what items to carry and sell in the store?
   a. What factors impact availability and pricing of your products?
4. What are some of your best-selling items?
5. Your store offers a selection of fresh produce. Why did you decide to sell fresh produce?
6. How important is the fresh produce to your business?

**Customers**

7. How would you describe your customers?
   a. Probe: ethnic/race, family/individual, age (young/old), location (e.g. live nearby or far away)
   b. Who are your most frequent customers?
   c. Who else shop at your store?
8. What are your busiest and least busy days and hours of the store in a week?
   a. Can you describe the customers who visit the busiest and the least busy hours of your business?
9. What do your customers usually look for in your store?
10. How much on average your customers spend during each visit?
11. What do you think the main reason is that your customers choose your store to shop?
12. How do you describe your relationship with your customers?
   a. Have you ever befriended any of your customers/visited them outside of the store/met their family members?

**Community and Economic Development**

**[Employment; Indirect business creation]**

13. How many employees do you have?
14. How do you choose your employees?
   a. Probe: prior familiarity; referral; advertisement/flyers
15. Where do your employees live?
16. Have you ever helped members of your community or family to find jobs and/or establish a business? How?
17. Probe: providing information; connecting them to suppliers; providing financial help
18. Do you have any business or personal relationships with other storeowners in this neighborhood?

**[Direct business creation]**
19. What do you envision for your business in the next 5 years?
   a. What are your future business/economic plans?
   b. Have you ever considered expanding your business?
      i. If yes, how would you do that?
      ii. If no, why not?
20. Have you ever considered moving to another location within Upper Darby or surrounding suburbs? If yes, why?

[Neighborhood perception; spillover effect on other businesses]
21. Since you have opened this business, have you noticed any changes in this neighborhood?
   a. Probe: changes in composition of residents; increase/decline of businesses; type of businesses
   b. How do you describe the residential and commercial environments of this neighborhood?
   c. Why do you think new businesses opened up/why do you think businesses closed in this neighborhood?
   d. If they refer to establishment of new businesses, probe with asking details about the types of businesses that have been established.
22. Would you recommend anyone to either reside or open a business in this neighborhood?
   a. If yes, to whom? And why?
   b. If not, why not?
23. Have you ever feared the safety of yourself, your business or your customers?
   a. If yes, can you describe the situation.
   b. What did you do to manage the situation?

[Social relationships; positionality in the community]
24. Who do you share your challenges and/or concerns with about your business or the neighborhood?
   a. If a pressing issue threatens your business, neighborhood, or your community, how would you address that? Who would you refer to?
25. How do you describe your relationship with the local community in Upper Darby?
26. Are you involved with/visit any community organizations in Upper Darby?
   a. What these organizations typically do?
   b. Why do you usually visit these organizations?

Exit question
27. How do you describe Upper Darby food environment?
   a. What do you like about it?
   b. What do you dislike about it?
28. What do you think that immigrant food businesses do for Upper Darby? Is there anything that I have missed?
APPENDIX B. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Survey of customers at the case study stores

A survey about access to food in Upper Darby

This study looks at where people often shop, what they eat, and whether or not they have easy access to their preferred foods. Completing the survey takes about 5 minutes. The study is approved by the University of Pennsylvania. Your participation is voluntary and confidential. Your participation will help us to have a better understanding about the ways that residents shop for foods in a diverse community.

1. Age
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-34
   c. 35-44
   d. 45-54
   e. 55-64
   f. 65 or more

2. Sex
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Prefer not to disclose

3. Race/Ethnicity
   a. Black/African American, not Hispanic
   b. White/Caucasian not Hispanic
   c. Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander
   d. American Indian or Alaska native
   e. Multi-racial
   f. Other (please specify)

4. Do you consider yourself to be Latino/Hispanic?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Don’t know

5. Nationality (Place of Birth):

6. What is your home’s zip code?

7. What is the closest street intersection to your home?

8. How many people live in your household?

9. Do you have a working private vehicle?

10. How often do you shop at H-Mart?
    a. Less than once a month
    b. Once a month
    c. 2-3 times a month
    d. Once a week
    e. 2-3 times a week
    f. Daily

11. How do you typically travel to and from H-Mart?
    a. Public transportation
    b. Driving my own vehicle
    c. Driving a rental car
    d. Getting a ride
    e. Walking
    f. Cab/Uber/Lyft
    g. A combination of two or more modes

12. On average, how much do you spend during each visit to H-Mart?
    a. Less than 20 dollars
    b. Less than 50 dollars
    c. 50-100 dollars
    d. 100-200 dollars
    e. More than 200 dollars

13. Why do you shop here?

14. What types of food do you usually buy from H-Mart?

Thank you so much for your participation!
## APPENDIX C. STORE AUDIT CHECKLIST

### Store Audit Check List

Date: __________
Survey start time, survey end time: ________________
Food establishment name: ________________
Number of cash registers/workers: ________________
SNAP/WIC acceptance: ________________
Alcohol/tobacco products: ________________

A. Select the available food categories at the store
   - Fruits
   - Vegetables
   - Meat/poultry/fish
   - Dairy
   - Grain
   - Beas
   - Fats and added sugar

B. Add other food categories not listed above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit and vegetable items</th>
<th>Fresh/ Frozen/ Canned</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price per unit</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Shelf Space</th>
<th>Product location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good/ Fair/ Bad</td>
<td>Domestic/ International</td>
<td>(significant or not) *</td>
<td>(front, middle, back)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dairy products</th>
<th>Fresh/ Frozen/ Canned</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price per unit</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Shelf Space</th>
<th>Product location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good/ Fair/ Bad</td>
<td>Domestic/ International</td>
<td>(significant or not) *</td>
<td>(front, middle, back)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grain products</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price per unit</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Shelf Space</th>
<th>Product location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good/ Fair/ Bad</td>
<td>Domestic/ International</td>
<td>(significant or not) *</td>
<td>(front, middle, back)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bean/pea products</th>
<th>Frozen/ canned/ dried/ loose</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price per unit</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Shelf Space</th>
<th>Product location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good/ Fair/ Bad</td>
<td>Domestic/ International</td>
<td>(significant or not) *</td>
<td>(front, middle, back)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Price per unit</td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>Shelf Space (significant or not) *</td>
<td>Product location (front, middle, back)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fats and added sugars</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>None 1-2, 3 or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices (dry herbs, mixed powder, canned)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>None 1-2, 3 or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat/poultry/fish/egg products</td>
<td>Fresh/Processed/Canned</td>
<td>None 1-2, 3 or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* If it occupies more than half of the shelf space, it is counted as significant.
CHAPTER 5: NEITHER BLACK NOR WHITE: FOOD SHOPPING AND CONSUMPTION PATTERNS IN A MULTIETHNIC COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION
Essi, a Malian woman in her early twenties, lives in downtown Upper Darby. I met her at the end of August when she was attending services at a mosque in Upper Darby. Essi has a family of seven for whom she cooks every other day. Having a car makes it possible for Essi to shop at multiple food stores to provide for her family. She shops once a week at Save a Lot, located next to the township Middle School. She prefers to purchase her fresh produce from Produce Junction mainly for its affordability. Neither Save a Lot nor Produce Junction provide her with all she needs to make African dishes. For that purpose, she makes a weekly visit to a small African grocery store near her house to purchase rice and spices.

Silky and Ne’maat live in the same neighborhood as Essi does. Silky, a middle-aged woman from India, lives with her husband and three children. Silky and her family do not have a car. To them, the Indian grocery stores near their house are their primary destination for grocery shopping. Silky walks to her favorite Indian grocery store 2-to-3 times a week to buy “Indian grocery” such as specialty tea, flours, milk and vegetables. Ne’maat, a twenty-something Bengladeshi woman, does not have access to car either. To provide for her family of three, she takes a bus to a Walmart once a week. She shops at Walmart mainly for its ability to provide “foods of all kinds” at a reasonable price. To purchase meat and poultry, however, she walks to a Bengali grocery store close to her house where she purchases Halal products.

Tanisha, an African-American woman in her thirties, also shops at multiple food stores. Tanisha lives in downtown Upper Darby and works at the Welcome Center, the township’s office for immigration-related services. Tanisha uses her personal car to do grocery for her family of four. She mainly relies on Fresh Grocer to buy “ingredients for a meal” as it is the closest store to her house. However, she likes buying her fresh produce at Produce Junction for its quality and price. Tanisha shops at some other places such as Giant, ACME and H-Mart. She particularly enjoys the fresh seafood section of H-Mart. She makes occasional visits to farmers’ markets as well. Maryann, an elderly African-American woman, uses a combination of modes of transportation to shop at Fresh Grocer. In fact, Fresh Grocer is her only food destination. She likes this place, trusts the food, and believes it has good sales. She often buys produce, fish, chicken, cookies and donuts at Fresh Grocer to prepare food for herself and her husband.

Essi, Silky, Ne’maat, Tanisha and Maryaan live within the same Zip Code in downtown Upper Darby but navigate their food environments in different ways. Individual factors such as access to a private vehicle, food budget, household size and preferences for cultural foods all are important in shaping the individuals’ shopping practices. But, it is the dense and diverse food environment of Upper Darby that provides them with multiple food retail options to choose from based on their own preferences and priorities. These individuals live in a working-class suburb with a significant portion of the community at or below poverty level.
Public health researchers pay especial attention to community food environments to explain how physical and built environments impact health outcomes (Lovasi et al. 2009, Sallis and Glanz 2006). Food environment research has become more sophisticated over the past two decades to include various measures of access beyond proximity to supermarkets. More and more, food and public health researchers have incorporated other types of retail – such as food pantries, farmers’ markets, grocery stores - in their investigations (Raja et al. 2008a, Pothukuchi 2004, Machado et al. 2018, Martin et al. 2014). Nonetheless, numerous current studies (Crowe et al. 2018, Parisi et al. 2018), governmental studies (United States Department of Agriculture 2017), and policy documents (Khan et al. 2009) still discount the roles of small-scale food stores in food provision. One major contributing factor to this omission is homogenization of (low-income) individuals’ preferences (Blacksher and Lovasi 2012). The unspoken, yet present, assumption is that all people with low-incomes – Essi, Silky or Maryann - desire the same food, shop the same way and consume the same food. Disregarding individuals’ differences may explain why other types of food retail still do not count as legitimate actors in food provision as supermarkets and supercenters do.

Most researchers focus on disparities in access to food in low-income communities often compare neighborhoods with high proportion of African Americans to predominantly white neighborhoods (Baker et al. 2006, Galvez et al. 2008, Morland and Filomena 2007). These studies have documented lack of access to supermarkets (i.e. “food desert”) (Zenk et al. 2005), an abundance of fast-food outlets (i.e. “food swamp”) (Powell, Chaloupka, et al. 2007), and availability of healthy foods at higher prices (Hendrickson et al. 2006). Recently, scholars have added more nuances to this narrative by focusing on variety of ways that individuals interact with their food environments and procure foods (White et al. 2018, Cohen et al. 2018). Nonetheless, “food deserts” and “food swamps” are still associated with food landscapes of African-American neighborhoods. This is evident from ample current studies offering the same explanations to understand health disparities in low-income communities of color (Phillips and Rodriguez 2019, Morris et al. 2019, Crowe et al. 2018).

This description, however, does not hold true in Upper Darby. As Chapter 3 showed, the food environment of downtown Upper Darby provides its diverse (51% African-American/Black and 32% foreign-born) working-class (48% poor or struggling) residents with plenty of options to access healthy foods. The downtown food environment offers access to national chain, discount and ethnic supermarkets, ethnic grocery stores, specialty food stores, produce markets and more. Chapter 4 demonstrated how small-scale ethnic grocery stores contribute to food provision as well as community revitalization. The ways that most public health and food scholars describe food landscapes of low-income communities cannot explain how individuals living in a food environment such as that of Upper Darby make food shopping decisions and how that may impact their health.

Existing studies have built the groundwork for predicting how people with low-income (often African-American or Hispanic) access food, what they consume, and how that impacts their health when they live in environments where making healthy decisions is not easy. Scholars know less about how individuals of diverse backgrounds shop for food and what they consume when living in diverse and dense food environments. This
chapter aims to contribute to the literature by examining individuals’ food shopping and consumption behaviors in the diverse food environment of Upper Darby.

Understanding how Upper Darby’s food environment shapes food shopping and consumption patterns of different individuals is important for four main reasons. First, multi-ethnic suburbs are an increasingly common reality of the United States (US) metro regions (Logan and Zhang 2010). These communities are home to individuals with diverse ethnic backgrounds and places of origin, including both US and foreign-born residents. Second, Immigrants establish businesses as a higher rate compared to their US-born counterparts, especially in food retail and services (Kauffman Foundation 2016). Third, dietary acculturation – the process of adopting the predominant diet of the host country – is a significant predictor of diet-related health outcomes among immigrants (Satia 2010). Immigrant-run food stores may assist the foreign-born residents to maintain traditional diets and slow down the process of dietary acculturation. Fourth, some traditional diets are health protective (Ooraikul et al. 2008), meaning that adhering to such diet prevents development of diet-related diseases. Immigrant-run food stores may also be beneficial for the health and wellbeing of the US-born residents by introducing them to ingredients that promote healthy diets.

This chapter examines how shopping at a diverse food environment (i.e. downtown Upper Darby) impacts food shopping and consumption practices of individuals with different backgrounds (US-born vs. foreign-born). I break down this broad questions into three researchable smaller questions: (1) How does shopping in a diverse food environment impact people’s frequency of shopping, modes of transportation and money spent on food? (2) How does shopping in a diverse food environment impact people’s food destinations? (3) How does shopping in a diverse food environment impact people’s food consumption and dietary diversity? I use a semi-structured survey of a purposive sample of shoppers to pursue each question. Whenever possible, I offer and analyze the survey results for different ethnic groups. The discussion and conclusion provide a picture of how the food environment of Upper Darby shapes food shopping and consumption patterns of the shoppers.

METHODS
Study Sample
This study used a semi-structured survey to explore food shopping and consumption patterns of the individuals who shopped for food in Upper Darby from July to October 2018. Previous food shopping and consumption studies informed the survey questions. The survey had four major sections: background information, food shopping, food consumption, food environment perception. Questions about food consumed in a week as well as reasons for choosing particular stores were open-ended to allow individuals from all backgrounds to offer a response that best fits their experiences. The survey instrument was piloted with four individuals who were not part of the study. The instrument was modified to be concise, precise and clear in language. With help from community members and non-profit staff, the survey instrument was translated and offered in 6 languages: English, Bengali, Punjabi, Spanish, Korean, and Mandarin. Translators helped to translate open-ended responses back to English.
The study used a purposive sample of residents to represent the demographic composition of downtown Upper Darby residents. Participants were approached and recruited from public places such as libraries, community events (e.g. soccer game), religious organizations (e.g. Sikh temple, mosque), township immigration center, coffee shops, food courts and food stores. Participants were compensated for their time and help with $5 in cash. The final sample included 115 adults (18 years and older). Survey completion took approximately 15-20 minutes. The survey was self-administered, except for few occasions when participants preferred for someone to read and fill out the survey for them. The University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board approved all data collection procedure.

Data Preparation and Variable Construction

Food Shopping Variables

Primary food destination(s): Primary food destinations was constructed by summing up answers to 3 different questions. Participants were asked to share where they do most of their food shopping; where they purchase fresh produce; and whether or not they visit any other food stores to complete their shopping trips. Responses were open ended. After survey collection, responses were coded as national chain supermarket, ethnic supermarket, small ethnic grocery stores, farmers’ markets, food trucks, and Produce Junction.

Number of visited stores: Number of visited stores reflects the total number of food stores that a participant used in order to do one round of complete food shopping. The number was obtained by summing up answers to the three questions discussed above.

Food Destination Categories (FDC): FDC was a constructed variable that shows what combination of food stores participants used for their food shopping. Responses were later categorized in 4 FDC. Shopping only at national chain supermarkets and ethnic supermarket was labeled as “Category 1: Only supermarket”; shopping at supermarkets in conjunction with one other store was labeled as “Category 2: Mainly supermarket”; shopping at three or more different types of food stores was labeled as “Category 3: 3 or more distinct food store”; and shopping only at ethnic food stores was labeled as “Category 4: Only ethnic stores.”

Frequency of shopping: Frequency of shopping was a multiple-choice question that recorded the participants frequency of shopping at their primary food stores based on 6 categories: less than once a month, once a month, 2-3 times a month, once a week, 2-3 times a week, and daily.

Modes of transportation: Modes of transportation was a multiple-choice question asking how individuals often travel to and from their primary food stores. The question offered 7 options: public transportation, driving my own vehicle, driving a rental car, getting a ride, walking, cab/Uber/Lyft, and a combination of two or more modes.

Food Consumption Variables

Food consumption: Food consumption variable was constructed using responses to two open-ended questions. 1. What types of food do you typically purchase from your primary food store(s)? 2. Please name 5 food items you consume the most during a week.
The reasoning for combining responses to these two questions was to build a variable that accurately and completely reflects the participants’ diet. For example, many respondents answered to question 1 and skipped question 2, and vice versa. In combining the two questions, repetitive answers were dropped.

To convert the open-ended answers to categorical variables, I borrowed the same food categories used in the Healthy Eating Index (HEI) developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (Promotion. 2015). The HEI categorized food groups into Adequacy and Moderation; Adequacy food groups are essentials for health and Moderation food groups need to be consumed in moderation. The Adequacy food groups consist of fruits, vegetables (including greens and beans), grains, dairy, protein foods (including meats and beans, seafood and plant proteins), fats (including oils and fatty acid). The Moderation food groups include refined grains, sodium, empty calories (including added sugars and saturated fats). I modified these variables based on the participants’ responses. Since nutrition information was not collected, some groups such as fatty acid and sodium were dropped. The open-ended answers were coded as a 0/1 variable for each category where 1 represented the presence of that particular food group and 0 represented its absence.

**Dietary Diversity Score (DDS):** DDS is used as a proxy to evaluate participants’ diet. Since this study did not collect extensive information on nutrition value and quantity of food consumed in a week, it was not possible to use the existing tools such as the HEI scoring scale to evaluate the healthfulness of participants’ diet. I relied on a simpler scoring scale known as Dietary Diversity (DD). Dietary Diversity is an alternative indicator of healthy diet commonly used in developing countries (Ruel 2003). DD is a significant indicator of healthy diet (Ruel 2003). Studies have found association between DD and individual nutrient adequacy (Torheim et al. 2004), food security (Hoddinott and Yohannes 2002), and child growth (Onyango 2003). DD is usually measured using a simple count of foods or food groups over a given period of time, from 3 to 15 days (de Oliveira Otto et al. 2018).

DDS in this study reflects the total number of different food groups that participants consumed in a week. To construct the DDS, I deducted the sum of Moderation food groups from the total number of Adequacy food groups.

\[
DDS = \text{Total Adequacy score} - \text{Total Moderation score}
\]

In this case, DDS not only counts the diversity of food groups consumed in a week but also takes into account the healthfulness of the categories consumed. The minimum and maximum possible DDS scores ranged from -3 to 9, where -3 represents a simple and unhealthy diet and 9 represents a diverse and healthy diet.

**Explanatory Variables**

Explanatory variables included age, sex, household size, vehicle ownership, distance, and place of origin. Most explanatory variables were chosen based on the existing literature on individual characteristics that impact food shopping and consumption behaviors. Ethnicity and distance were chosen based on the main hypothesis informing this study, as
different backgrounds (e.g. ethnicity) and living in a diverse food environment (e.g. distance from the downtown) may yield different shopping behaviors.

**Distance:** Distance indicates whether or not participants lived within downtown Upper Darby or outside of it. Living in downtown Upper Darby is a proxy for having access to a diverse food environment. To construct this variable, participants home Zip Codes were converted to a 0/1 variable, with 1 representing participants who lived in the downtown (Zip Code 19082) and 0 representing those who lived outside of the downtown.

**Ethnic groups:** Five ethnic/background groups were constructed for this study. The existing foreign-born shoppers were categorized in 5 groups: Africans, Indians and Bangladeshi, East and Southeast Asian (including individuals from China, Korea, Vietnam, and Cambodia), Latin America and Caribbean (including individuals from Ecuador, Honduras, and Jamaica), and other (including few respondents from Afghanistan, Sudan and Russia).

**Method of Analysis**
Analysis was conducted using STATA 15.1 software. To evaluate significant differences between means of two groups, t-test was used. To test dependency between two categorical variables, Chi-Square test was conducted. For those 2x2 tables, where the expected frequency was smaller than 5, Fisher Exact test was performed. Odds ratios were calculated from the 2x2 tables for those variables with statistically significant dependency. Bivariate linear and multi-nominal logistic regressions models were conducted to determine which variables predict FDC and DDS. Bivariate models were p<0.25 were incorporated into multivariate models. However, the results from multivariate models were not significant. As a result, only bivariate regression models were analyzed, and the results were reported separately.

To provide a context to situate the survey findings, the results of the latest the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Household Food Acquisition and Purchasing Survey (FoodAPS) are presented. FoodAPS is the first nationally representative survey of American households to collect unique and comprehensive data about household food purchases and acquisitions. FoodAPS collects information about quantities and expenditures for the foods and beverages acquired by all household members over a one-week period from grocery stores and other food retailers (food at home; from restaurants, fast food places, and other eating places (food away from home); and from other sources such as schools, community food pantries and gardens. While the data meant to represent a national sample (including both SNAP participants and nonparticipants), they can help to understand the degree to which food acquisition and purchasing in Upper Darby follows the same pattern as that of the national.

**LIMITATION**
As a cross-sectional survey in a multi-ethnic community with a relatively small convenience sample, the main limitation of this study relates to generalizability. The share of the foreign-born population out of the entire sample (%68) was close to that of the downtown Upper Darby but was much larger than the township at large (%19). Moreover, downtown Upper Darby is a suburban township, but with walkable neighborhoods. Walkability of neighborhoods, along with zoning regulations that allow
storefronts, could impact the ways that immigrants form businesses and/or the ways that residents travel to and from the stores. The findings of this study are relevant for communities with demographic composition and land use patterns similar to that of Upper Darby.

RESULTS

Characteristics of the study participants

Most of the respondents were women (65%). The respondents were diverse in terms of age, where 25-34 years-old made up the largest group of participants with only 24 percent. The mean age of all participants was 43. Asians and African Americans/Blacks made up much of the sample with 42 and 40 percent, respectively. Most participants (68%) had access to at least one private vehicle, with 3 to 5 people living in their household (59%). About half of the participants (52%) lived within the downtown. The foreign-born sample was younger, had larger families, had less access to a vehicle, and was more concentrated in the downtown Upper Darby compared to the US-born participants. See Table 5.1.

The participants in this study differed from that of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Household Food Acquisition and Purchasing Survey (FoodAPS) in a few ways. The 2015 FoodAPS, similarly, had a sample majorly made up of women (68%). However, the sample for the present study was more diverse. Most of the FoodAPS sample (76%) were white with 13 percent Black, and 4 percent Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The FoodAPS households also had smaller families (average household size=2.42) and more access to a car (89%) compared to the sample of this study (Ver Ploeg et al. 2015).

Table 5.1 Description of the Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>All (N=115)</th>
<th>US Born (%) (n=37)</th>
<th>Foreign Born (%) (n=78)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54-64</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and more</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American and Pacific</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islander</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial other</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Vehicle ownership</strong></th>
<th>Own at least a vehicle</th>
<th>68</th>
<th>77.8</th>
<th>62.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 and more</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in the downtown</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Darby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*i-test indicates statistical significance at *p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***0.01

**Question 1: Shopping at a diverse food environment impacts shoppers’ frequency of shopping, money spent and modes of transportation**

**Frequency of shopping to primary food store**

Upper Darby residents, on average, shopped once a week. Foreign-born shoppers shopped at their primary food stores more frequently than the US-born shoppers (p<0.05). The frequency of shopping for the US-born shoppers had a larger variance compared to that of the foreign-born shoppers. Most of the foreign-born shoppers (60%) visited their primary stores between once a week to 2-3 times a month. Significant interactions found between being foreign-born and shopping 2-3 times a week (X²= 7.13, p<0.01), meaning that the foreign-born shoppers had 1.33 greater odds of shopping 2-3 times a week compared to the US-born shoppers.

**Mode of transportation to primary food store**

More than half of the participants drove their own vehicle to and from their primary food stores. Overall, 59.6 percent of the respondents used their own car, 16.7 percent walked, and 12.3 percent used a combination of two or more modes of transportation (e.g. public transportation and walking) to travel to the food stores. These results, for the most part, were similar to those of the FoodAPS; 88 percent of the households in the FoodAPS sample relied on their own vehicle. However, those who relied on walking, public transportation, or other modes of transportation were overrepresented in this study (36%) compared to that of the FoodAPS sample (6%) (Ver Ploeg et al. 2015).

This composition, however, varied for foreign-born versus US-born shoppers. The US-born shoppers were more likely to use a combination of two or more modes of transportation to travel to and from the food stores; whereas, the foreign-born shoppers were more likely to walk to and from their primary stores (X²= 2.98, p<0.1). The foreign-born shoppers were less likely to drive their own car, rent a car, or use a two or more combinations of modes of transportation compared to the US-born shoppers. These differences, however, were not statistically significant. The concentration of the foreign-born population in the downtown, where most of the food retails are located, may explain why they often walk to and from their food destination. For example, an African-American male who lives outside of Upper Darby explained to shop primarily at H-Mary where he also works as a security. He commutes to work by bus. However, on days when he does grocery shopping after work, he needs to get a cab or a shared ride (e.g. Uber/Lyft) from the bus station to home to carry his bags. On the other hand, for the
Indian, Bangladeshi, or Afghan shoppers who live in the downtown Upper Darby walking is a feasible way to shop for grocery at one of the Indian or Bengali grocery stores.

**Average money spent at primary food store**

The Upper Darby residents spent $71 on average at their primary food stores in a week. The Upper Darby participants spent less than what the most conservative governmental food plan estimates for the cost of food at home in January 2019. The official 2019 USDA Thrifty Food Plan estimates the weekly cost of food for a family of two to be $87 and for a family of 4 to be $140 (Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion 2019). Participants only reported the amount of money they spend at their primary food stores; thus, these numbers do not represent the household total food expenditure in a week. Nonetheless, assuming primary food stores meet most of the shoppers’ food demand, the Upper Darby residents’ grocery expenditure alludes to a limited household food budget.

US-born and foreign-born shoppers had different food spending patterns. Foreign-born shoppers in Upper Darby, on average, spent 20 dollars less on food at their primary food stores in a week compared to the US-born shoppers (p<0.05). A majority of the US-born shoppers (62%) spent between 50-200 dollars during each visit; whereas, the foreign-born shoppers were more likely to spend less than 20 dollars at their main grocery store in a week (p<0.05). The foreign-born and US-born shoppers, however, spent their 20 dollars at different places. For instance, an elderly Indian male spent less than 20 dollars to buy fruits and vegetables whenever he shopped at Sabzi Mandi, and Indian grocery. Similarly, other Indian shoppers who shopped primarily at Indian grocery stores purchased fruits, vegetables, milk or wheat/pulses, or products that are essential to their diets, with their 20 dollars. The African-American female shopper, on the other hand, visited ShopRite for buying products in bulk such as water or chicken once a month. She, then, visited Produce Junction to shop for fruits and vegetables at a lower cost.

*Table 5. 2 Descriptive Statistics of the Survey Responses for the Entire Sample, US-born and Foreign-born Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>All (N=115)</th>
<th>US Born (%) (n=37)</th>
<th>US-born Mean</th>
<th>Foreign-born (%) (n=78)</th>
<th>Foreign-born Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of shopping at the main destination</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once a month</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times a month</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>19.2††</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times a week</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of transportation to the main destination</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transportation</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving a private vehicle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car rental</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a ride</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cab/Uber/Lyft</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of 2 or more modes</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average money spent during each visit to the main destination</th>
<th>10.6</th>
<th>2.7</th>
<th>3.05</th>
<th>14.5</th>
<th>2.67**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20 dollars</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-50 dollars</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-100 dollars</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-200 dollars</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of cooking at home</th>
<th>64.9</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>1.69</th>
<th>72</th>
<th>1.44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every other day</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 3 times a week</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* t-test indicates statistical significance at **p<0.05
* Chi-square indicates statistical significance at ¶p<0.1 ¶¶p<0.05 ¶¶¶0.0

**Question 2: Shopping in a diverse food environment impacts shoppers’ food destinations**

**Food shopping destinations for the entire sample**

The food destinations for the Upper Darby residents are a combination of national chain supermarkets (e.g. Fresh Grocer, ACME), ethnic supermarket (H-Mart), small ethnic grocery stores, food trucks, farmers’ markets, and a produce market. Four groups of food retail represent the different ways that participants navigate their existing food businesses. See Table 5.3. The first category includes those who only rely on supermarkets (both national chain and ethnic) as their primary food shopping destinations. The second category includes those who rely mainly on supermarkets but visit one other food retail to complement their shopping. For example, an individual may visit 3 different supermarkets and the produce market to purchase food. The third category consists of those who visit three or more distinct food stores. For instance, a customer shops at Sabzi Mandi and a farmers’ market. The last and forth category includes those who only rely on ethnic grocery stores and do not shop at any other food retails.

Supermarkets played a major role as food destinations of the Upper Darby shoppers; 73 percent of the participants shopped at supermarkets as their main shopping destination,
including the shoppers who utilized one other type of food store besides supermarkets. This result, in part, was similar to that of the FoodAPS. The national survey showed that supermarkets and supercenters dominated the shopping destinations of most US households, regardless of their income and other characteristics; in 2015, about 89 percent of households did their primary grocery shopping at supercenters and supermarkets (Ver Ploeg et al. 2015). Despite similarities between the predominant shopping destinations, use of supermarkets and supercenters was higher in the national survey compared to that of Upper Darby.

Upper Darby shoppers relied more on diverse food retail outlets compared to the FoodAPS sample. The FoodAPS showed only 5 percent of households did their main shopping at other retailers which included small grocery stores, specialty retailers (e.g. farmers’ markets, bakeries, ethnic food stores), convenience stores, pharmacies and dollar stores (Ver Ploeg et al. 2015). In this study, however, those who only shopped at ethnic food stores made up 12 percent of the shoppers, while another 15 percent visited more than three different retails for grocery shopping. In addition, the national survey did not differentiate between other retailers that provide access to wholesome food such as farmers’ markets and ethnic food stores and those who do not such as convenience stores, pharmacies and dollar stores. Lumping up all non-supermarket food stores in “other retailers” is yet another example of discounting the contribution of small-scale food retails in food provision.

Table 5.3 Percentage of Participants who Shopped at each Food Destination Category (FDC) for their Major Grocery Shopping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destinations</th>
<th>Overall (%) (n=100)</th>
<th>US-born (%) (n=37)</th>
<th>Foreign-born (%) (n=63)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only supermarkets</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>21****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarkets and one other store</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more distinct stores</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only ethnic food stores</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19 ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_t-test indicates statistical significance at *** P <0.01; **** P<0.001_

**Shopping destinations based on place of origin**

The diversity of food destinations in the Upper Darby sample mainly pertains to diverse ways that the foreign-born individuals navigated their food environments. Foreign-born shoppers had more diverse food destinations compared to the US born shoppers (p < 0.001). Foreign-born shoppers had significant differences in shopping at two types of food destinations compared to the US-born shoppers: shopping only at supermarkets (p<0.001) and shopping only at ethnic grocery stores (p<0.01). The US-born shoppers had 5 times greater odds of shopping only at supermarkets compared to the foreign-born
customers. On the other hand, there was a strong association between the foreign-born shoppers and those who only shopped at ethnic food stores.

The foreign-born shoppers visited a more diverse range of food stores, but the US-born shoppers visited more supermarkets. The US-born shoppers, on average, visited one national chain supermarket more than the foreign-born shoppers did (p< 0.001). The US-born individuals visited up to 5 supermarkets to complete their food shopping. Take Stacy and Fariha as examples of US-born and foreign-born shoppers’ different shopping patterns. Stacy is a 30-year old African-American resident of Upper Darby. She mainly shops at Fresh Grocer, but also visits ACME and Giant occasionally. Despite visiting three supermarkets, she still goes to Produce Junction to purchase fresh produce. Fariha is also a resident of the downtown Upper Darby. She is 30-year old and from Bangladesh. Fariha mainly shops at three Indian and Bengali grocery stores: Taj Mahal, Bangal Halal and Khamarbari. She also visits Produce Junction for fresh produce. At the end, she visits supermarkets such as Save-a-Lot and H-Mart to complement her shopping.

Not all foreign-born individuals navigate their food environment the same way. Ethnicity, food preferences and taste are only a few factors that shape people’s food shopping patterns. To be sure, other factors such as income, household size, access to cars and other individual factors also impact how foreign-born individuals make use of their food environments. Nonetheless, it is important to understand what types of food stores are more appealing and respond to the needs of different ethnic groups.

**African Shoppers**

Africans shopped at a diverse set of food stores. Shopping only at supermarkets was four ($X^2=3.73, p< 0.1$) times less likely to meet the full demand of African shoppers compared to all other participants. African shoppers often used a combination of a national chain supermarket (e.g. Fresh Grocer, ShopRite, Giant), a produce market (e.g. Produce Junction, farmers’ market, produce trucks), and an African grocery store. In fact, African shoppers had 3.33 ($X^2=3.85, p< 0.1$) times greater odds of shopping at 3 or more distinct food stores compared to all other participants.

Most of the African participants shopped at national chain supermarkets for one main reason: proximity. About 67 percent of all African shoppers had access to a private vehicle, enabling them to complement their shopping trips by visiting other types of food stores. For example, an African shopper, who shops at Dollar General and Fresh grocery near her house, visits Jerry’s Corner, a produce market in Philadelphia as it is “cost effective and cheaper than other places.” Similarly, those participants who followed up their visits to ShopRite with shopping at Produce Junction expressed that Produce Junction is “the only option for fresh produce” and is “affordable.” To another African shopper who visits both Fresh Grocer and Giant, local produce trucks are her favorite place to purchase produce because “Mohammad [the owner] is friendly and fruits and vegetables are fresh.”

Accessing three different food stores is not convenient for those African shoppers who do not have a car. All African shoppers without a car mentioned they purchase all their food, including fresh produce, from one retail outlet such as H-Mart, Fresh Grocer or an African grocery store. These shoppers mainly shop at these locations due to proximity
and ability to purchase everything they need at one place. These participants use walking, getting a ride, using a cab, or a combination of different modes of transportation to travel to their stores.

**Indian and Bangladeshi Shoppers**

National chain supermarkets had a minimal role in supplying the food demand of the Indian shoppers. Indian shoppers were 19 ($X^2=15.56$, $p<0.001$) times less likely to rely solely on supermarkets for their food shopping compared to all other participants. Instead, they mainly shopped at a variety of Indian and Bangladeshi grocery stores in and out of the township. The existence of an Indian/South Asian enclave in Millbourne and through downtown Upper Darby means that this group of population has access to a wider range of commercial spaces geared toward their needs compared to the other ethnic groups in the township. In fact, the Indian and Bengali shoppers were the only group of shoppers who only relied on ethnic grocery stores as their primary food destinations. Indian and Bengali shoppers had 6.77 ($X^2=9.92$, $p<0.01$) times greater odds of shopping only at ethnic food stores compared to the other shoppers. Regardless of type of food retail, the Indian and Bengali shoppers visited multiple distinct food stores to complete their trips. For example, 54 percent of Indian shoppers visited one supermarket (e.g. H-Mart, Fresh Grocery) and one additional food store (e.g. ethnic food stores, Produce Junction) to complete their food shopping trips.

To Indian and Bengali shoppers, proximity and ease of access to a food store were the main defining factors in their food shopping decision. Proximity is especially important to these group of shoppers since less than half of them (48%) had access to a private vehicle. In fact, the few respondents who solely relied on supermarkets did not have a vehicle and shared they were shopping there for “affordability” and “proximity.” While the Indian and Bengali shoppers chose to shop at the ethnic grocery stores for similar reasons, they offered a greater range of explanations for choosing to shop at these stores. For example, accessing ethnic food (e.g. Indian food, Bengali food, Halal meat), good staff and services, clean stores, and quality of food products were some of the reasons that influenced the Indian and Bengali food shopping decisions.

**East-Asian Shoppers**

The majority (70%) of East-Asian shoppers solely relied on supermarkets to shop for food. All respondents shopped at H-Mart, and sometimes in combination with a few other supermarkets such as Wholefoods, Trader Joes, ACME, Save-a-Lot, and Fresh Grocer, or a produce market such as Produce Junction or farmers’ markets. In addition to supermarkets, the East-Asian shoppers (especially the South Korean shoppers) used supercenters such as Costco. In fact, the South Korean shoppers were the only respondents in the entire sample for this study to have mentioned shopping at Costco. In addition to shopping at supermarkets and supercenters, a few East-Asian respondents also visited Produce Junction and farmers’ market for their produce needs.

Almost all respondents shared accessing cultural food as their main reasons for shopping at H-Mart. The East-Asian shoppers did not share that proximity and/or price were influential factors in making decisions about their food destinations, especially since 90% of the shoppers had a private vehicle and all of them (100%) traveled from outside of the
township to shop in Upper Darby. In other words, H-Mart appears to be a shopping destination for East-Asians who live in the Philadelphia metro region. Some of these shoppers might be the earlier Korean residents of Upper Darby and their children that have moved out of the township to further away suburbs. This group of population has the ability and mobility to travel long distances to access their cultural foods and services. For example, two South Korean female shoppers who were “church friends” drive to H-Mart from their houses in New Jersey to shop for “Korean food” such as specific sauces, vegetables, and fish.

**What Variables Predict Food Shopping Destinations?**

The multi-nominal bivariate logistic regression models showed that foreign-born status, household size, and age of participants had a significant association with the probability of being in one of the food shopping destination categories (FDC).

Being foreign-born had a significant negative association (p<0.05) with increasing the likelihood of the participants to shop at Category 1 (only supermarkets). In other words, foreign-born shoppers were 0.33 times (67%) less likely to shop only at supermarkets compared to the US-born residents. Households size was also a significant predictor of shopping destinations. Household size had significant positive associations with shopping at Category 2 (p<0.01) and Category 3 (p<0.001); any additional household member increased the odds of shopping mainly at supermarkets (Category 2) by 1.60 and shopping at three and more distinct stores (Category 3) by 2.08 times. Two age groups were also found to have a significant association (p<0.05) with shopping only at supermarkets. Those participants who aged 35-44 and 55-64 were about 90 percent more likely to shop only at supermarkets.

**Question 3: Shopping in a diverse food environment impacts shoppers’ food consumption**

**Diet composition**

Vegetables, grains and meats were the three major food groups that dominated the dietary pattern of the Upper Darby shoppers in a typical week. Table 5.4. Both US-born and foreign-born shoppers mentioned consuming vegetables more than any other food categories. Both groups consumed a wide variety of leafy greens. However, there were differences in their preferred types of grain products. For the US-born population, items such as pasta, bread and cereal were common among respondents; whereas, for the foreign-born population, rice, flour and wheat were dominant. The dietary composition of the US-born and foreign-born shoppers did not differ significantly. The only two food groups where the US and foreign-born responses significantly differed from one another were refined grains (p<0.1) and added sugar (p<0.1) products, where the US-born shoppers were more likely to consume these two groups compared to the foreign-born shoppers.
Comparing dietary patterns between US-born and foreign-born shoppers may obscure differences between ethnic groups. Table 5.5. shows how listed food groups in a week differ for each ethnic group. The US-born shoppers listed vegetables more often than any other food groups. At the same time, being US-born and consuming refined grains and added sugar products were strongly dependent (p<0.05), in a way that the US-born shoppers had 7 ($X^2=5.98$, p<0.05) and 6 ($X^2=4.80$, p<0.05) times greater odds of consuming refined grains and added sugar products compared to all other participants, respectively.

Table 5. 4 Percentage of each Food Group of all the Food Groups Consumed by the Entire Sample, US-born and Foreign-born Participants in a Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fruits</th>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Grains</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
<th>Nuts, beans and seeds</th>
<th>Meat</th>
<th>Poultry</th>
<th>Seafoods</th>
<th>Egg</th>
<th>Oil</th>
<th>Refined Grains</th>
<th>Added Sugar</th>
<th>Saturated Fat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-born</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>6.0*</td>
<td>6.0*</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$t$-test indicates statistical significance at * P <0.1
Highlighted cells indicate the largest food group shaping the participants’ diet

Vegetables made up a quarter of food items consumed by the Indian shoppers in a week. This relationship was not statistically significant. However, the two food groups that were statistically correlated with being Indians were meat (p<0.001) and seafood (p<0.01). Indians were 16 times less likely to consume meat compared to other groups. This is not
surprising given the fact that most Indians, at least those in this study, are vegetarians. On the other hand, Indians were 6 times more likely to consume seafood compared to other participants.

African shoppers listed grain as a main element of their diet. In fact, grain products made up a greater share of the diet of African shoppers compared to that of the other groups. However, this relationship was not statistically significant. Vegetables and seafoods made up half of what East Asian shoppers consumed in a week. The relationship between being East Asian and consuming vegetable was not significant. However, there was a statistically significant association between being East Asian and consuming meat and seafoods \( (\chi^2=6.80, p<0.01) \) and \( 19 (\chi^2=6.05, p<0.01) \) times greater odds of consuming meat and seafood compare to all other participants.

**Dietary Diversity Score (DDS)**

The DDS did not differ significantly for the US-born and foreign-born residents. Most respondents, disregard of their place of origin, had a DDS from 1 to 4, where 1 represents a simple diet and 4 represents a diet consists of at least four different food groups recommended by the HEI. The main difference, however, is in the range of scores. DDS for the US-born had the greatest range with scores as low as -2, indicating there were US-born shoppers who consumed more unhealthy food groups than recommended (or, healthy) food groups. Figure 5.2. shows that East Asian shoppers had the greatest mean of DDS (3). The mean DDS for the US-born and African shoppers were close to each other (2.7 vs. 2.5). Indian shoppers had a relatively smaller range (0 to 6) and the lowest mean (2.4) compared to all other groups.

**Relationships between Food Destinations and Consumption**

As it was mentioned earlier, food consumption was a constructed variable to indicate the number of different types of food groups consumed in a typical week using two open-ended questions. US-born residents mainly relied on supermarkets for most of the food groups they consumed in a week. Figure 5.3. shows that (only) supermarkets supplied 51.3 percent of all the food that US-born shoppers consumed in a week. This number is close to the proportion of the US-born shoppers (57%) who relied only on supermarkets to shop for food. The likelihood of consuming chicken \( (p<0.1) \) and saturated fats \( (p<0.05) \) for the US-born participants increased by shopping only at supermarkets. Table 5.6.

Visiting three and more food stores had a minimal impact on food provision for the US-born shoppers as it only supplied 12 percent of all their consumed food in a week. However, 40 percent of all varieties of food consumed by the US-born shoppers came from supermarkets and one other destination. In particular, the US-born shoppers used other destinations such as Produce Junction and farmers’ markets when shopping for fruits. In addition, shopping at supermarkets and one additional store was correlated with consuming grain products among the US-born shoppers \( (p<0.1) \).

For the foreign-born shoppers, on the other hand, the relationship between food destinations and food purchased was not as straightforward, such that no one category of
food destinations provided the majority of food consumed by the foreign-born shoppers in a week. For example, 44 percent of the foreign-born shoppers used supermarkets and one other destination as their primary food stores. However, the same category only supplied 22 percent of all the food consumed by the foreign-born shoppers. As Figure 5.3. shows all three categories (cat 1, cat 2, and cat 3) had an equal role in weekly food provision for the foreign-born shoppers.

Shopping at diverse range of food stores (cat 3) had a significant impact on the diet of the foreign-born shoppers. For example, shopping at category 3 and consuming seafood (p<0.01), meat (p<0.1), and dairy (p<0.1) were correlated. In addition, shopping at ethnic grocery stores had a strong correlation with consuming grains (p<0.05) for the foreign-born shoppers. Category 2, or mainly shopping at supermarkets, also provided access to seafood, however this relationship found to be stronger for those who shopped at 3 or more distinct food stores (cat 3) (p<0.001). Shopping only at supermarkets and consuming meat was also found to be correlated for the foreign-born shoppers (p<0.05).

Shopping only at supermarkets may promote an unhealthy diet among Africans. Table 5.6. shows that shopping only at supermarkets and consuming refined grain (p<0.01) was correlated among African shoppers; whereas, shopping at diverse food stores is correlated with consumption of dairy (p<0.1) and seafood products (p<0.05). While it is not clear what types of dairy (e.g. low-fat vs. high-fat) people purchased at diverse food stores, these stores offer potential in providing food groups that HEI recommends as essentials for a complete diet.

For Indian shoppers, shopping at category 1 and chicken consumption (p<0.1), category 2 and meat (p<0.05) and egg consumption (p<0.1), and shopping at category 3 and seafood consumption (p<0.01) were correlated. It is not surprising that the only items Indians seek at a non-ethnic grocery store are those not often found in the diet of the vegetarian consumers such as fish, chicken and meat.

Table 5.6 Association Between Which Food Destination Categories Participants Visited and What They Consumed in a Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Destinations</th>
<th>US-born</th>
<th>Foreign-born</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only supermarkets (Cat. 1)</td>
<td>*Chicken **Saturated fats</td>
<td>**Meat</td>
<td>***Refined grain</td>
<td>*Chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly supermarkets (Cat. 2)</td>
<td>*Grain</td>
<td>*Seafood *Meat</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>**Meat *Eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more stores (Cat. 3)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>***Seafood **Oil *Dairy *Meat</td>
<td>**Seafood *Dairy</td>
<td>***Seafood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only ethnic stores (Cat. 4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>**Grain</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square Test indicates significance at *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; ****p<0.001
What Variables Predict Dietary Diversity Score (DDS)?

Linear bivariate regression models demonstrated that age, number of stores visited, and money spent in a week were associated with participants’ DDS. The model suggested that age and diet diversity had a significant negative association (p<0.05), meaning that for one unit of increase in the age group (every 10 years), the DDS decreases 3.26 or by 3 food categories. Food destination categories (Cat 1,2,3 and 4) did not have any association with the DDS. However, the model found the number of total stores visited to have a significant positive association with the DDS (p<0.01). For each additional store visited, the DDS increases by 2.21 or two food groups. At the end, the model showed that spending 50-100 dollars and 100-200 dollars in a week on food had significant positive associations with the DDS (p<0.01). With any additional 50 and 100 dollars, the DDS for participants increases by 3.14 and 3.28, respectively, or by three food groups.

DISCUSSION

A dense and diverse food environment promotes frequent shopping, use of alternative transportation modes, and saving on food dollars

The Upper Darby shoppers shopped more frequently, used a variety of modes of transportation, and spent less money on food at their primary food stores compared to the sample of a national study (FoodAPS). Individual-level factors may explain these differences. For example, the sample for this study had a larger average household size and a lower rate of vehicle ownership. Vehicle ownership rate differed by 21 percentage point between the FoodAPS sample and the present study participants; and the two samples differed by 30 percentage point in using alternative modes of transportation such as walking. Thus, vehicle ownership by itself does not explain all the variances in using other types of transportation besides driving.

Living and shopping in a dense food environment facilitates access to food without dependency on private vehicles. For example, 63 percent of all the participants without cars lived within the downtown, of which 70 percent walked to and from their primary stores. In a hypothetical scenario where the downtown Upper Darby did not offer a wide and diverse range of food retail, these participants would be left without convenient access to their primary food stores. Many food access studies use low rates of vehicle ownership as one of the main measure in identifying areas with low (difficult) access (Walker et al. 2010), especially in low-income neighborhoods. These studies often use a combination of concentration of low-income residents without access to a vehicle to draw conclusion about the type of food environment available to them. This study suggests that living in a dense food environment, such as that of Upper Darby, may reduce the necessity and reliance on private vehicles for grocery shopping, thus increasing food access and choices for populations with limited mobility.

The dense and diverse food environment of Upper Darby also promotes shopping more frequently. On average, the Upper Darby shoppers visited their primary food stores once a week. A study of shopping behaviors of residents in a “food desert” showed that participants often shopped 2 to 4 times a month. However, each shopping trip in that study took about 2 hours round trip (Dubowitz et al. 2015). Foreign-born shoppers in this study, on the other hand, shopped more frequently, up to 2-3 times a week. Researchers
suggested that frequency of shopping may differ based on different backgrounds; Yoo and colleagues found that Asian-Americans shopped more frequently compared to African Americans (Yoo et al. 2006). Other public health and food studies found frequency of shopping to impact dietary and weight-related outcomes (Moore et al. 2016, Minaker et al. 2016). Frequent shopping enables individuals to keep a variety of fresh produce at home while less frequent shopping may increase the likelihood of purchasing frozen and canned produce to enhance their shelf life (Yoo et al. 2006). For example, a study in Waterloo, Canada, showed that people who shopped frequently at supermarkets and specialty stores consumed more fruits and vegetables compared to those who did not. In addition, the frequent shoppers at specialty stores had significantly lower BMI than those who infrequently shopped at specialty stores (Minaker et al. 2016). Upper Darby, as well, may promote a healthier diet by enabling residents to shop frequently at food outlets that offer wholesome food options.

Upper Darby shoppers did not spend as much on food as expected. The foreign-born shoppers spent less on food compared to the US-born shoppers. This is especially important given the larger size of foreign-born families. Multiple factors can explain the differences in spending patterns of US-born and foreign-born shoppers. This might derive from differences in income level, food budget, eligibility and/or use of food assistance programs such as SNAP and WIC. As shown earlier, African Americans and Asians make up most of the US-born and foreign-born populations in this study, respectively. The ACS 2012-2017 shows a minimal difference in mean household income among African Americans and Asians in Upper Darby. In fact, Asians had a slightly higher household mean income compared to African Americans/Blacks (39,174 vs. 35,583). In other words, income does not completely explain the differences in spending patterns between these two groups.

Frequency of shopping and the places where the foreign-born shoppers spend their money, however, may explain these differences. Foreign-born shoppers visited their primary stores more frequently. Thus, it is possible that in total they spent as much as (if not more than) the US-born shoppers. In addition, the foreign-born shoppers were more likely to shop at a diverse set of stores, particularly small ethnic stores. These places, as shown in Chapter 4, offer access to staple and inexpensive food products. Therefore, it is likely that the foreign-born shoppers purchased what they needed at lower costs. In other words, spending less money on food in Upper Darby may not point to the shoppers’ insufficient diets. Instead, the dense and diverse food environment of Upper Darby offers competitive, inexpensive, staple and essential food products which may enable the participants to acquire what they need at lower costs.

**A diverse food environment offers more options and fulfills different needs and preferences**

Upper Darby shoppers relied less on supermarkets and supercenters and shopped more at diverse food retail outlets compared to the FoodAPS sample. Differences in the sample and environmental characteristics may explain the higher rate of Upper Darby shoppers who relied on “other retailers” besides supermarkets. This study had a sample with a larger proportion of African Americans/Blacks and Asians compared to that of the FoodAPS. A diverse group of consumers may have different food preferences and
different food shopping behaviors compared to the FoodAPS sample. However, the
demographic composition of the sample in this study is closer to how cities and suburbs
in the US metropolitan regions look today. As such, the ways that Upper Darby residents
navigate their food environment are a better representation of how people make food
shopping decisions in a multi-ethnic community.

The diversity of the sample, by itself, does not explain why Upper Darby shoppers relied
less on supermarkets; they did so because the Upper Darby food environment provided
them with options. Chapter 3 and 4 demonstrated the density and diversity of food retail
in Upper Darby. This retail not only provides access to cultural foods, but also includes
specialty food stores such as a fish market, produce market, and farmers’ market. In this
type of food environment, there is something for everyone; one person may only shop at
national chain supermarkets while their neighbor may visit three to four different food
stores to complete their shopping. In other words, Upper Darby’s food environment
diversifies its residents’ food shopping patterns by giving them a variety of options from
which to choose. Living in a diverse food environment may deviate individuals’ food
shopping patterns from that of the national trend in a way that highlights the role of
“other retailers” and reduces the dominance of supercenters and supermarkets.

Supermarkets and supercenters still play an important role in providing access to food,
especially for the US-born shoppers. The foreign-born population complement their
shopping trips by visiting multiple and distinct types of food stores. For example, an
African shopper visited Fresh Grocer, then made a stop at Produce Junction, and at the
end visited an African grocery store for specialty products. The US-born shoppers, on the
other hand, complement their shopping trips by visiting multiple supermarkets. In fact,
the US-born shoppers, on average, visited one more supermarket than their foreign-born
counterparts. The US-born shoppers shared they shop at multiple supermarkets to
maximize their food dollars or to interact with “nicer staff.” For example, an African-
American female shopper expressed that she did not have one primary food store as she
visits four different supermarkets (ALDI, Wal-Mart, ShopRite and Giant) for different
deals on products; she shops at ALDI for their fair priced almond milk, at Wal-Mart for
their cereal sale, at ShopRite for their coupons and meat products, and at Giant for gas
points and produce.

Supermarkets and supercenters do not exclusively benefit US-born shoppers; foreign-
born shoppers also relied on these types of food retail to shop for food. The foreign-born
shoppers, however, seemed to shop at national chain supermarkets more out of necessity
than choice. Those foreign-born shoppers who only relied on supermarkets had limited
mobility and expressed they shopped there since it was “near my house” or “on my way
from work.” Shopping at multiple stores requires shoppers to have easy access to a
vehicle, which was not the case for some of the participants. Moreover, some foreign-
born shoppers – such as Latin Americans- shopped at supermarkets as their food
environment did not offer them many choices. As Chapter 3 showed, there were only two
Latin American grocery stores in Upper Darby. Meanwhile, most national chain and
ethnic supermarkets do allocate an aisle to “Hispanic” products.

This is not the case for many other ethnic groups residing in Upper Darby. For example, a
few blocks south of H-Mart there exists a small Pakistani grocery store. The store
provides access to fresh produce, a wide range of dry goods and households items. The
owner shared his plan for expansion of the business, adding a meat and catering section
to the store. When asked how his store differed from H-Mart and why his customers
chose him over shopping at a large supermarket, he quickly and firmly responded that
“[they] do not carry our country food” and followed up by adding that specialty products
and produce are more expensive at H-Mart than his store. This example shows that while
national chain supermarkets or ethnic supermarkets such as H-Mart have made efforts to
diversify their food stock, they still are not able to fully respond to the diverse needs of a
multi-ethnic community.

Ethnic grocery stores are crucial in the food access of foreign-born shoppers. There were
only a few foreign-born shoppers who solely relied on supermarkets to meet their food
demand. All other foreign-born respondents visited at least one ethnic grocery store to
complement their shopping. However, the ethnic grocery stores were not a mere
supplementary food destination. To many foreign-born shoppers, especially those from
India and Bangladesh, ethnic grocery stores were their main and only food shopping
destinations. Many of the Indian shoppers who used only ethnic food stores were elderly,
did not have a car and lived close to their food destinations. Since most of the Indian
participants practiced a vegetarian diet, the existing food stock at these small stores
sufficiently met the food demand of this population. Bengali shoppers had more mobility,
but they were specifically looking for “Halal meat” and cultural foods, making the
Bengali grocery stores an appealing choice. As shown in Chapter 4, accessing cultural
foods was one of the main reasons for the foreign-born shoppers’ reliance on small-scale
ethnic stores.

Not all the ethnic grocery stores are available within walking distance. African shoppers
often visit grocery stores located in Southwest Philadelphia where a significant number of
African immigrants and refugees live. A few African shoppers mentioned they combine
their regular trips to African churches in Southwest Philadelphia with their grocery
shopping. This pattern also characterized Indian shoppers. Some of the Indian shoppers
who were recruited from the Gurdwara shared that they shop at the Indian grocery store
next to the temple whenever they come for prayer. Similarly, a Korean church stands
right across the road from H-Mart and many other Korean businesses nearby attract
shoppers from a further distance. For these foreign-born shoppers, distance and proximity
seem a lesser determinant of shopping at ethnic food stores than access to cultural food
and combining multiple trips are.

Being foreign-born is one but not the only factor determining how individuals make
decisions in a diverse food environment. As the regression models showed, household
size and age also were important factors in shaping one’s shopping patterns. In Upper
Darby, having a larger family increased the likelihood of shopping at a more diverse set
of stores. Shopping at a more diverse food destination may be a shopping tactic to extend
food dollars and/or to meet multiple different needs. Aging, however, had a reverse
impact on the ways that individuals made decisions on where to do most of their grocery
shopping. Two groups (35-44 and 55-64) were more likely to solely rely on
supermarkets. It is not possible to certainly explain this shopping behavior given that
many factors determine individuals’ decisions. Nonetheless, shopping only at
supermarkets may be suitable for a young family (35-44) who - between caring for
children and working hours - may not have sufficient times for multiple trips. Meanwhile, the older shoppers (55-64) are more likely to live in a family of two, where a single supermarket may perfectly meet their needs.

**A diverse food environment promotes a more diverse and healthy diet**

Shopping in a diverse food environment enabled the residents, especially the foreign-born shoppers, to have a more diverse diet. The findings showed that there was a positive association between number of visited stores and the DDS, in a way that each additional store added two food groups to the participants’ diet. Among other factors determining DDS were age and money spent on food, where spending more money increased the DDS and aging decreased the likelihood of having a full and diverse diet. While the number of stores visited mattered for having a diverse diet, types of food stores that contribute to the residents’ diet varied based on place of origin and ethnicity.

Supermarkets and one other food destination provided access to almost all the food groups the US-born shoppers consumed in a week. Vegetables, grains and meats made up most of the US-born shoppers’ weekly diet. Added sugars (e.g. juice, sweetened beverages) and refined grains (e.g. cookies, cakes) had a small portion in the diet of the US-born shoppers; however, they had a significantly higher odds of consuming these two food groups compared to all other participants. The US-born shoppers accessed most of what they needed (87%) by solely or mainly shopping at supermarkets. Doing so increased the likelihood of the US-born shoppers to consume chicken, saturated fats and grains. Saturated fats in this study pertain to processed and preserved food, including pizza and fried food. The HEI considers saturated fats as unhealthy food products not to be consumed or consumed in moderation. Consumption of saturated fats is linked to increased risk of cardiovascular diseases (Siri-Tarino et al. 2010).

To foreign-born shoppers, all types of Food Destination Categories (FDC) contributed to their diets. Products such as vegetables; grains; nuts, seeds and beans; seafoods, and meat were important to the diet of the foreign-born shoppers. Supermarkets provided access to some of these essential items. Shopping at supermarkets only provided 28.6 percent of the food items consumed by the foreign-born shoppers in a week. Shopping only at supermarkets was associated with consumption of meat among foreign-born shoppers, and refined grains and chicken among African and Indian shoppers, respectively. Shopping at supermarkets increased the odds of consuming only one (i.e. grain) food group important to the foreign-born shoppers. Shopping at diverse food stores and ethnic grocery stores, on the other hand, were associated with consumption of seafood, dairy, grains, nuts, seeds and beans. Seafood is known as a healthy source of protein and is essential to the diet of many immigrant groups such as Africans, East and Southeast Asians. Similarly, grains are important both to the diet of the foreign-born shoppers and as a source of healthy protein. However, due to limited information, it is not possible to precisely evaluate the healthfulness of the grain products consumed by the foreign-born population.

Despite the important role of supermarkets in food provision, they may promote unhealthy diets. Consuming refined grains and saturated fats were associated with shopping only at supermarkets. This is similar to the result of a study in Brazil that
documented how supermarkets contributed to consumption of ultra-processed products (Machado et al. 2018). The same study showed that shopping at traditional retail (street vendors, small markets, small farmers and butcheries) was associated with a smaller consumption of processed foods. The findings from the current study also support this statement that shopping at a diverse set of food stores (including ethnic food markets) increased consumption of health protective items such as seafood, grains, nuts, seeds, beans and dairy. This study did not collect nutrition value of these products. For example, it is not clear whether or not the shoppers purchased low or high fat dairy products at the ethnic food stores. However, a similar study on the relationship between BMI and food purchasing of African immigrants pointed to a potential health benefits of ethnic markets (Hosler et al. 2016). This study showed that shopping at supermarkets and ethnic markers were associated with a lower BMI in Guyanese adults. In this study, the closest healthy ethnic market was 0.7 mile away compared with 1.7 miles away to the closest supermarket (Hosler et al. 2016).

**CONCLUSION**

The diverse food environment of Upper Darby is neither black nor white. It is not a “food desert” with limited access to healthy foods nor a “food oasis” where all residents access, purchase and consume healthy foods. The food environment of Upper Darby locates somewhere in between these two ends, so does its residents, their food shopping, and consumption patterns. Shoppers in Upper Darby do have access to a wide range of food destinations including typical national chain supermarkets, ethnic grocery stores, and produce markets. The diversity of food destinations provided the participants with an ability to navigate the food environment based on their own needs, preferences and food budget. National chain supermarkets played a significant role in food access and consumption of the US-born shoppers. The foreign-born shoppers, however, depended on all types of food destinations - especially ethnic grocery stores- in order to purchase the foods that were important to their diets.

These findings of this chapter demonstrate how residents of a diverse suburban community shop for food and what they consume. Supermarkets and supercenters still matter. However, they are not the only place that residents of this old industrial suburb visited to purchase the food they needed. As the chapter showed, ethnic food supermarkets, grocery stores, farmers markets and produce markets diversified the food environment of this suburban township. These findings help to demonstrate how food environment and shopping looks like in the increasingly diversified US metro suburbs. Food environments of the US metro regions are becoming more diverse as more and more working-class immigrants and African-American residents find older suburbs an ideal place to locate. As such, this chapter invites the future researchers to further explore how living in multi-ethnic suburban communities, as home to large low-income and minority population, impact people’s food shopping, diet and ultimately their health. The findings also make a case for the roles of ethnic food stores in promoting healthy diet, especially for the immigrant population. This chapter contributes to the small, but growing, literature on the roles small, local, and ethnic grocery stores in shaping people’s food access. As the experiences of foreign-born shoppers showed, supermarkets and supercenters do not dominate the food environment of Upper Darby; ethnic food stores and other retailers play an important role in helping Upper Darby residents to have access
to a more complete diet. The ethnic food stores not only provided access to cultural foods for different groups, but also were able to limit temptation for consumption of unhealthy foods. For public health scholars and advocates of healthy food access, the ethnic grocery stores can be a model to better understand how small stores can promote a healthy diet. Most public health interventions, grants and funding sources focus on providing financial and infrastructure assistance necessary to increase availability of healthy foods mainly by bringing fresh produce to corner stores. Interventions of this sort do less so to eliminate or reduce stocking of unhealthy foods such as various high-calorie, low-nutrition snacks and processed foods. Further exploration of ethnic food businesses, their operation and business models can help to understand how to turn corner and convenient stores to places that offer fresh produce and carry items that enable customers to prepare a meal instead of providing them with prepared meals.

Figure 5.1 Percentage of Participants from Different Ethnic Groups Who Shopped at Each Food Destination Category (FDC)
Figure 5. 2 Dietary Diversity Score for Different Ethnic Groups

Figure 5. 3 Share of each Food Destination Category (FDC) in Shaping the Weekly Diet of US-born and Foreign-born Participants
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APPENDIX A. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

A survey about access to food in Upper Darby

This study looks at where people often shop, what they eat, and whether or not they have easy access to their preferred foods. Completing the survey takes about 15 minutes. The study is approved by the University of Pennsylvania. Your participation is voluntary and confidential. Your participation will help us to have a better understanding about the ways that residents shop for food in a diverse community. If you have any questions, please contact Maryam Khojasteh at 716-954-7429 or maryamkh@upenn.edu.

Background Information

1. Age
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-34
   c. 35-44
   d. 45-54
   e. 55-64
   f. 65 or more
2. Sex
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Prefer not to disclose
3. Race/Ethnicity
   a. Black/African American, not Hispanic
   b. White/Caucasian not Hispanic
   c. Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander
   d. American Indian or Alaska native
   e. Multi-racial
   f. Other (please specify)
4. Do you consider yourself to be Latino/Hispanic?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Don’t know
5. Nationality (country of origin):
6. What is your home’s zip code?
7. What is the closest street intersection to your home?
8. How many people live in your household?
9. Do you have a working private vehicle?

Food shopping

10. How often do you go for grocery shopping?
    a. Less than once a month
    b. Once a month
    c. 2-3 times a month
d. Once a week
e. 2-3 times a week
f. Daily

11. What is your main food shopping store? Please provide street address or the closest intersection.

12. How do you typically travel to your major food store?
   a. Public transportation
   b. Driving my own vehicle
   c. Driving a rental car
   d. Getting a ride
   e. Walking
   f. Cab/Uber/Lyft
   g. A combination of two or more modes

13. What do you typically buy at your main food store?

14. On average, how much do you spend during each visit to your main food store?
   a. Less than 20 dollars
   b. Less than 50 dollars
   c. 50-100 dollars
   d. 100-200 dollars
   e. More than 200 dollars

15. Why do you choose this store as your main place to shop for food?

16. Is this the same place you shop for fresh produce? If YES, please skip to question #20.
   i. Yes
   ii. No

17. If not, where do you usually buy fresh produce? Please provide street address or the closest intersection.

18. Why do you choose this place to purchase fresh produce?

19. How do you typically travel to and from this store?
   a. Public transportation
   b. Driving my own vehicle
   c. Driving a rental car
   d. Getting a ride
   e. Walking
   f. Cab/Uber/Lyft
   g. A combination of two or more modes

20. Do you have any other favorite place to shop for food? (This could include other food stores, food trucks, farmers markets etc.)

Food consumption

21. Not including breakfast, how often do you cook food at home?
   a. Everyday
   b. Every other day
   c. Less than 3 times in a week
   d. Never

22. For how many people do you prepare food?
23. Please name at least 5 food items that you consume frequently in a typical week. 
(this could include foods that are important to your cuisines or diet).

**Neighborhood quality**

24. Can you find most of the food you need at stores in Upper Darby. 
   a. Yes 
   b. No 
   c. Somewhat 
25. Can you find your cultural food at stores in Upper Darby. 
   a. Yes 
   b. No 
   c. Somewhat 
   d. Does not apply 
26. Can you afford the food available at food stores in Upper Darby. 
   a. Yes 
   b. No 
   c. Somewhat 
27. Are you satisfied with the quality of foods in Upper Darby. 
   a. Yes 
   b. No 
   c. Somewhat 
28. Do you like living in Upper Darby? 
   a. Yes 
   b. No 
   c. Somewhat 
29. Do you call Upper Darby “home”? 
   a. Yes 
   b. No 
   c. Somewhat 
30. In the next 5 years, would you like to stay in Upper Darby or move to another city? 
   a. Stay here 
   b. Move out 
   c. Do not know 

*Thank you so much for your participation!*
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION
MULTIFACETED IMPACTS OF IMMIGRANT FOOD BUSINESSES ON COMMUNITY WELLBEING

During my fieldworks in summer of 2018, the H-Mart food court was my refuge; a place where I took a rest, had lunch, organized my notes, conducted surveys. The very first few times I ordered food from one of the Korean restaurants, I was not sure what to expect. All I knew was that I needed an inexpensive, warm food that felt like a home-made meal. The Korean restaurant did not disappoint. Every time, I received a large bowl of food, accompanied with soup, and a few side dishes – all for 10 dollars. I quickly became a regular customer. While I never managed to speak more than a few words with the Korean woman in charge of the store, we started to exchange a few smiles and nods – she was acknowledging my loyalty to her store and I was appreciating her welcoming me.

Feeling welcomed, at-home, and at-ease are how I feel whenever I step into an H-Mart or a 99 Ranch, the largest Chinese supermarket chain in the States. To be sure, none of these places carry my cultural foods, but I still purchase the bulk of my groceries from them. Passing by a commercial plaza in my suburban New Jersey community and seeing a Korean spa, a Korean BBQ, an H-Mart, Korean bakeries, a Mongolian Hot-Pot, a Taiwanese fried chicken, and a Malaysian restaurant all in one place makes me feel at home. These multi-ethnic food stores and supermarkets bring a level of comfort and vibrancy to the suburbs of New Jersey that were previously accessible only in diverse urban neighborhoods. The concept of “melting-pot” – however flawed – no longer sparks images of hustle and bustle of inner cities where different ethnic groups live next to one another. Multi-ethnic suburbs are the new face of diversity in 21st century America.

The working-class, multi-ethnic suburban community of Upper Darby challenges expectations of those who view this place either as a suburb, an “ethnoburb,” or a working-class township. Upper Darby is a suburban township, but not in the early ways of being a racially and economically homogenous community and with separation of uses. Upper Darby is home to a large population of immigrants, including those who bypassed the city to directly settle in this suburban township. However, immigrants of Upper Darby are from a working-class background and different from high-income and highly-educated foreign-born residents of “ethnoburbs.” Their different socioeconomic status does not mean that these newcomers did not have a substantial impact on the social, economic, cultural, physical, and in this case, the food environment of the township. Upper Darby, especially its downtown, is home to a large low-income and working-class minority population. Unlike what many previous researchers suggest, its food environment is far away from being “deserted.” The food environment of downtown Upper Darby is dense and diverse mainly because of many immigrant entrepreneurs who own and run small to medium-sized groceries and restaurants.

Immigrants in Upper Darby contributed to community wellbeing in more than one way. First and foremost, they brought the population base needed to resume growth in the township. As chapter 2 showed, the continuous wave of immigrants – from Greek immigrants to newcomers from Asian, Latin American and African countries – reversed the trend of population loss, provided economic activities, and repurposed, revived, and established community-serving retails and community organizations that provided
essential and necessary services to meet the growing needs of the diverse population. In the “bedroom” community of Upper Darby, where there is no major industrial base, immigrant-run small businesses are the main economic activities that capture residents’ and visitors’ cash, contribute to the township tax base, and stimulate business growth. The multifaceted impacts of immigrants on their communities, in fact, are most visible through these small to medium-sized food businesses that immigrants own and operate through the township.

The turn-over among the immigrant food businesses were fundamental in stabilizing this first-ring suburban community. Not only did many immigrant food entrepreneurs open businesses in previously vacant properties, but as chapter 3 presented, the high rate of business and ownership transfer helped the township to (a) maintain a steady level of business activity in the downtown and (b) provide a continuous access to services and food. Local governments, credit unions and funding agencies, often, are not fond of a high turn-over rate when investing in local businesses. Funders, even those who work with small-scale businesses, consider entrepreneurs with a history of short-lived businesses risky investments, and would ultimately deem them as ineligible to receive any financial support. A high turn-over rate may indicate negative business characteristics for a single business; however, the collective impacts of turn-over may be positive for the community at large. In an alternative reality where Upper Darby did not benefit from having a renewed source of entrepreneurs to take over closed businesses, the community could have experienced the same destiny that many other local commercial strips have faced: high rate of vacancy, departure of other businesses and a gradual decline – a trajectory, that indeed, the township started to embark on which was most evident in the closure of the Sears store in 1980s.

A dying downtown was not a case in Upper Darby mainly for its ready-to-work immigrant entrepreneurs who were effective in reviving the economic and commercial core of the township. The Vietnamese and Pakistani examples in chapter 4 demonstrated how the established immigrant entrepreneurs trained and helped a new generation of business owners who were able to continue their business – in the case of the Vietnamese store- or establish their own shop – in the case of the Pakistani store. In the ethnic economy and enclave literature, scholars have discussed how immigrant entrepreneurs provide access to jobs, experience and income to their co-ethnic community (Chrysostome and Arcand 2009). This also holds true in Upper Darby. However, what immigrant entrepreneurs of Upper Darby offer is not merely developing a workforce who would ultimately stay “trapped” in the cycle of low-wage jobs (Light et al. 1994). As these examples presented, immigrant entrepreneurs provided an opportunity where they intentionally taught the new business owners of the nitty gritty of running a grocery store. While these new entrepreneurs still work on a business sector with low profit margin, they now own their own business, an economic asset, which could help them to gain accumulated income, access loans and mortgages, and become upwardly mobile. A common tail among many second-generation immigrants is their memories of growing up in their parents’ grocery/convenience store(Zhou and Bankston 1998); a concept common enough that recently has received its own show – Kim’s Convenience, story of a Korean-Canadian college student who helps her parents running a convenience store that payed for her tuition.
Besides sustaining and reviving the economic fabric of the community, the immigrant food businesses contributed to forming and strengthening community relationships in this suburban township. Political and social scientists have extensively studied social cohesion in heterogeneous communities (Wickes et al. 2014), exploring whether it is possible to maintain cohesion and social capital in increasingly diverse communities (Letki 2008). In the multi-ethnic suburb of Upper Darby, racial tensions and residential segregation challenge the township government who works toward a more integrated community. Under these circumstances, immigrant food businesses are the only cultural ambassadors that provide opportunities for people of different backgrounds to engage in a similar activity at a public setting. As customers and storeowners shared in chapter 4, small-scale businesses provide opportunities for face-to-face and personal interaction; an interaction that have led in forming community trust between and within different ethnic groups and increased perception of safety. The township, aware of this potential, has invested in this opportunity to use food as a bridge between different groups of the residents in Upper Darby through organizing events such as the International Food Festival. While exploring social cohesion and capital were not the focus of this study, these examples point to the crucial roles that immigrant food businesses play in building relationships in a diverse setting, a prerequisite for social capital (Putnam 2000).

The immigrant-run food businesses diversified the suburban food landscape of Upper Darby. The working-class diverse residents of Upper Darby have a wider variety of options to shop for food besides national chain supermarkets, fast-food franchises, and corner stores. What makes Upper Darby food environment different from the predominant descriptions of low-income and minority neighborhoods is a wide range of food businesses that provide access to affordable, healthy and wholesome food. In this food environment, residents have a choice on where to shop for food; while an Indian household may shop entirely at a chain supermarket, the other may prefer to shop at a small Indian grocery store. As chapter 5 showed, residents of Upper Darby visited a more diverse range of food stores to shop for food compared to a national sample. Chapter 4 demonstrated how customers sorted the existing food stores based on various considerations, from a desire to have a personal interaction with shopkeepers to an ability to benefit from various saving deals. Having choice and control over where to shop and what to consume bring an integrity to individuals’ relationship with food. To Upper Darby residents, where to shop and what to eat are not rights reserved for the wealthy. In Upper Darby, residents do not have to shop at Fresh Grocer or H-Mart because it is their only healthy food outlet. They do so, because they choose to. In the diverse and dense food environment of Upper Darby, these choices also happen to be a variety of places that offer “fresh apples” such as various ethnic grocery stores and produce markets.

The dense food environment of Upper Darby promotes a shopping style which is potentially health protective. The abundance of small grocery stores within walking distance from residential areas encourage shoppers to walk to and from their food destinations. Walking access to food retail that provide healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food is essential in food access of elderly immigrants. This group of population, who faces language difficulties, would have experienced tremendous challenges in access to food had it not been for various neighborhood ethnic grocery stores. The vehicle-less, elderly population are not the only groups who benefit from
living in a dense food environment. As chapter 4 presented, even those shoppers who had access to a vehicle chose to walk to shop at an ethnic food market. Immigrant food entrepreneurs – taking advantage of the walkable layout of downtown Upper Darby – established businesses and services that meet the daily needs of the community. Not only the neighborhood ethnic food stores encourage walking, but also, they pull out residents out of their houses more often. The ability to walk frequently to access basic needs promote an active lifestyle. Many urban planners and public health officials seek to encourage and promote an active lifestyle to reduce health risks associated with a sedentary life (Ding and Gebel 2012, Giles-Corti et al. 2015). To many low-income and working-class residents of Upper Darby who may not be able to afford gym memberships or find an allocated time for exercise, the simple everyday act of walking to shop may be their only dose of physical activity they can receive.

Small ethnic food markets also help to make the healthy choice an easy one. To be sure, residents of all backgrounds still rely on supermarkets and supercenters to shop for food, as presented in chapter 5. Nonetheless, having access to a wide range of small stores that provide access to essential food products reduce the necessity of visiting supermarkets. Supermarkets, loaded with temptation for inexpensive high calorie and low nutrition foods, may not always provide access to the healthiest diet (Machado et al. 2018). This is also evident from the survey results that showed those who solely shop at supermarkets have an increased likelihood to consume foods saturated in fats or refined grains. Small ethnic food markets, on the other hand, constrain the food stock to items essential to prepare a meal. Not only the small ethnic food markets provide access to a healthy food stock, but also they play a crucial role in the diet diversity of foreign-born population.

**WHY IMMIGRANT FOOD ENTREPRENUERS OF UPPER DARBY MATTER**

Immigrant food entrepreneurs of Upper Darby rebuild the township in ways that protect health and wellbeing of the residents. These actors contributed to physical and economic revitalization of the community, helped to foster inter-ethnic relationships, promoted an active lifestyle, and made the healthy food choices convenient ones. Scholars have previously documented the extent to which immigrants have contributed to each one of these outcomes – except for those related to physical activity and healthy food access. While previous studies examined the physical, economic, social, cultural and political restructuring of new and emerging immigrant gateways, they often neglected the health effects of immigrant-led revitalization. This study provides evidence to argue that none of these effects – from physical restructuring to health protection- are independent from one another. In fact, each one of them is a product of a larger interconnected system through which immigrants shape their new communities.

What the immigrant food entrepreneurs of Upper Darby illuminate in this study challenges the ways that public health scholars in North America understand and study a “healthy immigrant effect” (Kennedy et al. 2015). Healthy immigrant effect points to the fact that many immigrants and their children are healthier upon their arrival than the native-born population (Gushulak 2007). Healthy immigrant effect, however, diminishes over time through processes such as cultural and dietary acculturation (Stella et al. 2003). This framework is static and views the health and wellbeing of immigrants as a mere stand-alone outcome. For example, these studies show that newcomers have lower rates
of diabetes and obesity (Antecol and Bedard 2006), but they come short in explaining the reasonings behind these patterns.

Immigrant food entrepreneurs of Upper Darby provide one explanation for the healthier status of new Americans by demonstrating how their diverse businesses and food stock have created environments that support healthier decisions. In doing so, they invite us to understand the “healthy immigrant effect” as a product of a system rather than the end-result; a system that immigrants themselves have built and contributed to. This system – or the ways that immigrants build places - and its role in health and wellbeing of receiving communities suggest new areas of focus for urban planners who care about both place-making and health and wellbeing of communities.

Planners and ethnic studies scholars who explore how Latin-Americans (re)shape US communities have named this interconnected system a “Latino urbanism” or “Latino place-making” (Diaz and Torres 2012, Lara 2012, Arreola 2012). While this term exclusively pertains to the Latinx communities, its premise is adaptable to other immigrant populations. These scholars argue that there are particular characteristics to the ways that Latin Americans build their communities, whether it is in their vernacular architecture or their use of public places. Sandoval-Strausz expands this argument to suggest that there are potential health benefits to Latino-built landscapes, referring to the role of public spaces and dense commercial areas in pulling out Latin-Americans during Chicago heatwave and saving lives (Sandoval-Strausz 2013, Klinenberg 2015). The findings of this study align with Sandoval-Strausz’s theory and provide evidence that immigrant-run businesses contribute to community wellbeing at different levels of influence, from rebuilding physical and economic structure of the community, to increasing safety and forming relationships, to supporting individuals’ healthy eating choices.

Upper Darby, its trajectory, and its food environment are not an anomaly. If anything, they represent what food environment, shopping and consumption look like in increasingly diverse suburbs or small to medium-sized townships across the US. In the suburbs of 78 of the 97 largest metro areas, the foreign-born population grew faster than the overall population; Upper Darby is only one of these towns. Take New Brunswick NJ for an example. New Brunswick is a small township of 57,073 people. The township experienced a sudden growth in population in 1930s, mainly because of Central European immigrants from Hungary. Post 1970, the township faced continuous population loss. This trend changed after 1990 with arrival of Latin-American – mainly Mexican-immigrants. Today, 50 percent of the population are Hispanic. In 2012, Fresh Grocer, the only supermarket of the township closed. Local governments officially announced New Brunswick a “food desert”. In this newly “deserted” township, the only thing that was not in shortage was Mexican-run grocery stores and restaurants. In fact, on the same block where Fresh Grocer used to stand there exist a few bakeries and three large Mexican grocery stores that offer a wide selection of inexpensive fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and seafoods, as well as household items. In 2015, Key Food took over the Fresh Grocer vacant parcel, and local media and city government celebrated its opening as it put an end to the “food desert” status of the township. While the township governments were busy negotiating a 20-year lease with Key Food, these grocery stores were serving healthy and
affordable foods to the Latin community and African-American residents who lived nearby (Loyer 2015).

This story repeats itself in other immigrant receiving communities. Buffalo NY, for example, is a rust belt city of 258,612 people which is often characterized by abandoned and vacant properties, outmigration, and departure of businesses. The city, however, has seen a slow resurgence in recent years with the population increasing by 5% from 2005 to 2009 due to arrival of new immigrants and refugees. The newcomers have successfully revitalized many low-income neighborhoods. Despite the role of immigrants in rebuilding communities, these actors are often invisible in the local government’s economic development strategies which often focus on physical improvement projects to attract large companies and businesses, such as the downtown and waterfront revitalization projects (Shibley et al. 2016). Buffalo’s recent economic growth has had little translation into actual development for low-income communities. Today, only a few supermarkets serve the city which are often out of the physical reach of the low-income residents without access to a private vehicle (Widener et al. 2011). Despite the lack of access to large-scale food outlets, immigrant neighborhoods are home to many small-scale grocery stores that offer fresh produce and culturally appropriate foods. The increasing population of immigrants and refugees begets the growth of demand for cultural products unmet by the general market. As the result, Buffalo has witnessed a visible growth of immigrant-run eateries and food businesses throughout the city. As of 2013, the most recent update found on these statistics, there were 56 ethnic food places, significant enough to draw the attention of news outlets and magazines about the growing diversity of the Buffalo’s food landscape (Kelly 2013).

Immigrant food entrepreneurs – in Upper Darby, New Brunswick, Buffalo, or in other similar diverse towns - serve individuals of all backgrounds, especially those with limited financial capital. The line of Latin-American and African-American shoppers in front of the fresh seafood section of H-Mart is not exclusive to H-Mart of Upper Darby. This is a familiar scene that shoppers encounter in variety of ethnic food stores- from Vietnamese supermarkets in heart of Philadelphia to Chinese supermarkets in Edison NJ. These stores challenge and complement the accepted wisdoms on how people with low-oncomes shop for foods and navigate their food environment. These stores, and their stories, are particularly important as most of the knowledge in regard to food environment, shopping and consumptions patterns, and their relations to health are based on studies that examine these patterns in urban neighborhoods. Not only do immigrant-run food stores complicate the black-white, simplified depiction of food environments, but they also provide a basis for further studies to explore how food shopping and consumption in low-income suburban communities differ from those of an urban population.

FUTURE POLICY AND RESEARCH DIRECTION
The findings of this research carry implications for local governments, planners, and public health scholars and professionals who seek to achieve the triple goals of building places, creating healthy communities and facilitating immigrants’ integration. This research provides evidence for the multifaceted ways that newcomers impact their new communities. Understanding the multiple roles that immigrants play in their new communities not only adds nuance to immigration debates and understandings of immigrants’ impacts, but also provides receiving communities with more opportunities to
tap into the potential of newcomers in building communities. Identifying these roles, their connections, and benefits can enable local governments and community stakeholders to increase their capacity and resources amidst declining public funding for addressing multiple issues challenging communities with limited resources.

First and foremost, what immigrant food entrepreneurs need is acknowledgment for what they are already offering to communities. As long as these actors and their multifaceted impacts on communities are invisible to local governments and policy makers, public policies, funders and organizations continue to bypass them as valuable assets in communities. Recognition is crucial as many of the existing incentives and programs do not reflect the particular challenges of immigrant food entrepreneurs and/or are not a proper fit. For example, food system planners, community advocates and policy makers have provided a range of tool kits and strategies to bring retailers to underserved areas, bring healthy foods to the shelves of small stores, and create healthy corner stores. To attract big box stores, these strategies include offering generous financial incentives. To create healthy corner stores, the tool kits suggest helping storeowners with storage areas, grants to purchase facilities, providing labeling and better marketing. To be sure, all these recommendations matter, important and can be effective. However, the immigrant food entrepreneurs of places like Upper Darby cannot benefit from any of these incentives/grants as they already have a fully functioning grocery stores that stock a large variety of fresh produce. This does not mean that immigrant food entrepreneurs do not need any assistance, but it calls for existing healthy food access financing to be more reflective of their particular needs and challenges.

Second, community and economic development policies and strategies need to provide larger support for initiatives and programs that invest in development versus growth. Traditional market-based economic development strategies invest in projects that bring jobs, income and create businesses. These strategies often make cities and townships attractive for investment – an investment that often comes from outside of the community (Shaffer et al. 2006). Community advocates argue that market-based interventions generate benefits and revenues for the property owner, business owner, local government, and non-resident workers and not for low-income residents (DeFilippis and Saegert 2013). In other words, the generated revenue from marketing the neighborhoods for external investment does not stay within the community.

Immigrant food entrepreneurs, on the other hand, embody all benefits that community economic development professional seek after, such as contributing to community wealth and ownership over its assets. Community economic development professional focus on comprehensive, long-term and sustainable changes within the community by relying on the community’s assets and empowering the residents to take control of their own community. However, there is an imbalance between strategies that support the former rather than later type of investment. While progressive cities – such as Philadelphia – work intentionally to invest in small and minority-owned business development, numbers of jobs created are still a major goal of municipalities.

Third, local governments and immigrant advocates need to consider business ownership as a strategy that facilitates integration of immigrants into the social and economic fabrics of receiving communities. Local governments and nonprofit organizations in receiving
communities across the US provide a range of programs and services to facilitate adjustment of newcomers in their community. The reach, content and rigor of these services depend on the size and capital of the receiving communities, their history of immigration, and presence of an established network of civil society institutions. Understanding the potential of immigrants to establish businesses, some nonprofit organizations offer a range of business training classes in order to increase the business literacy of immigrants and familiarize them with the business and fiscal environment of US.

In some cases, such as Philadelphia, nonprofit organizations assist immigrants in providing legal guidance on how to proceed with opening a business or providing classes that help them scale up their businesses. In communities with limited resources – such as Upper Darby - integration assistance is more often limited to English and citizenship classes. These basic classes are important. However, none of the business owners appeared to be challenged by limited English abilities. In other words, what the township offers in terms of services may not necessarily be helpful in preparing immigrant entrepreneurs to have an easier time establishing or expanding their business. The township government cited fiscal and human capital limitations as major obstacles in designing and delivering interventions that can leverage the potential of immigrants in community building and economic development. The same constraints can also explain the limited information the township had of particular needs and challenges of immigrant (food) entrepreneurs in their community.

Lastly, existing policies, programs and initiatives can amplify their impacts and leverage scarce and disparate public dollars by working with a more integrated and comprehensive agenda. The multifaceted impacts of immigrant food entrepreneurs on community wellbeing demonstrate that they perform multiple functions and offer multiple benefits to the community. Planners and public health professionals have already acknowledged the relationship between healthy food access and economic development. Local governments and nonprofit organizations such as community development financial institutions use a series of economic development tools and funding sources – such as Community Development Block Grants, redevelopment funds, tax credits and other incentives – to promote healthy food access, mainly through opening supermarkets in low-income communities.

In low-resource communities with small capacity such as Upper Darby, this relationship can be reversed; in that, public health funding sources and tools can be used to support community and economic development initiatives which ultimately could improve the health and wellbeing of residents. For example, the limited financial and professional capacity of Upper Darby does not provide the township with tools to support and expand the business of immigrant entrepreneurs; the township even struggles to find funding for small projects such as advertisement and marketing campaigns. To maximize the roles of immigrant food entrepreneurs in creating healthy food environments, offering business classes might be more impactful than providing entrepreneurs with infrastructures and facilities they already have. The reality of limited capacity of governments in small townships highlights the significance of considering the multifaceted impacts of immigrants on community and a necessity for more flexibility and integration between public health, community and economic development funding streams.
This research explored how immigrant-led revitalization contributes to community wellbeing through the lens of food entrepreneurship. The findings build the groundwork for future research to further explore the health-effects of immigrant place-making. This work encourages planning and public health scholars to have a more holistic and integrated understanding of development, wellbeing, and their interplay. The same way that planners are using policy and regulation to support health and wellbeing of communities, public health professionals can view community economic development as a long-term investment in the health of the public, relevant to their profession, and a potential area of intervention.

In order to advocate for the aforementioned policy directions as well as designing appropriate, successful interventions, future research should consider questions that could complement and update the predominant understandings of food environments, food access, and immigrant food entrepreneurship. Changing the ways that future research will understand, measure and evaluate these topics is especially important as they provide the basis for public policies and government interventions, in a similar fashion that numerous public health studies provided the evidence-base support for funding and investing in supermarket intervention.

Public health and planning scholars can contribute to building this body of knowledge by (1) acknowledging that supermarkets and supercenters – while important – are not the only source of food, especially in multi-ethnic communities; and (2) developing food environment, food access and consumption surveys and measurement tools that are culturally appropriate. For example, the popular, validated Nutrition Environment Measurement Survey that evaluates the healthfulness of food stores is entirely geared toward a Western diet (Glanz et al. 2005). It misses an opportunity to rigorously capture the value of “other retailers” in healthy food access. Further projects might involve (3) conducting research that highlights roles of “other retailers” in healthy food provision; (4) investing in longitudinal studies that evaluate the long-term health-effects of community development projects; (5) learning about particular challenges and needs of immigrant (food) entrepreneurs, especially those who work in small townships and suburbs; (6) exploring how increased commercial diversification of US suburbs shape inter-ethnic relationships and in return, how these relationships impact immigrant economic performance and community wellbeing at large; and (7) investigating the various other ways that immigrant – business and social – entrepreneurs contribute to health and wellbeing of communities, from providing care for aging population. Lastly, scholars across disciplines should continue to build an evaluation culture wherein progress beyond increase/decrease in numeric metrics is considered as legitimate evidence and powerful enough to inform policies and engage policy makers. For example, nonprofit organizations that focus on building a just, sustainable food systems have sought to build such a culture by integrating access to food with other issues that impact communities such as integration of immigrants and refugees, assisting former incarcerated individuals, youth development and community safety. Some of these organizations were, in fact, able to successfully campaign for policy changes around issues that affected their communities.
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