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**Don't Hassle Me, I'm Local:
The Integration of Latin American Settlers
in the Delmarva Peninsula**

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Abstract

This work is a case study of a 'new destination' for immigration to the United States, examining community changes and responses over time in the rural Delmarva Peninsula and contributing to an expanding literature on 'best practices' for immigrant integration. Significant numbers of Latin American immigrants first arrived in the early 1990s, settling out of the Eastern migrant stream and taking year-round jobs in the regional poultry-processing industry. The immediate concerns of this research are two-fold: first, to identify the successful practices and promising initiatives that have surfaced over the last fifteen years in Delmarva – successful and promising in enabling immigrants to participate as full members of their host communities – and second, to identify the current and future challenges that face Delmarva towns in the processes of accommodation and settlement. Data collection involved approximately thirty-five in-depth qualitative interviews, use of secondary sources such as newspaper articles and U.S. Census data, and participant observation through volunteering in three nonprofit organizations working with the Spanish-speaking immigrant community. Overall, public ambivalence towards immigration – anxiety about the sociocultural impact tempered by recognition of the importance of immigrant labor in the poultry industry – engenders acceptance, albeit an uneasy or reluctant acceptance. In this environment, many successful practices have arisen. However, a second wave of migration consisting of retirees and second-home buyers from overcrowded neighboring states is changing the Delmarva landscape and creating new challenges for immigrant integration, especially in terms of housing. In addition, the region faces challenges specific to the healthy development and education of the second generation.

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Introduction

Dela...where?

The Delmarva Peninsula consists of the state of Delaware and the Eastern Shore counties of Maryland and Virginia. Along the Peninsula's eastern border, the Delaware River widens into the Delaware Bay and meets the Atlantic Ocean; to the west, the Chesapeake Bay forms a wide moat shielding Delmarva from the hustle of Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Interstate 95 snaking down the East Coast. Only in recent decades have the tremors of social change begun to shake the rural peninsula. One aspect of this change is the region's emergence as a 'new destination' for immigration.

During the 1990s, researchers began to notice significant shifts in immigrant settlement patterns across the U.S.; with growing frequency, migrants arrived in destinations other than the traditional six gateway states (California, Texas, New York, Illinois, Florida, and New Jersey). Although the numerical majority of foreign-born still live in those six states, the growth rates of the foreign-born population in those states have decreased, while the growth rates have skyrocketed in states like Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, and Delaware.¹ Accordingly, the attention of some researchers has shifted, to what have been labeled new immigrant gateways, new destinations, or non-traditional receiving areas.

Like other non-traditional migration destinations, Delmarva provides a window onto questions of migration and settlement, integration and community. The peninsula, however, is unique in its geography, history, and current demographic

pressures. Not only do Delmarvans have little experience of diversity other than the still highly residentially segregated black and white groups, but water on three sides historically kept the land isolated and cut off from outsiders of any sort. For the most part, Delmarva was left to itself until two massive bridge projects were completed in 1952 and 1964, connecting it to the mainland to the west and to the south, respectively. When my family moved there in 1987, they learned that "You ain't local unless you got people in the ground." At just about the same time, significant numbers of Latin American migrants began to move to the area.

In the first years of their arrival, tensions arose between long-time Delmarva residents and immigrants, and the social and linguistic isolation of the newcomers led to several problems that affected the community as a whole. Now, fifteen years down the road, what changes have occurred in the interactions between Latin American settlers and American-born Delmarva residents? Do we see "stasis, or integration?"² Through what mechanisms have immigrants adapted to and become part of their host communities? What factors in a small-town setting encourage or inhibit this adaptation, and what steps can be taken to promote community integration?

The Importance of Research on Integration in New Destinations

This research presents another piece of the puzzle of community integration by examining the processes of immigrant settlement in rural Delmarva, with a primary focus on Sussex County, Delaware. In the traditional destination cities, researchers have studied group interaction and integration in the first, second, and third

generations. In Delmarva, the second generation is still small, both numerically and literally – the majority is now in elementary school. However, even with settlement is still in early stages, rural new destinations offer researchers chances to observe individual and group interactions on a very different level, in a setting where the multiplicity of variables present in the modern metropolis are distilled to a much smaller number, and through this distillation we may see things that would remain obscured in sprawling cities.

The immediate concerns of this research are two-fold: first, to identify the successful practices and promising initiatives that have surfaced over the last fifteen years in Delmarva – successful and promising in enabling or empowering immigrants to participate as common members of their host communities – and second, to identify the current and future challenges that face Delmarva towns in the processes of accommodation and settlement. This research contributes to an expanding literature on ‘best practices’ for small towns facing rapid demographic change due to immigration. The spread of knowledge about such practices can help limit ethnic/racial tensions, violence, labor exploitation, and other unsavory consequences often witnessed in communities with marginalized populations.

Unique Delmarva

Delmarva is different from other rural new destinations in two important ways. First, as mentioned above, the historical and cultural background of the Peninsula is one of geographical isolation and interethnic relations starkly divided

along the black and white color line, with a high degree of continued residential and socioeconomic segregation and limited exposure to other ethnically or linguistically diverse groups. Other areas labeled new immigrant gateways such as Kansas and Nebraska actually have a history of over a century of Mexican migration:³ it might be more accurate to think of those locations as *renewed* destinations. Delmarva, however, does not have a historical record of Latin American migration and thus brings a different context to the individuals settling there today.

Second, other new immigrant gateways have had no or slow population growth, or even population decline as seen in Iowa.⁴ In contrast, Delmarva is reeling from overall population growth, due to something many other non-traditional destinations do not have: oceanfront property. Sussex County, Delaware, the primary destination for immigrants within the peninsula, experienced a 56% growth rate between 1990 and 2005.⁵ The overcrowded Eastern seaboard states of Pennsylvania and New Jersey are spilling retirees or second-home buyers into the (once) cheaper living in Delmarva, and DC-ites are moving to make their beach homes their primary homes. The beach towns were used to seeing their populations triple or quadruple during the summer, but now the few “Don’t Hassle Me, I’m Local” bumperstickers appear to be surrounded by PA plates year-round. Commuter traffic has emerged in an area that only knew weekend beach traffic, since people with service jobs at the shore cannot afford to live anywhere near them and are being pushed steadily inland.

The Delmarva Peninsula is in a state of flux, with certain areas experiencing runaway growth and development and residents feeling a significant change not only in population but in a way of life. Where and how do the Latin American immigrants

who live, work, and raise their families in Delmarva fit in to all of this? It's a question worth asking, one important to everyone who calls a community in Delmarva home.

What do we mean by integration?

This study discusses best practices for immigrant integration. I mentioned above that such practices help to enable or empower immigrants to participate as common members of their host communities. But what exactly is meant by integration? Pinning down a definition of the word proves difficult, yet its existence as a concept is rarely questioned. Few researchers have asked, as Adrian Favell does, “who or what is integrating whom and with what?”⁶ Scholars Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska note that conceptions of integration operate with the assumption of society as a cohesive, interconnected unit, an already integrated entity whose existence is threatened by the unincorporated element, the immigrant.⁷ This entity is based more on Anderson’s “imagined community”⁸ than on any empirical actuality; however, the perceived threat and the social consequences of this perception are very real. But integration matters to more than our perceptions and imaginings. For individuals left on the margins, the consequences are also very concrete. There are of course many ways to experience marginalization that are hardly the sole domain of immigrants. However, to conceptualize immigrant integration in new destinations, it is helpful to consider one extreme on the spectrum of migrant experience – a person completely marginalized by residence, language, employment, appearance, legal status, etc. While of course not every immigrant enters a receiving country at that extreme, many do. If

one end of the spectrum is isolation, exclusion, and marginalization, the other end of the spectrum is participation, inclusion, and integration. We can conceptualize integration as the process of moving away from that extreme of marginalization. “In its most general form,” writes Demetrios Papademetriou, Co-Director of the Migration Policy Institute, “integration is the process through which, over time, newcomers and hosts form an integral whole.”⁹ By definition, new destinations do not offer the length of time necessary for newcomers and hosts to approach an integral whole; however, new destinations will show processes of increasing or decreasing marginalization.

In her study of Salvadoran immigrants in Long Island, Sarah Mahler outlines several factors contributing to their marginalization.¹⁰ She describes the generation of low-wage jobs in the local economy, in industry as well as in a rising demand for services. The immigrants drawn by these jobs were unaware of the actual high cost of living in Long Island, a lack of knowledge that created an immediate disadvantage, which was only compounded by skills mismatches and skills deficiencies. For example, migrants who move from the Salvadoran countryside to suburban Long Island experience skills mismatches; the skills that serve them in a rural area are of little use in their new home. Urban residents are likewise affected by skills mismatches; any academic achievements or professional training from their countries of origin are worth little in the U.S., especially in the absence of legal work status. The most commonly experienced skill deficiency is lack of English ability. Furthermore, Mahler asserts that the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) contributed to the construction of marginality through its proposed employer sanctions. For the first time, employers who knowingly hired unauthorized workers

would be legally liable for their actions; prior to IRCA, only employees were held responsible. Although the promised employer sanctions rarely materialized, the fear of enforcement changed the labor environment for migrants. Fewer employers were willing to risk sanctions. In the narrowed immigrant labor market, remaining employers often take advantage of the fearful climate to exploit workers. IRCA effectively made immigrants more vulnerable, and opportunists profit off this vulnerability.¹¹ The limited work available to immigrants and the changing political climate engender increased isolation. Living in marginalization, these immigrants barely glimpse the mainstream society of the American dream. Opportunities for newcomers and natives to interact are significantly reduced, and there is little movement away from marginalization.

“The first objective of integration,” notes Papademetriou, “should be to enable newcomers to get the fairest possible returns on their human capital investments and thus contribute as early and as fully as possible to community life.”¹² In this, the roles of governments and employers are significant. Governments, ideally, are the monitors and enforcers of standards of decency and equity, and employers are crucial since the first link many migrants have to their communities is as employees. Both governments and employers can implement powerful protections against marginalization; conversely, governments and employers can create conditions of increased marginalization as evidenced in Long Island.

When we discuss integration, we are essentially speaking of assimilation, a concept first popularized among scholars by Robert E. Park in the 1920s. He and E.W. Burgess defined the term in *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*,¹³ and Park

continued to expand upon this theme, especially in *Race and Culture*.¹⁴ Theirs was a linear model, based on four stages of interaction between immigrants and the native-born: contact, competition, accommodation, and eventual assimilation. The assimilationists who followed added to or modified their model but upheld the basic linear direction of assimilation, in which the newcomer approaches and eventually becomes part of the mainstream. The major definitive work on the subject from the standpoint of linear assimilation is Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life*.¹⁵ In this, Gordon refines Park's model to seven stages: cultural, structural, marital, identificational, attitude-receptional, behavior-receptional, and civic assimilation. Gordon views his model through the three prevailing ideologies of assimilation at the time: Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism. "From the long-range point of view," he writes, "the goal of Anglo-conformity has been substantially, although not completely, achieved with regard to *acculturation*."¹⁶ Gordon shows the inadequacy of the melting pot hypothesis, which should produce new forms of American identity, structures, and institutions through the biological and cultural merging of various ethnic groups, pointing to the numbers as an obstacle to this outcome; the proportions of the merging elements are markedly uneven. At the historical peaks of 1890 and 1910, foreign-born residents comprised only 14.7% of the total US population.¹⁷ Even at this high point, which has not been reached since, the proportion of immigrants merging with the native-born is a small minority, and the idea of the melting pot ends up approximating Anglo-conformity, in that the minority is swallowed up by the majority in the merger.

In his elaboration on the position of the cultural pluralists, Gordon refers to his earlier point of the overwhelming triumph of acculturation and suggests that rather than cultural pluralism, “a more accurate term for the American situation is *structural pluralism*.”¹⁸ Gordon defined structural assimilation as the assimilation of minority groups into the majority structure – “entrance into the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society,” but later conceived American society as one comprised of structurally separate ethnic subsocieties, with distinct institutions and social networks.¹⁹ As he observes, “structural assimilation has turned out to be the rock on which the ships of Anglo-conformity and the melting pot have foundered.”²⁰ Although his work is the backbone of the linear assimilationist framework, he recognized the need for a structuralist explanation. Gordon’s model is unable to explain certain realities, such as the delayed assimilation of certain minority groups, divergences based on location or class, or the potential for individuals to assimilate in certain ways and not others.

The most influential theory to address these structural inequalities is that of “segmented assimilation,” elaborated by sociologists Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou.²¹ This term reflects the fact that American society is segmented and segregated, and immigrants will therefore assimilate only into the segment of society which is accessible to them. Zhou delineates three broad outcomes in her description of segmented assimilation: 1) a path of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle class, 2) downward assimilation into the underclass and cycles of permanent poverty, and 3) a path of economic advancement with lagged

assimilation – deliberate preservation of the immigrant community’s values and tight solidarity.²²

These three outcomes parallel the three modes of intergenerational incorporation identified by Portes and Rubén Rumbaut: *consonant acculturation*, *dissonant acculturation*, and *selective acculturation*.²³ In *consonant acculturation*, both first-generation parents and their second-generation children assimilate into the host society at a similar pace, a situation which most often occurs when parents have higher economic status, higher levels of education, or other resources that allow them to keep up with the cultural and linguistic adaptations of their children. *Dissonant acculturation* develops in the opposite set of circumstances; children outpace their parents in their quickness to abandon ties to the country of origin and their rapid acquisition of the host country’s language and cultural norms. Greater knowledge of the host society prematurely endows children with familial authority, as parents rely on them to be interpreters and guides. In this situation, parents can feel helpless and unable to adequately fulfill their roles as parents; the growing distance between generations undermines family unity and stability, and members of the second generation are at higher risk of downward assimilation. On the other hand, in a scenario of *selective acculturation*, the family is able to maintain the immigrant language and culture while adapting to the host society, frequently through the support of a strong co-ethnic community. Children’s partial retention of their parents’ language and customs moderates the cultural shift, and this slowed transition allows both generations to assimilate at a similar pace and intergenerational conflict is

reduced. This scenario most often yields positive socioeconomic outcomes for both generations and, by extension, the communities in which they live.²⁴

Throughout this discussion, the words ‘acculturation,’ ‘assimilation,’ ‘incorporation,’ and ‘integration’ appear with a great deal of overlap. Of these, the term ‘assimilation’ carries a stronger connotation, having fallen out of favor for several decades due to its characterization as a unidirectional process in which newcomers give up their cultures to join the mainstream. This classic assimilation paradigm operated under three central assumptions: the clean break assumption, the homogeneity assumption, and the progress assumption.²⁵ The first describes the assumption that “immigration takes place between remote, neatly bounded geopolitical spaces, where a clean break is inevitable, whether desired or not”²⁶ – an assumption perhaps slightly more applicable to the European immigration at the turn of the twentieth century, but with little currency now. The second, the assumption of homogeneity, describes the perception that immigrants merge with a unified American society. The theory of “segmented assimilation” addresses this assumption squarely, calling attention to the fact that American society is diverse and fragmented, its parts often segregated within the whole. The newcomer may encounter one fragment or many, but he or she will not find a single homogenous American society. Furthermore, ‘mainstream American culture’ is not static. As scholars Richard Alba and Victor Nee note, it constantly absorbs ethnic influences; over time, cultural traits lose their associations with ethnic groups and become incorporated into an American culture.²⁷ Third, the assumption of progress is deeply engrained in the myth of the American dream and purports that integration into American society automatically entails

progress, shown through improved health, education, and income. Several studies have thrown this widely held belief into question, revealing that in some surveys first-generation immigrants appear healthier, less likely to have emotional difficulties, and less likely to display risk behaviors than later generations.²⁸

Recent research on transnationalism has thoroughly undercut the clean break assumption. “Rather than cutting off their social and economic attachments, and exchanging one political membership for another, increasing numbers of migrants keep feet in two worlds,” Peggy Levitt writes. “They engage in transnational practices or economic, political, and sociocultural occupations and activities that require regular, long-term contacts across borders for their success.”²⁹ She reminds us that transnationalism and assimilation are not mutually exclusive, and that there are various possible interactions of transnational and assimilatory practices – connections to one’s country of origin can help or hinder assimilation into the host society, depending on each set of circumstances. Affirming that transnationalism and assimilation often coexist, Morawska conceptualizes the outcomes of their combinations as context-dependent, reflecting the interaction effects between multiple factors at the national, local, and individual levels. She asserts that research into the conditions of the coexistence of transnationalism and assimilation will be more productive than continued perception of the primacy of one process over the other.³⁰ We can see that assimilation and transnationalism are not antithetical as assertions of traditional citizenship would have us believe, and this trajectory for future research may well be illuminated by research in the new immigrant gateways.

Throughout the evolution of the concept, immigrant incorporation into the host society has been assessed in terms of four quantitative yardsticks: socioeconomic status, residential segregation, linguistic assimilation, and intermarriage.³¹ The weighty variable of socioeconomic status can be broken down further to consist of educational attainment, labor market segmentation, and wage disparity. Recent sociological inquiries into these variables find enduring stratification and barriers to immigrant achievement. Portes and Rumbaut identify educational achievement as a key determinant of success or failure for the second generation, whereas the adult first generation's success is a function of labor market performance.³² Like broader assimilation outcomes, educational attainment is determined by the interaction of the human and social capital of the immigrant and the barriers and opportunities present in the host society. Nationwide, it has been noted that Hispanic students are not performing as well academically as other groups. For example, Hispanic students drop out of high school at a rate twice as high as non-Hispanic whites,³³ and the disparity in bachelor's degree attainment rates between the two groups is even greater.³⁴

In terms of labor market segregation in traditional urban gateways, researcher Roger Waldinger finds the ethnic niche ubiquitous with little interurban variation within groups; in other words, members of the same group establish the same type of niche regardless of the city they find themselves in, ethnicity thus acting as a principle of social organization.³⁵ This finding is unlikely to be repeated in small-town new destinations; the population density of these areas precludes the formations of strongly segregated ethnic enclaves. Although ethnic neighborhoods do form in small towns, students will continue to attend the same schools, shoppers will shop at the same

grocery stores, etc. Examining wage disparities through a comparative analysis at the level of metropolitan area, Mark Ellis finds that the wage structure for the native-born generally improved, while the wage structure for immigrants worsened or stagnated, indicating that the native-born and immigrants work in dual labor markets.³⁶ In urban areas and rural areas alike, immigrants and native-born residents are unlikely to compete for the same jobs, and labor market segregation is persistent.

In contrast, linguistic assimilation does seem to occur across the board. A recent study concluded that although second-generation bilingualism is more prevalent now than in earlier waves of migration, especially among Spanish speakers, English acquisition in the second generation is near-universal; by the third generation, a clear majority among all ethnic groups is monolingual in English. Third-generation bilingualism is seen primarily in border communities with historical patterns of language maintenance and consistent contact and exchange with Mexico.³⁷

Many of these measures of assimilation rest on the second or even third generation, with the assumption that the first generation will experience a significantly lesser degree of assimilation. In new immigrant gateways, the newcomers arrived recently enough that the second generation may still be quite young; therefore assessments based on these measures may yield incomplete findings. Current research into integration in new destinations will likely illuminate an interim stage, in which the immigrants are no longer sojourners, but incorporation into the larger fabric of the local community is still minimal. In these contexts, processes of integration will be evidenced by decreasing marginalization of immigrant populations.

Chapter 1

A 'New' Phenomenon, Here to Stay

Historical Perspectives on Newness

Although the United States is commonly known as a nation of immigrants, its immigrants have historically favored certain parts of the country more than others. Even as recently as 2000, over two-thirds of the United States' foreign-born population lived in six states only: California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois. However, during the 1990s, growth in some of these states slowed for the first time. In California, New York, and New Jersey, the growth of the immigrant population fell lower than the national average growth of 57.4%,³⁸ while growth rates in states like Nevada, Arkansas, and North Carolina surged. Destinations outside of the six traditional states of immigration have been dubbed "new destinations." However, this label is slightly misleading, as it encompasses destinations with varying degrees of newness.

In this respect, a typology given in a Brookings Institution report, "The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways,"³⁹ can be useful. Utilizing census data spanning the twentieth century and, specifically, the proportion of the foreign-born population compared to the national average, the Brookings Institution's Audrey Singer categorizes metropolitan immigrant destinations in six ways. *Former* gateways like Baltimore, Philadelphia, and St. Louis had high proportions of foreign-born residents between 1900 and 1930, but proportions lower than the national average every decade

since. *Continuous* gateways, such as New York, San Francisco, and Chicago, have attracted foreign-born residents throughout the century, while *post-World War II* gateways like Los Angeles, Miami, Houston, and San Diego show high percentages of foreign-born only after 1950. Cities like Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Phoenix, *re-emerging* gateways, had proportionately high immigrant populations between 1900 and 1930, high levels which were then not seen again until after 1970. Places like Atlanta, Dallas, and Las Vegas, which have had high percentages of foreign-born only since 1980, are *emerging* gateways. Finally, Singer classifies cities like Austin, Salt Lake City, and Raleigh-Durham as *pre-emerging* gateways – cities where the proportion of foreign born, although numerically small, experienced skyrocketing growth rates in the 1990s. While this typology is limited to metropolitan areas, it is useful in that it serves to remind us of the historical continuity of immigration in the United States. Immigration is a consistent presence in our national story, although it has manifested in different locations at different times. Most importantly, this typology helps to steer us away from the inclination towards dualism that a label like ‘new destinations’ engenders – the dangerous tendency to label one wave of immigration ‘old’ and another ‘new,’ which often segues into labeling one ‘good’ and another ‘bad.’

In that light, the recent phenomenon of ‘new destinations’ can be understood as an evolution in the continuing story of immigration to the United States. Census 2000 data provided the numbers confirming that the 1990s indeed ushered in another shift in migration patterns. To take a closer look at this shift, we can follow the twentieth century migrations of one national-origin group, Mexicans, who represent

approximately three out of every ten foreign-born residents in the United States⁴⁰ and whose history of migration to the U.S. stretches back to the annexation of Mexican territories in 1848. Researchers Durand, Massey, and Charvet chart Mexican migration patterns in the United States between 1910 and 1996, detailing the development of different flows.⁴¹ At the turn of the century, Texas was the primary destination for Mexican migrants, but between 1910 and 1920 – what the researchers call the Classic Era – California’s economic prowess grew and consequently attracted increasing numbers of migrants. Arizona and New Mexico were also settlement states, and small numbers of migrants went to Kansas and Colorado, two destinations with important railway and industrial centers. During the 1920s and 1930s, Illinois began to draw a small percentage of immigrants. The Bracero Era,ⁱ from 1942 to 1964, aligned with explosive economic growth in California, and by 1960 California surpassed Texas as a destination for Mexican migrants. Michigan and New York also drew settlers, and Indiana experienced growth as well, reflecting settlement in suburbs east of Chicago. From 1970 to 1980, or what the authors term the Undocumented Era, growth in California’s immigrant population outstripped all other states.

Following this period, several macro-level changes contributed to sweeping demographic change and the shift in migration trends. A prominent factor was the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), which leveled the first sanctions against employers who knowingly hire unauthorized workers but is better remembered as an amnesty, as it legalized 2.3 million Mexican laborers. IRCA’s

ⁱ The Bracero Era refers to the years of the Bracero Accords, an agreement that allowed the United States to import Mexican farmworkers. This began in 1942 as a “temporary” response to wartime labor shortages, but was extended until 1964 – many peacetime years. (Durand, Massey, and Charvet 2000.)

demographic effects were visible almost immediately, in just the six years between 1990 and 1996, as the percentage of Mexican immigrants living in states **other** than Arizona, California, Illinois, New Mexico and Texas doubled.⁴² 1990 marked the completion of the general amnesty and Special Agriculture Worker (SAW) legalization program. Over half of the newly legalized workers were living in California, predominantly in the southern part of the state.⁴³

At the same time, the Cold War came to an end, leading to cuts in the defense industries and a subsequent sharp recession in California's economy. Rising unemployment and downward pressure on wages engendered hostility towards immigrants, and anti-immigrant mobilization secured passage of Proposition 187 in 1994. Although it was later declared unconstitutional and overturned, Prop. 187, which prohibited undocumented migrants from receiving publicly funded health treatment, education, and welfare, sent a strong message to immigrants, legal or otherwise. Moreover, in an effort to appease anti-immigrant sentiment before the 1996 presidential election, the Clinton Administration launched Operation Hold-the-Line in El Paso, Texas, in 1993, to be followed by Operation Gatekeeper in the San Diego area in 1994, Operation Safeguard in central Arizona in 1995 and Operation Rio Grande in south Texas in 1997. This extensive border-enforcement strategy channeled undocumented migration into the desert, creating new migration routes.⁴⁴

At the same time that California became characterized by recession, hostility towards immigrants, and a militarized border, IRCA gave millions of migrant workers the freedom to move legally and without fear. In addition, many families took advantage of the chance to leave relatively dangerous inner-city neighborhoods or

high city rents and moved to small towns across the country. Furthermore, coinciding with these sweeping changes were the mismanaged peso devaluation in Mexico in 1994 and subsequent economic crisis, and the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Many more Mexicans joined the migrant stream, and California was no longer the most attractive destination. Strong economies and high demand for labor in the nontraditional states sealed the deal: immigration now coming to a town near you.

Rural vs. Urban Contexts

Urban areas like Salt Lake City, Atlanta, and Minneapolis-St. Paul are part of the latest diversification of migrant destinations. Even New York City is viewed as a ‘new destination’ for Mexican migrants: although Mexicans from the Mixteca region have worked in New York since the 1940s, the numbers of people involved in this migration have shot up since the late 1980s, and Mexicans in Nueva York are taking a place alongside more established Puerto Rican and Dominican communities.⁴⁵ While urban destinations such as these are considered in the literature, the practices of incorporation in cities will likely have little relevance towards practices of incorporation in rural or small-town areas. In considering small towns with limited recent experience of either immigration or multiculturalism, sociologists Mary Waters and Tomás Jiménez note three aspects significant to processes of incorporation.⁴⁶ First, there is the possibility of flexibility in intergroup relations, as the position of immigrants in class, racial, and ethnic hierarchies may be less entrenched. On the

other hand, less traditional migrant destinations lack the institutional support developed over time, such as legal-aid agencies, multilingual health clinics, bilingual education, and other newcomer support services. Adjustment to demographic change in small towns may be greatly influenced by the speed with which community leaders can create such institutional support. Last but not least, the size of rural or small-town destinations will uniquely affect processes of integration. In metropolitan areas, immigrants often live, work and attend school in ‘enclaves’ largely separate from other city inhabitants. In smaller towns, there are far fewer schools, grocery stores, places of worship, or other spaces for interaction. The necessity of shared resources and public spaces may lessen social separation of immigrant and native-born groups.

Given the probable dissimilarities in rural and urban contexts of integration, it is constructive, with regard to the Delmarva Peninsula, to look specifically at research on rural areas. As of this writing, the literature is not extensive, but there are several published case studies, drawn largely from the Midwest and the Southeast. Almost every case study describes one key factor: labor.

The Pivotal Role of Employers

On the micro-level of analysis, many researchers have documented the employment conditions inextricably linked to swelling ranks of non-native workers. Employers often play a very significant part in the establishment of immigrant destinations on the local level. In many cases, large employers engage in direct recruitment. This can take the form of employer representatives traveling to Mexico to

gather workers through the H-2B visa programⁱⁱ or through newspaper ads in Mexican newspapers.⁴⁷ In other instances, representatives will travel to areas of higher concentrations of immigrants within the United States to bring workers back to their towns. For example, the arrival of Guatemalans in Morganton, North Carolina, in the early 1990s can be traced directly to one personnel manager at the Case Farms poultry plant, who called a friend in Mississippi in response to an acute labor shortage to ask where this friend found workers.⁴⁸ Indiantown, Florida, was the answer, where Guatemalans working the citrus harvests were eager for year-round work. The personnel manager immediately went to Florida, set up a table in a Catholic church office, and promptly signed up ten workers, who were in Morganton the next weekend. In another example, in two separate recruitment schemes, employers in Dalton, Georgia, brought Mexican laborers from Dallas and El Paso, Texas, to work on construction of a water dam in 1973 and in a poultry plant in 1974.⁴⁹ In these ways, employer recruitment establishes migration patterns.

Rural towns may also experience growth in immigrant populations through the process of “settling out,” in which seasonal agricultural workers leave the migrant stream, preferring year-round, indoor work to the demands of following the harvests. In Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley, migrant workers have worked in apple orchards since the 1940s.⁵⁰ Over the years the workforce shifted from predominately white laborers from Florida or Appalachia to include Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino workers,

ⁱⁱ H-2B visas are available for temporary non-agricultural work for which there are no qualified and willing U.S. workers. Temporary is defined as one-time, seasonal, peak load or intermittent, with a duration of less than one year. Only 66,000 H-2B visas are issued each USCIS fiscal year. (U.S. Department of Labor, <http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/foreign/h-2b.asp>)

and many Latinos have opted for year-round residence and employment at one of several local poultry processing plants. In the Midwest, seasonal workers in the sugar beet fields or in cherry, peach, or apple orchards “settled out,” taking year-round employment primarily in food-processing plants.⁵¹ This pattern is also evidenced in Delmarva, as migrant workers who follow seasonal agricultural work along the East Coast have stayed to work in poultry processing.⁵²

Often this settlement is spurred by local unemployment rates near or below 3%. Throughout most of the 1990s, Marshalltown, Iowa, had an average unemployment rate of 2.7%, well below the U.S. national average of 4.0%.⁵³ In 2000, Marshalltown’s applicant-to-opening ratio was 0.75:1, fewer than one applicant per job opening. The unemployment rate in Winchester and Frederick Counties in the Shenandoah Valley stayed below 3% from 1998 through 2001, dipping down to 1.7% in 2000.⁵⁴ Tight labor market such as these help ensure that, as one interviewee told researchers, “*Aquí siempre hay trabajo*” (Here, there is always work).⁵⁵

More often than not, that work is of a certain nature – dirty, dangerous, or physically difficult. For some industries, the demand for immigrant labor has become structurally embedded.⁵⁶ In a 1996 survey of San Diego County businesses employing immigrant labor, Wayne Cornelius found that foreign-born workers comprised 92% of both the agricultural and food-processing workforces, and that these high proportions of foreign labor were largely impervious to legal and public policy changes. As the nature of the work discourages native-born workers from applying and as employers increasingly rely on network recruitment to find new workers at no expense to the employer, the demand for immigrant labor becomes structurally embedded. Oil

production in southern Louisiana experienced this shift after the domestic oil industry bust in the mid- to late 1980s; with the insecurity of the oil economy made clear, many local workers left either the industry or the region itself, and it became difficult to find Louisianans to fill what was already a dirty, dangerous and physically difficult job.⁵⁷ In the 1990s, employers recruited Mexican workers. “Because the price of oil fluctuates, profits are linked to how quickly employers expand or contract the size of their labor force,” researcher Katharine Donato writes. “Therefore, because Mexican workers were seen as expendable, temporary, and less costly, employers in southern Louisiana hired them more and more often, sometimes placing them at the very top of the hiring queue.”⁵⁸ This brief description illustrates how the demand for immigrant labor became institutionalized or structurally embedded in one local industry.

In many non-traditional destinations, the development of a settled immigrant community is closed linked to an employer in the food processing industry: meatpacking, poultry processing, vegetable canning, blue crab processing, etc. The Midwest meatpacking industry giants implemented restructuring strategies in the late 1980s that resulted in relocation of plants to nonmetropolitan counties, weakened unions, lower wage structures, de-skilled labor, more limited career paths, and rapidly increased production line speeds.⁵⁹ In some locations, a food processing plant dominates the local economy. Duplin County, North Carolina, whose Latino population jumped from 2.5% of the total population in 1990 to 15.1% in 2000, is the home of Carolina Turkey, the largest turkey producer in the world.⁶⁰ Similarly, Marshalltown, Iowa, is the home of the third-largest pork-packing plant in the world.⁶¹

These massive employers play a proportionately large role in shaping their communities, for better or for worse.

The Costs of Cheap Chicken...

Despite the pivotal function of large employers in the changing demographics of many rural areas, most employers do not acknowledge or take responsibility for their influential roles. The benefits of their labor practices are diffuse, as Americans as well as residents of other countries enjoy cheaply processed food and other products, but the costs are concentrated. Town, county or state resources are channeled to meet urgent needs of newcomer employees and their families. The case studies of rural immigrant receiving areas highlight similar hot spots and challenges for communities: housing, health care, education, social interaction, and outreach. Frictions from linguistic and cultural differences are echoed in town after town, but researchers also find many examples of ‘best practices’ for immigrant integration, community solutions that benefit all residents.

Housing

Some employers will provide on-site housing, especially for H-2B workers, although this practice can impede integration, keeping the labor force tucked away on company grounds.⁶² Otherwise, employees must find their own housing, within the bounds of their wages. Many immigrants also send money home every month to support family members, and those who have come directly from their countries of

origin may also be repaying debts to *coyotes* for the border crossing(s). Furthermore, prior to arrival, migrants may have heard tales of high wages in the United States, but not realized the equally high costs of living.⁶³ These compounded costs, faced with typically low wages from food processing and similar industries, do not allow much flexibility in housing. In Delmarva, this has resulted in immigrants living in overcrowded, subdivided apartments, substandard houses and trailers that are not maintained. For example, one apartment complex in Sussex County, Delaware, consistently lacked safe drinking water for its Mexican residents; the landlord as of 2001 refused to address the problem, knowing the unlikelihood of his tenants reporting him to the proper authorities.⁶⁴

Despite the common-sense knowledge that substandard housing conditions generate additional concerns for local healthcare providers and, if schoolchildren are involved, educational institutions, initiatives to provide affordable housing have met resistance. In Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, where Mexican workers have been employed in mushroom sheds since the 1960s, a nonprofit called Alliance for Better Housing (ABH) planned to purchase and renovate an abandoned duplex for rental to two families.⁶⁵ Some locals attempted to block this plan by distributing flyers claiming that eight to twelve single men would be housed in each unit, generating outcry. Eventually, the plan for the duplex was executed, but similar ABH initiatives likewise encountered opposition. Two decades earlier, in Shelby, Michigan, plans for the Chapita Hills Apartments, transitional housing for agricultural workers who were moving to the area year round, fueled a sixteen-month battle with the Shelby Concerned Citizens Committee.⁶⁶

A different approach was taken by some residents of Rogers, Arkansas, and First National Bank. First National Bank was purchased in 1975 by Sam Walton, creator of Wal-Mart, and whatever one may think about Wal-Mart, Sam Walton is nothing if not a good businessman. Accordingly, Walton approached bank personnel to ask them what strategies they had taken to reach the sizeable Latino community in Rogers, which incidentally is home to Tyson Foods Corporate Headquarters and several poultry processing operations.⁶⁷ The Latino immigrant population in Rogers, as elsewhere, was not utilizing the banking system, due to lack of knowledge and trust in the system. A task force at the bank developed a series of seminars to be delivered in Spanish, and the task force convinced North Arkansas Poultry to allow them to offer the one-hour seminars on the job site, while employees were still on the clock. The seminars instructed attendees on the basics of writing a check, using deposit slips and ATMs, and later how to establish a credit history, navigate a mortgage loan, and plan for retirement. The bank also hired bilingual staff and brought in experts to instruct bank employees on Mexico and Mexican culture. The bank clearly benefited: by 1996, two years after the seminars began, 60% of the poultry plant's employees were members of the bank, up from 8% prior to the seminars. As of 1999, approximately 52% of Rogers' immigrant population belonged to First National Bank, altogether representing \$26.5 million in business, through deposit accounts and consumer, mortgage and commercial loans.⁶⁸ Moreover, from 1994 to 2000, over 700 immigrant families purchased houses for the first time through mortgages from the Arvest Bank Group, which includes First National. North Arkansas Poultry benefited as well. Not only did worker turnover decrease, bringing substantial savings to the

employer, but company management believes employees have been more loyal since the plant assisted them with banking and homeownership.⁶⁹ In this community, the efforts and business sense of one bank, with the cooperation of one poultry processing plant, accomplished a great deal towards the often tricky issue of housing.

Healthcare

Food processing industries have extremely high injury rates.⁷⁰ In poultry plants, carpal tunnel syndrome or repetitive motion injury is the most widespread form of workplace injury, but employees are also exposed to respiratory problems from dust and feathers as well as to the hazards of working on a floor slippery with fat while handling sharp knives.⁷¹ Nevertheless, many employers do not provide health insurance for the first months of employment, during the period when new hires are more likely to be injured.⁷² The burden of healthcare is deflected to the individual or the community. For many immigrants – as well as for quite a few native-born Americans without health insurance – the costs of treatment are prohibitive, resulting in little or no routine, preventive care. In addition, in many rural areas, the ratio of physicians to population is lower than in cities and has declined in recent decades.⁷³ Rural areas also have a harder time overcoming what is one of the biggest obstacles in immigrant healthcare – the language barrier. It can be much harder to find bilingual health professionals or qualified interpreters in rural areas. The language barrier may also be compounded by culturally different conceptions of health, disease, and expected patient-physician interactions.

One innovative response, developed in the Shenandoah Valley, is the training of lay health educators in the immigrant community. As Micah Bump notes, “The primary health care system in the United States assumes a level of trust in hospitals, clinics, and doctors and is particularly intimidating for immigrants who have rarely experienced institutional health care.”⁷⁴ Members of Latino communities in Winchester and Frederick Counties are trained as *promotoras de salud* (health promoters), who then work to contact immigrants and provide education about the American healthcare system, concepts of illness, and standard treatment procedures. In Greensboro, North Carolina, the Immigrant Health ACCESS Project hired and trained several bilingual and bicultural “Lay Health Advisers.”⁷⁵ In addition to carrying out health education for immigrants, these advisers also counseled health care providers on different cultural understandings of health and healthcare. Other programs include training of nursing assistants, expansion of doula or midwife training programs to provide culturally appropriate prenatal care, and mobile clinics.⁷⁶

Education

The same difficulty in finding qualified bilingual or multilingual professionals in rural, small-town areas impacts public education as well. This area, however, can quickly become even more complicated because of the ideology bound up in language and educational policy, as schooling serves to convey national cultural meanings and images and is at times utilized in more overt Americanization campaigns.ⁱⁱⁱ In the U.S.,

ⁱⁱⁱ In 1998, the Georgia Statewide ESOL and Migrant Education Workshop agenda booklet, decorated with nationalistic clip-art icons such as the U.S. flag, the Liberty Bell, and pilgrims, contained the

emotions over English monolingualism can run high and policies follow suit. In 1996, nineteen states had “Official English” laws. Eleven of these states are in the South. Students who are English Language Learners (ELLs) in non-traditional immigrant receiving areas may be more likely to be exposed to an educational culture that does not value bi- or multilingualism and therefore disparages their languages and the languages of their parents. In some rural schools, few teachers have traveled extensively or studied a foreign language, experiences which could help them understand the disorientation of being in another country.⁷⁷

In an effort to remedy this limitation and better understand the backgrounds of their Mexican-origin students, many small-town educators, as well as other civic leaders, have invested time and resources in traveling to Mexico themselves. In 2000, the school district of Rogers, Arkansas, commenced sending teachers to Mexico during summer vacation.⁷⁸ In Marshalltown, Iowa, researchers organized trips to bring the mayor, police chief, and later the Woodbury School principal, the director of adult education and ESL, and other town leaders to Villachuato, Michoacán, and other sending communities linked to Marshalltown.⁷⁹ Moved by his visit to sorely underfunded Villachuato schools, the principal realized that education in the village did not necessarily translate into a better life, and therefore his cultural assumptions about the inherent motivation for educational achievement were not automatically shared. Interestingly, the principal initiated a two-way immersion program, beginning with the kindergarten class of 2003, and there is a waiting list consisting of native

following quote from Theodore Roosevelt: “There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism.” A similar quote from Henry Cabot Lodge was also included to ensure the message was clear. (Beck and Alleksaht-Snyder 2002.)

speakers of both Spanish and English.⁸⁰ Similarly, as part of the Georgia Project, a collaboration between Georgia school districts and university educators in Monterrey, Mexico, researchers began a program called the Summer Institute in 1997. After two weeks of instruction in English as a Second Language methods and introductory Spanish, teachers travel to Monterrey for continued Spanish instruction and classes in Mexican culture and history. Thus far, over one hundred Georgia teachers have studied in Mexico through the Summer Institute.⁸¹ Not far from Georgia, another well-established example of this practice takes place as part of the Latino Initiative run by the University of North Carolina's Center for International Understanding since 1998. Participants in the Latino Initiative attend seminars and training meetings in North Carolina to learn about the state's recently-arrived and fast growing Mexican-origin population, and then travel to Mexico for a week-long immersion program. Upon returning to North Carolina, participants are expected to use the knowledge gained from their first-hand experiences to inform policy decisions and interactions with immigrants in their communities.⁸² Through these trips, American-born residents expand their own cultural education and in the process become better able to meet the educational needs of newcomers in their communities.

Within the classrooms, teachers in immigrant-receiving areas employ a variety of ELL programs that range in effectiveness and in their primary goals. When ELL 'pull-out' programs remove students from mainstream classrooms, they can end up isolating students from English-speaking peers, increasing feelings of marginalization, with the additional risks of impeding English language acquisition and instruction of academic content.⁸³ Another option for English instruction is dual immersion or two-

way immersion programs, which, as of 2004, were found in twenty-three states and at least 266 public schools.⁸⁴ In these programs, native speakers of English are taught in a classroom with an equal proportion of native speakers of another language, most frequently Spanish, and academic subjects are taught alternately in both languages, validating the merits and utility of the majority and minority language alike. The students learn from each others' linguistic 'funds of knowledge', and the goal of dual immersion is for all students to become fluent bilinguals. However, this program has been implemented more often in large urban school districts, as equal proportions of native English speakers and ELLs are required. In small towns, pull-out programs may be the most feasible option, in which case good communication between ELL and mainstream classroom teachers and steps to link ELL teaching to mainstream academic content can help avoid some possible pitfalls of pull-out instruction.

The ramifications of language education policies have been the subject of many volumes, and will continue to be debated, discussed, and researched. As the children of immigrants in less traditional receiving areas pass through elementary, middle, and high schools, perspectives from rural, small-town locales will join the discussion. One aspect of the debate is already at a critical juncture for students who have already or are about to graduate from high school. In Delmarva, Miller calls attention to "the fate of the growing number of high school graduates who lack legal status, but who are awarded scholarships of post-secondary education for which they are ineligible."⁸⁵ Students who were brought to the U.S. as children, without documents, and have grown up as Americans in American schools graduate to realize that any earned scholarships are null and void and that they must pay out-of-state

tuition despite growing up as residents of a particular state. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, or the DREAM Act, addresses this dilemma, but is still pending in Congress; in the meantime, nine states have passed legislation that allows students who have completed a certain number of years in a public high school to pay in-state tuition at public universities.⁸⁶ As Douglas Massey points out, “Money devoted to the support of immigrant families and the education of immigrant children should not be viewed as an expense but as an investment that is essential for the nation’s economic growth and future prosperity.”⁸⁷

Social interaction, discrimination, and outreach

Goździak and Martin conceptualize integration as sustained interaction between and among newcomers and host communities.⁸⁸ Movement towards an integrated whole will require not only that interaction be sustained but that it be of a certain quality. However, sustained interaction of any sort is the first step in overcoming the social separation along ethnic lines that is common in many American towns. Descriptions of intergroup relations in the case studies invariably include examples of discrimination, with manifestations ranging from the blatant to the covert. Many Americans would condemn blatant forms of discrimination such as beatings or racial slurs, but they do not recognize as racism other, more subtle manifestations, such as avoidance, distrust, negative comments, or consistently being a bystander to discriminatory practices without protest.⁸⁹ In addition, newcomers often face institutional discrimination, such as service providers who do not bother to provide equal services to minority groups – for example, a hospital using a child as a medical

interpreter or a schoolteacher assigning a new monolingual Spanish speaker to a bilingual student for translation, both instances where the system fails to provide equal services.⁹⁰

Despite the pervasiveness of discrimination, sustained interaction and accommodation occur, even in the Deep South. In Dalton, Georgia, researchers observed several instances of interaction such as Latino and black employees socializing on shift breaks at the carpet mills and white Daltonians joining Mexican soccer leagues and attending Mexican dances.⁹¹ In Dalton as well as elsewhere in the United States, the market potential of Latinos as consumers is reflected in merchants' eagerness to attract them, and the use of Spanish is indirectly validated in signs and advertisements.

In addition to instances of both discrimination and accommodation, every community in these case studies has given rise to at least one outreach organization or community alliance. Comprised of native-born Americans, immigrant community members, or a mix of both, these organizations tackle health education, skills training, provision of legal services, cultural heritage preservation and education, labor issues, domestic violence, mental health issues, conflict mediation, ESL classes, community development, etc.⁹² Churches are also a very important force in outreach to immigrant communities. Religious leaders have in several instances been instrumental in creating community organizations, such as La Esperanza in Georgetown, Delaware, which provides advocacy, healthcare, childcare, and legal services to southern Delaware's Spanish-speaking immigrants.⁹³ Ultimately, however, the many efforts of these

outreach organizations deserve the structural support of local, state, and federal policies.

Only One Way to Go: Forward

The limited glimpses of several rural communities with recently increased proportions of foreign-born residents provided in the case studies discussed here reveal several common themes as well as original local responses. Further research and awareness will help to guide communities through this most recent evolution in the history of migration in the United States, with the hope of laying a foundation for a brighter, more inclusive future. The rural Delmarva Peninsula has begun to navigate many far-reaching social changes, and the path Delmarvans forge now and in the next several years stands to illuminate the choices of many other American communities.

Chapter 2

Delmarva: Historical and Current Contexts



Figure 1. Map of Delmarva, showing the state and county boundaries of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

A Sense of Place

To understand the cultural context that is Delmarva, it helps to understand its geography. Delmarva is a land defined by water: 5,940 square miles of land provide over 3,500 miles of shoreline. The bulk of this shoreline is to be found in the infinite twisting contours of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries; Maryland's Eastern Shore alone claims 2,000 of those shoreline miles. On the other side, the Atlantic Ocean and

the Delaware Bay meet approximately 530 miles of shoreline. From north to south, the peninsula stretches 145 miles, with its widest point about 68 miles across. On the northern end, where the peninsula attaches to the mainland, the land is narrow; the matter-of-factly named Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, connecting the two bays, spans only fourteen miles. Very much like an oversized barrier island, most of the peninsula is irredeemably flat and comprised of Atlantic Coastal Plain sediments. The land is interwoven with slow-moving rivers, tidal saltwater marshes, and inland bays.

As Interstate 95 zooms through New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., it merely grazes upstate Delaware and bypasses the entire peninsula. Despite its proximity to the Northeast urban corridor, Delmarva is a world apart. As one DC journalist described Sussex County, “It resembles an outpost of the Bible Belt or the Deep South that has somehow come loose and attached itself to the mid-Atlantic.”⁹⁴ Like the Bible Belt or the Deep South, Delmarva has not historically been home to a population that would be described as diverse. As a consequence of early settlement by northern Europeans, Delmarva’s native population was dramatically thinned, and the peninsula would barely notice the waves of immigration that came after colonial settlement. The Nanticoke Indian Tribe is the only remaining active tribal organization in Delmarva, with around 500 Nanticoke living in Sussex County and two acres of tribally owned land near the not-coincidentally named Indian River.⁹⁵ Although the annual powwow event draws thousands of people from on and off the peninsula, the tribe is small and has lived assimilated into the mainstream culture for the past two hundred years. The massive migration at the beginning of the twentieth century did bring Italians, Poles, Greeks, and others to the city of

Wilmington in northern Delaware, but very few first generation immigrants ventured into the rural Peninsula. By the time second and third generations moved south, their diversity as “white ethnics” was minimized. Thus diversity in Delmarva has been felt primarily in terms of black and white.

Between the white and black populations, segregation has been persistent. As mentioned, Delmarva culturally resembles the South, and with that resemblance carries a legacy of racial prejudice and segregation. Historically, there were always more free blacks than slaves in Delaware, Delaware was officially part of the Union during the Civil War, and the Delmarva Peninsula was an important part of the Underground Railroad. However, a drive along its back roads today reveals many Confederate flags, prominently displayed in front yards and on pickup trucks, and in certain places, the flies on the walls still hear pernicious racial slurs. Racism against African-Americans remained entrenched in educational institutions until recent decades. For example, black students in Sussex County did not have the option to attend high school locally until October 1950, when William C. Jason Comprehensive High School was constructed. Four years later, following the landmark Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*, implementation of the ruling met some resistance, including “the Milford Incident,” a protest of 1,500 people that caused the Milford school board to resign, enabling a newly formed school board to rescind the admission of eleven black students.⁹⁶ William C. Jason High School stayed open until 1967, when desegregation was finally realized. Forty years later, residential segregation between whites and blacks continues to be markedly visible.

Thus the interethnic landscape in which Delmarva's Latin American immigrants found themselves in the early 1990s was defined by two groups with little sustained interaction. Delmarva then was a place where most people were very set in their ways, for better or worse, with little exposure to people from different ethnic groups. Writing about Mexican immigration in Dalton, Georgia, Hernández-León and Zúñiga summarize a fundamental sociological principle applicable to Delmarva: "that interethnic relations have their own local and regional history and that women and men use that history to face and make sense of new situations. As they do so, they repeat patterns and establish new ones."⁹⁷ Delmarva's history of intergroup relations presents a prism through which long-term residents and immigrants experience integration.

Agriculture and the Birth of an Industry

Commercial agriculture in Delmarva has in fact utilized immigrant labor for over a hundred years. At the entrance of the twentieth century, the two big crops on the peninsula were strawberries and tomatoes. Sussex County, Delaware, and Worcester, Wicomico, and Somerset Counties in Maryland timed the school year to accommodate the strawberry harvest and free up students to labor in the fields. In addition, gangs of white and black laborers from Baltimore and other cities were brought in to pick the berries. Tomatoes were primarily sold in cans, with canneries in almost every town. The canneries operated four weeks out of the year, requiring a short burst of intense labor; to find workers, foremen went to Baltimore and other cities, recruiting immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Mostly Italians,

Greeks, and Slavs, these immigrants were referred to as “Bohicks.” They lived in camps in substandard housing, rarely spoke English, and remained separate from the local population.⁹⁸

Delmarva at that time was isolated and undeveloped. Roads throughout the peninsula were unpaved and impassable much of the year; the railroad was the only option for transportation of crops until 1924, when the DuPont Highway was constructed, linking Selbyville to Wilmington. Delmarva residents leaned heavily on the water as well as the land; menhaden were processed in large numbers for their oil, and watermen, or proggers, harvested other fish, oysters, clams, and crabs. World War I brought prosperity to Delmarva and other rural areas through high demand for agricultural products; however, the post-war surplus caused prices to drop. Then, in the 1920s, the strawberry crop was ravaged by a fungal disease, and changing salinity in the Indian River Bay brought a decline in the local proggers’ harvests. The Depression had arrived early, and people in the area south of the Indian River Bay, known as the Baltimore Hundred, were especially pinched.

In 1920, a man named Arthur W. Perdue left the railroad to establish a table-egg farm near Salisbury, Maryland. At the time, chickens were commercially valuable for their eggs rather than their meat. Farmers would sell excess cockerels (young males) in late spring and summer, but the birds remained a seasonal specialty, as quality of the meat during the rest of the year could not be guaranteed. However, demand for chicken was high, especially in New York City, where, for its large Jewish population, chicken provided another variety of meat in a diet free of pork.⁹⁹ In 1923, a fortuitous error linked this burgeoning market with the hard-pressed residents of the

Baltimore Hundred. Cecile Steele, a hard-working housewife in Ocean View, Delaware, raised laying hens to supplement her family's income, ordering fifty new chicks each year to replace losses in the flock. That year, hatchery owner Vernon Steen of Dagsboro confused the order and sent five hundred chicks instead of fifty. Instead of returning them, Cecile raised the chicks and, eighteen weeks later, made a handsome profit in selling them to a local buyer, who then shipped the chickens north to the urban markets. The following year, Cecile ordered one thousand chicks; within two more years, the Steeles had increased their flock to ten thousand birds. Their neighbors took note, and by 1925 approximately fifty thousand broilers were being raised in Baltimore Hundred. By 1928, five hundred households in the area had taken up broiler chicken production.¹⁰⁰

The pressing need for a new source of income felt throughout Baltimore Hundred and nearby areas made residents eager to take up the profitable enterprise chanced upon by Cecile Steele. Several factors contributed to the industry's growth and staying power: a mild climate, sandy soil that drains quickly and helps control disease, cheap building materials for chicken houses in the locally abundant loblolly pines, regional low wages and low labor costs, and, of course, proximity to urban markets. As historian Roger Horowitz observes, "In the mid-1930s virtually all of Delaware's chickens, produced by Protestants who had lived for generations in the same area, went to New York City for the Jewish immigrant market."¹⁰¹ In decades that followed, national consumption of chicken soared, and the growers in Delmarva have kept pace. In 2005, the wholesale value of all broilers, roasters, and Cornish hens produced in Delmarva was \$1.65 billion.¹⁰² The table-egg farm that Arthur W. Perdue

started in 1920 is now a vertically integrated agribusiness with annual revenue of \$2.8 billion and the fifth-largest poultry-producer in the nation in terms of sales.¹⁰³ Sussex County, the birthplace of the industry, continues to hold the title for the number-one broiler producing county in the United States.

People on the Move

Help Wanted: Se Busca Ayuda

As early as 1965, a report on the Delmarva poultry industry cautioned that the problem of “attracting, keeping and managing processing plant workers is one that will continue and increase in difficulty.”¹⁰⁴ Labor is the perennial problem of the poultry industry. To begin with, poultry processing plants must be located near growers in order to minimize the birds’ potential weight loss while in transit and allow delivery of birds of uniform weight and size. Uniform size is desirable not only because it facilitates rapid processing on the assembly line, but also because the fast food companies who purchase massive quantities of chicken expect a uniform product that will cook evenly in automated frying vats.¹⁰⁵ Thus poultry processing plants are located in rural areas out of necessity. The low population density in rural areas does not provide an adequate labor pool. In 1980, only three counties in rural Delmarva had a population density greater than 100 persons per square mile.¹⁰⁶

The structure of the poultry industry and the nature of processing work pose more significant obstacles in the search for labor. Low profit margins and competition suppress wages, which have hovered at 60 percent of the average U.S. manufacturing

wage since the mid-1960s.¹⁰⁷ “Regardless of the personal inclinations of employers,” notes Horowitz, “the highly competitive industry and labor-intensive process made paying wages higher than the industry average a prescription for bankruptcy...In the absence of unions commanding a majority of poultry workers and able to raise wages across the board, firms followed a low wage strategy and accepted turnover rates as high as 100 percent annually.”¹⁰⁸ Compounding the problem is, of course, the fact that line work at a poultry processing plant is physically difficult and dangerous. In 1989, chicken processing plants ranked second in the nation in repetitive motion industries (behind the red meat industry), with little wonder – a study that year reported that each worker in the evisceration line “pulled, twisted, and placed viscera of chickens in excess of 10,000 times per shift.”¹⁰⁹ Processing areas are kept very cold to control bacteria, and blood and other detritus can make the floors slippery, while workers at some stages of processing handle extremely sharp knives. It is difficult work.

From the beginning, working the line in poultry processing has been a job for people with limited options. Early in the industry’s history, “probably 70 to 90 percent of the line work force in any given processing plant was female.”¹¹⁰ In the years after World War II, employment opportunities for white women improved significantly, and line workers subsequently became primarily African-American. For example, in Harbeson, DE, Paramount Poultry’s line workers were 80 percent African-American by 1948, with many of these employees moving up from the bottom tip of the Peninsula, or from Virginia or North Carolina.¹¹¹ Even then, poultry plants were drawing workers off the Eastern migrant stream. For Townsends, Inc., a company that at the time owned both orchards and chicken plants, the transfer was especially

streamlined. The pattern of migrant agricultural laborers shifting to poultry processing work was well-established over sixty years ago. What has changed is the composition of the migrant stream.

Delmarva, with its summer bounty of peaches, tomatoes, cucumbers, watermelons, potatoes, beans, and cantaloupes, has long been a part of the migrant stream that carries people from Florida to the Canadian border. During the 1970s, as many as 12,000 migrants passed through Delmarva to work stoop labor in the fields each season; this number dropped to around 6,000 by the early 1980s as more workers stayed year-round and as the crop emphasis on the Peninsula shifted from produce to grain to provide feed for the expanding number of chickens. Migrant laborers then were predominantly African-American, but the workforce composition was already changing. Large numbers of Haitian refugees moved north from Florida's citrus groves, and crew leaders recruited Spanish-speaking workers in southwest Texas and Puerto Rico.^{112 113} The work was back-breaking, the pay abominable, the migrant camps abject, and some crew leaders unscrupulous and exploitative. As one former migrant worker described Delmarva, "This Eastern Shore is a desolate place for the migrant. The growers don't want anyone coming in and changing their 300-year situation. The old prejudices are here; nobody is changing. Nobody accepts these workers as human beings."¹¹⁴ Given the choice, many seasonal migrants passing through the peninsula opted for jobs in poultry processing, which offered year-round, indoor employment and eventual benefits and vacations.

Change did indeed take a very long time in reaching the Peninsula and its "300-year situation," but eventually it did arrive, by way of two bridges. The first and

more heavily used is the Bay Bridge, officially called the William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial Bridge, which crosses the Chesapeake Bay to connect Maryland to its Eastern Shore. First proposed in 1908, the bridge finally opened in 1952. This bridge provides Washington, D.C., metropolitan area residents with a direct route to Delmarva and its beach resorts. The second bridge linking Delmarva to the mainland happens to be the largest bridge-tunnel complex in the world. Stretching across 17.6 miles, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel opened in 1964 and is a combination of trestles, bridges, and tunnels, connecting Virginia Beach and Norfolk to Virginia's Eastern Shore counties. Before 1952, getting from D.C., Maryland, or Virginia to the Delmarva Peninsula without a boat was cumbersome, and this allowed Delmarva to develop as if it were quite remote, when in fact it sits plumb in the middle of the Eastern seaboard. With the bridges, Delmarva is "Just a Few Hours' Drive From All Major Cities Along the Mid-Atlantic Corridor," as the Delaware Tourism Office reminds us; according to another agency, over 57 million people live less than a day's drive from Delaware's 25 miles of ocean beaches.¹¹⁵

Although tourism existed in Delmarva since the late nineteenth century, it remained small. Once the Bay Bridge opened, the beach resorts started to gather steam, and by the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, the tourist industry was booming. The dramatic growth of the tourist industry created numerous service jobs, attractive alternatives to poultry processing for many entry-level workers. The African-American workforce that supported the poultry plants in the 1950s and 1960s largely left the industry for the better economic opportunities flourishing on the coast. This shift solidified the pattern of ethnic succession in the poultry labor force, as

African-American workers, who filled the line jobs vacated by white women, moved on and left behind an expanding industry full of job openings, which were soon to be occupied by Latin American laborers.

In Delaware, the unemployment rate, which was 8.5 percent in 1982, fell to 3.2 percent in 1987 and 1988.¹¹⁶ Statewide unemployment rose to 5.1 percent in 1990, but in Sussex County it remained low at 3.8 percent, with only 2,300 workers listed as unemployed. The number of listed unemployed workers stayed below 3,600 over the next five years.¹¹⁷ For the poultry plants, labor shortages were acute. Between 1985 and 1995, annual broiler production in Delmarva grew 25% while employment grew a mere 1%. One company hired an agency to bus temporary workers down from Wilmington while another turned to the local correctional institution.¹¹⁸

Delmarva employers did not delay in looking farther afield for labor. Draper King Cole, Inc., a canning company in Milton, Delaware, had set up a recruiting office in Texas on the border with Mexico in the early 1980s.¹¹⁹ In 1992, Perdue was offering \$100 a head for employees to drive down to Florida and bring back new recruits. Olegario Capriel, one of the first Guatemalans to arrive in Delaware, told researcher Katherine Borland how he would go to Florida on the weekends, where he had previously worked for eleven months harvesting produce. Capriel would go to Indiantown and other areas with concentrated populations of Guatemalans, position himself by the main store, and put the word out. People would line up to speak to him.¹²⁰ Soon enough, for Perdue, Townsends, Mountaire, Allen's, and other labor-short companies, the word was out, far and wide, up and down the migrant stream, and in distant towns in Latin America: in Delmarva, *hay trabajo*.

Upheaval, Violence, and Scorched Earth in Latin America

At the same time that many Delmarva employers were searching high and low for workers, many Latin Americans were searching for escape from political and economic upheaval. The latter half of the twentieth century, above all the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, witnessed turmoil and, in some countries, scourges of horrific violence. To further illuminate the arrival of Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Mexicans in Delmarva, it is necessary to look at the recent history of these countries.

Throughout twentieth-century Latin America, opposition intensified as citizens chafed under grossly unequal systems of land distribution and wealth, where the terms of the Spanish conquest had evolved to keep power in the hands of a small elite. In Guatemala, this opposition succeeded in bringing Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán to power through democratic elections in 1951, the first-ever peaceful transition of power in Guatemalan history. When the Arbenz administration initiated an agrarian reform program, the United States government reacted aggressively to protect the assets of American companies in Guatemala, most notoriously the monolithic United Fruit Company, in which then CIA director Allen Dulles and U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had vested interests. The Arbenz government was toppled by a CIA-orchestrated coup in 1954.¹²¹ These events ushered in a dark period for the beleaguered Central American nation, in which the military maintained tight control of the government, either overtly or through a civilian figurehead. For two decades, the level of repression fluctuated, but political “disappearances,” torture, and killings by the army and paramilitary right-wing death squads were always present. By the late

1970s, guerrilla opposition forces had increased their operations and consolidated their bases of support; for many grass-roots organizations, activists, and civilians, years of the military's heavy-handed tactics and refusal to allow even slight reforms made the guerrilla movement seem like the only alternative.¹²² The army mobilized to crush this popular support, targeting individuals and organizations, and then, at the end of 1981, under the regime of Fernando Romeo Lucas García, initiated a campaign of *tierra asada* or "scorched earth," a new level of bloodshed and terror. General Efraín Ríos Montt took power in March 1982 through a coup, and the evangelical minister intensified the *tierra asada* campaign into systematic genocide. Entire villages and fields were set ablaze, families burned alive in their homes; one massacre followed another. Years later, after the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, the Guatemalan Truth Commission concluded that 626 villages had been destroyed and over 200,000 people killed or disappeared; the Commission found the state responsible for 93 percent of the violence and the guerrillas responsible for 3 percent. The genocidal nature of the violence is reflected in the Commission's finding that 83 percent of the victims were Maya.¹²³ One and a half million people were displaced by the violence, which was concentrated in the northwest highlands. Many refugees ended up in refugee camps in Mexico, while others, upon hearing that the U.S. was offering asylum, made their way to the U.S. border. Delmarva resident Zenon Perez's story, told to Katherine Borland, illustrates a route common to many Guatemalan refugees. In 1987, after witnessing killings at his school, eighteen year-old Perez heard neighbors talk of the U.S. giving refuge to Guatemalans and fled to Miami. From Florida, he went to New York and Pennsylvania picking apples, then to New Jersey

picking blueberries. After a few months in Virginia, Perez came to Delmarva, to the Allen's poultry plant in Cordova, Maryland, and eventually to Mountaire and Perdue in Delaware.¹²⁴ The migrant pathway Perez followed is by now well-trodden, and motivations for following it are complex and multi-layered. However, when the migration routes connecting Central America to the United States were established in the 1980s, often one motivation – survival – was enough.

The emigration of Salvadorans parallels that of Guatemalans in many ways. In El Salvador, fewer than fifty powerful families have owned most of the best agricultural lands since the nineteenth century; while these lands were developed into coffee, cotton, and sugar plantations, the peasantry was pushed into less productive land and a pattern of seasonal migration to the plantations.¹²⁵ As researcher Sarah Mahler points out, "This was the first stage in their uprooting."¹²⁶ Opposition over the decades was suppressed by the Armed Forces, at times brutally and bloodily, but labor unions and resistance groups continued to struggle. Following a military coup in 1979, the country descended into a civil war that would last until 1992 and claim the lives of 70,000 people.¹²⁷ While some Salvadorans sought refuge in Honduras, others fled north, forging a migrant pathway that hundreds of thousands would follow.

The migratory relationship between Mexico and the United States is of course very different, with a much longer history, in which one must consider that the American Southwest was once part of Mexico, that immigration between the two countries was unrestricted at the beginning of the twentieth century, and that the U.S. government invited guestworkers through the Bracero Program between 1942 and 1964. However, in looking only at the more recent Mexican migration, there are two

factors of upheaval to keep in mind. First, on January 1, 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) took effect, creating the largest free trade area in the world and subsequently displacing Mexican agricultural workers. NAFTA was supposed to create jobs in Mexico and thus reduce migration; however, by many accounts, it did not make good on its promise.¹²⁸ Real wages in Mexico have declined since NAFTA, and 19 million more Mexicans live in poverty than before the agreement was signed.¹²⁹ The era of free trade up-ended a way of life in rural Mexico, and failed to fill the void with other opportunities. Then, in December 1994, a disastrous peso devaluation plunged the country into a deep economic crisis; the recession not only heightened need for income among poor households in traditional migrant-sending areas, but also brought acute financial pressure to middle class families.¹³⁰ In the mid-1990s, new and broadened segments of the Mexican population looked north for solutions.

It is easy to identify two extremes in the spectrum of motives for migration: in commonly accepted definitions, “refugees” are forced migrants who have no choice but to flee to survive, and “immigrants” are primarily economic migrants who choose to seek better opportunities. This is true to an extent, but within this spectrum are myriad shades of grey and complex combinations of motives. Sociologist Rubén Rumbaut divides the refugee-immigrant dichotomy into four types of exit motives. Within the category of “political” motives, Rumbaut identifies *targets* and *rebels*, within “economic” motives, *victims* and *seekers*. *Targets* leave their countries due to forced relocation, fear of arrest or harm, or harassment by the dominant regime; *rebels* leave in political-ideological protest or because of lack of freedom; *victims* leave to

escape famine, lack of health care, harsh economic conditions, or the inability to make a living; *seekers*, as the name indicates, leave seeking better futures, education, or prospects for their children.¹³¹ In this typology, some economic migrants – *victims* – migrate with very few choices at their avail, while some political refugees – *rebels* – make the choice to leave. This is just one possible typology of exit motives, and in reality migrants may often represent all four categories, but it demonstrates the potential pitfalls of the common conception that immigrants choose to migrate and refugees have no choice. Moreover, the legal recognition of who receives asylum reflects the U.S. government's foreign policy more than it does the reality on the ground. For example, despite the carnage wreaked across Guatemala in the 1980s, 98 percent of Guatemalans' applications for asylum were denied in that decade,¹³² reflecting the relationship between the Reagan Administration and Guatemala's military government. When Ríos Montt assumed power, the U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala stated, "We consider President Ríos Montt a significant improvement over the previous President, and we hope to be able to work constructively with him."¹³³ After Reagan met Ríos Montt, he described him as a "man of great integrity" who had received a "bum rap."¹³⁴ With or without asylum, refugees from Guatemala in that era came to the United States and looked for work to support themselves once they arrived, thus blurring further the lines between political refugee and economic migrant.

The later decades of the twentieth century witnessed profound upheaval in Mexico and Central America. Millions of people were uprooted, and for those who

landed in the United States, many American employers extended a warm, if low-wage, welcome. One might say they met each other halfway.

LAPD – Locals Against Pennsylvania Drivers

While the forces of the ever-increasingly interwoven world aligned to connect Delmarvans and Latin Americans, another group of people was on the move. As if the crowds in New York, New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, and D.C. had finally reached a critical mass and begun spilling their overflow into Delmarva, as if a collective realization of ocean beaches, low taxes, and undeveloped land had dawned over the Northeast or been announced on the nightly news, newcomers poured into Delmarva and especially Sussex County. Between 1990 and 2005, Sussex County's population grew 56 percent, from 113,229 to 176,323 (not counting 37,000 second-home owners), more than double the average growth rate for all U.S. counties, 22 percent.¹³⁵ During this period, over 28,000 new homes were built, most on former farmland.¹³⁶ Farmland currently sells for over \$50,000 an acre – putting a price tag of \$10 million on a 200-acre farm – or \$100,000 an acre closer to the coast.¹³⁷ Farmers receive inquiries about selling on a daily basis, and for many, the offers are too good to refuse. Once sold, the land is rapidly converted into high-density condo complexes and cookie-cutter homes, and retirees, second-home buyers, and people tired of city life move in. As of this writing, on average, 313 people move to Sussex County each month.¹³⁸

Needless to say, demographic change of this size and swiftness has rattled some long-term residents. Road rage incidents produce shouts of “Go back to

Pennsylvania!”, and one Sussex County man got creative, designing a logo and getting stickers and sweatshirts printed: “LAPD – Locals Against Pennsylvania Drivers.” Some of the tension stems from the large income differential between many newcomers and locals. As coastal property values vault skyward, lower-income residents are pushed farther and farther inland. The eventual collision between development and a rural way of life worries some. As Delaware’s chief agricultural planner observes, “Commercial agriculture and \$450,000 home subdivisions don’t get along very well. Chickens don’t smell very good.”¹³⁹ In the poultry industry, some have predicted that the Peninsula will eventually go the way of Long Island, where summer tourism and residential development replaced ducks and potatoes.¹⁴⁰

Latin American migrants began to settle in Delmarva just before it entered its own period of upheaval. The rapid growth in Sussex County and other coastal areas affects immigrants in multiple ways, but most acutely in terms of housing. Interestingly, even as explosive development makes affordable housing scarce, the construction boom dramatically increases employment opportunities for migrants: framing, drywall, painting, clean-up on construction sites, landscaping, and housecleaning, to name a few. Previously confined to agricultural work and poultry processing, the sectors of the labor market utilizing immigrant labor have expanded substantially. It is safe to say that with a consistently high demand for labor, Latin American migrants will continue to settle in Delmarva. In the midst of the changes the region is undergoing, the question arises: How will Delmarva accommodate all of its new arrivals?

Chapter 3

Methods and Sources of Data

This research provides a qualitative assessment of changes over time regarding Latin American immigration and settlement in Delmarva, based on fieldwork conducted between September and December 2006. Data sources include interviews, secondary sources such as newspaper articles, U.S. Census data, and radio reports, and participant observation as a volunteer with different organizations working with Latin American immigrants. My intention throughout the data collection was not to gather portraits of Latin American immigrant experiences in Delmarva,^{iv} but rather to examine the way immigration has affected the community as a whole, native-born and immigrant residents alike, with the underlying purpose of identifying successful practices for immigrant integration as well as current and future challenges for Delmarva communities.

Geographic focus

Although most of my fieldwork was conducted in Sussex County, Delaware, I maintain a broader focus that encompasses the entire Delmarva Peninsula because the economy – especially the seasonal agriculture and poultry industry which effectively linked migrants to the area – functions regionally. Latin American immigrants who live in Maryland work in Delaware and vice versa. The poultry industry, in particular,

^{iv} For an excellent collection of the personal stories of Latin American immigrants to Delmarva, please read Katherine Borland's *Creating Community: Hispanic Migration to Rural Delaware*.

stretches across the peninsula, taking little notice of state lines. For example, Perdue Farms, Inc., is headquartered in Salisbury, Maryland, with hatcheries and feed mills in Delaware and Maryland, and processing plants in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, while Allen Family Foods, Inc., has its company headquarters in Seaford, Delaware,



Figure 2. Locations of hatcheries, and feed mills, and poultry processing plants in Delmarva.

with hatcheries and processing plants in Delaware and Maryland. Other vertically-integrated poultry businesses on the peninsula are similarly distributed; moreover, the thousands of growers who raise the chickens are spread out across Delmarva. In addition to chicken, other goods and services also pay little heed to state lines; for example, as one of the few providers of affordable and bilingual medical services, La Red Health Center in Georgetown, Delaware, draws clients from several Maryland counties.¹⁴¹ When discussing economic issues

immigration, only the broader regional view of

Delmarva makes sense.

However, the Delmarva Peninsula covers a lot of ground. My in-depth qualitative data collection necessarily focused on a smaller geographic area: Sussex County, Delaware. Sussex County is a natural focus for this research. The largest

Figure 3. Three Delmarva counties with highest growth in Hispanic population between 1990 and 2000.



county in Delmarva, centrally located within the peninsula, Sussex is the birthplace of the broiler chicken industry and the top broiler-producing county in the United States. Within rural Delmarva, Sussex is home to the greatest numbers of Latin American immigrants. In 2000 the U.S. Census counted 6,915 Latin American-born residents in Sussex County, compared to 2,062 in Accomack County, Virginia, and 1,842 in Wicomico County, Maryland.^v The corresponding growth rate of the immigrant population between 1990 and 2000 is also highest in Sussex County, at 369%. In addition, Sussex County's total population has been growing exponentially due to internal migration from other parts of the overpopulated East Coast. The demographic change experienced by Sussex County is in many ways a harbinger for future growth looming over the rest of Delmarva. In Sussex, two population spikes – the growth in the Latin American immigrant population and the growth in the population of retirees and second-home buyers – have fueled each other. The availability of cheap immigrant labor facilitated the construction boom, and the new homeowners,

^v Other counts are, not surprisingly, much higher. The Delaware Population Consortium estimated that 7,932 Hispanic immigrants resided in Sussex County by 1995, while a local Catholic priest estimated the 1996 immigrant population at 20,000 in southern Delaware and 7,000 on Maryland's Eastern Shore. (1)

generally wealthier than the native Sussex population, have contributed to increased numbers of service jobs filled by immigrants, in areas such as housecleaning and landscaping. The experiences of Sussex County communities are relevant to every community in Delmarva, as well as to other small-town American communities experiencing rapid demographic change. In light of this, my research concentrates on Sussex County within the larger Delmarva context.

Secondary sources

Most of the data concerning Delmarva in the 1980s and 1990s are drawn from newspaper articles. Two individuals were instrumental in locating these sources. Historian Roger Horowitz keeps several files in his office at the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware, filled with articles related to the paper he and University of Delaware Professor Mark Miller wrote about immigration in Georgetown, Delaware, in 1999.¹⁴² He generously allowed me to peruse these files. In Georgetown, ESL teacher and long-time community advocate Allison Burris Castellanos shared an overflowing folder of newspaper clippings related to the local immigration, especially concerning education and social services. Both Horowitz and Castellanos provided a wealth of information.

In addition, I gathered more recent articles during my stay in Delmarva, drawing especially from *The News Journal*, the *Sussex Countian*, *El Tiempo Hispano*, and the *Cape Gazette*.

Interviews

Interview participants in this research were located through a small-town snowball methodology. In a place like Sussex County, most everyone knows everyone, and most people will take the time to help someone out. Moreover, immigration is a topic very much on residents' minds, and many people promptly offered thoughts and observations upon hearing of my research intent. Snowball sampling eventually provided approximately thirty-five interviews, which ranged from forty-five minutes to two hours in length.

For the initial interviews, I approached people who were recommended to me by mutual acquaintances, based on their knowledge of and insight into the experiences of Latin American immigrants in Delmarva and host communities' receptions of these immigrants. These people in turn recommended other interviewees. In addition, I contacted some individuals directly based on their positions in the community as teachers of English Language Learner (ELL) students or as local and state government representatives. The interviewees represent a diverse group. In addition to teachers and government officials, interviewees were church leaders, realtors, newspaper editors, and poultry growers; interviewees worked in law enforcement, banks, construction, poultry plants, and nonprofit agencies. Within this varied group, approximately one third of my interviewees were of Latin American origin, and two thirds were long-time Delmarvans, with the exception of a few recent transplants from other parts of the Mid-Atlantic.

Although snowball sampling poses a risk of locating respondents with many similar characteristics, the small-town context of Sussex County reduces some aspects of the sample selection bias. Snowball sampling in a place where ‘everyone knows everyone’ is likely to turn up a greater variety of respondents since people of very different backgrounds are connected simply through the small town.

Interview questions varied according to the wide-ranging experiences of the respondents. Rather than using a single questionnaire, I prepared several open-ended questions or prompts for each interview. (See Appendix 1. Sample Interview Questions.)

Community involvement

Between September and December 2006, I volunteered at three organizations working with Latin American immigrants: Sussex County Habitat for Humanity, La Casita Homework Help Program, and La Esperanza. This involvement contributed to my knowledge of community issues.

The Sussex County chapter of Habitat for Humanity serves all Sussex residents in need of decent housing. In recent years, Habitat partner families have included several immigrant families. La Casita is an after-school program for children of immigrants, in which staff and volunteers help students complete their homework. The students range from kindergarten age to early high school. La Esperanza is the hub for the provision of social services in Spanish; the nonprofit offers English classes, citizenship classes, legal assistance regarding immigration status, assistance with

Medicaid, and healthcare services. I volunteered with one section of the Adult Basic ESL classes. Approximately ten students attended the weekday classes.

A broad foundation

The purpose of this research is not to offer an in-depth investigation of the education of non-English-speaking students, of the provision of healthcare to immigrants, or of the extension of access to transportation, housing, and banking for Latin American newcomers. Other researchers have focused on such issues individually;^{vi} however, many of these studies focus on communities in established immigrant destinations, and may not pertain to Delmarva or other rural new destinations. My research endeavors to provide a big-picture view of a small-town area, bringing Delmarva's experiences to the immigration discussion. It offers a broad assessment of multiple issues under the belief that they are interrelated, and that an understanding of the way they affect each other is an essential foundation from which to address individual concerns and build stronger communities.

^{vi} See Appendix 2. Further Reading for a list of such research.

Chapter 4

Arrival and Adjustment: Early Challenges

The “Changing Face”

The arrival and settlement of thousands of Latin American migrants in the small towns of Delmarva in the 1990s was big news. Reporters quickly gravitated to Georgetown, Delaware. The county seat of Sussex, Georgetown in 1990 contained some 4,100 people. By 1992, around two thousand Guatemalan migrants, primarily young men from the indigenous highlands, had taken up residence alongside them, drawn by employment in a Perdue processing plant located within town limits. The interaction between long-time, “good ol’ boy” Georgetown residents and newly arrived Mayan Indians offered an irresistible story. The metaphor of choice was a “changing face,” which appeared in varied forms: “the changing face of Sussex” in 1994,¹⁴³ “the changing face of Georgetown” in 1995,¹⁴⁴ and the “changing face of the Shore” in 1996.¹⁴⁵ The repetition of this metaphor attests to the visual nature in which many residents experienced this change. Reporters described trash piled up outside decaying houses, beat-up cars in driveways, and “the gutters filled with empty Goya cans from the night before,”¹⁴⁶ in addition to the observation that the newcomers “didn’t look the same.”¹⁴⁷ Describing a corner store catering to the immigrant population, a reporter wrote, “At Joe’s [Market], Hispanic culture strikes the visitor in the face.”¹⁴⁸ Although this article was written with an overall intent of sympathy for

the new arrivals, the reporter still chose language depicting the cultural encounter as something not only shocking but also violent – being struck in the face.

For many in Georgetown, the town's demographic shift was felt as a sudden and abrupt change. As then Mayor Steve Pepper told a reporter, “It seemed like it happened overnight.”¹⁴⁹ Although it is true that the numbers of Latin American migrants settling in Delmarva increased sharply in the early 1990s, the conditions that connected these migrants with jobs in the Delmarva economy arose over time, and presumably two thousand migrants didn't all arrive on the same bus. What is more likely to have happened “overnight” is that certain concerns linked to the presence of a socially marginalized, linguistically isolated population suddenly became impossible to ignore. As a Georgetown councilman acknowledged in 1997, “Maybe we thought the problem would go away if we waited long enough...Now people are finally starting to realize that they’re not going away and we need to deal with the problems.”¹⁵⁰ The problems that surfaced involved housing, transportation, and intercultural frictions. In one reporter’s words, they were “problems of change in places not used to change, problems borne of inaction by government and industry.”¹⁵¹

Finding Shelter

The biggest and most immediate problem was housing. Even in the early 1990s, there wasn’t enough affordable housing to go around; fifteen hundred households in Sussex County were on waiting lists for public housing or rent subsidies

at that time.¹⁵² ^{vii} Trailer parks provided a solution of sorts, as migrants squeezed into older units. Some landlords charged per-person rents, easily extracting \$1000 a month from ten inhabitants in a run-down trailer. In a rather infamous trailer park in Marydel, Maryland, many trailers would house twenty to thirty persons each during the summer months.¹⁵³ In Georgetown, enterprising landlords went beyond the usual trailer park on the outskirts of town to meet the housing need. One couple hired a Guatemalan man in 1987 to work on their farm outside of town, and when the man had difficulty finding housing, the couple bought an old house in town and rented it to him. Soon enough, members of the man's family traveled from Guatemala to join him in the house, finding work in the Perdue plant. The couple recognized a trend and bought three more houses to rent out. By the end of the decade, they owned seventeen houses in Georgetown, all rented to Latin American immigrants.¹⁵⁴ Another entrepreneur, driving through Georgetown in 1992, noticed men living in their cars. He purchased a 35-unit apartment complex in Georgetown and proceeded not only to rent to immigrants but offered one tenant three months free rent to open the corner *tienda* that is now Joe's Market.¹⁵⁵

However, the efforts of enterprising individuals notwithstanding, housing shortages remained acute as demand continued to outpace supply. Trailers, old houses, and apartments alike were grossly overcrowded. In Georgetown, town officials noticed that trash collection in the Kimmeytown neighborhood doubled; however, the

^{vii} Despite the shortage, in 1994 the Sussex County Council rejected to rezone a 20-acre property so that the state could develop 80 townhouses for needy families, opposing high population density in a historically rural area. Eight years later, the Council would approve a development of 185 homes on a 30-acre property, for families of a decidedly higher income bracket.

small amount of property tax collected on the old houses was inadequate to cover the rising costs of town services.¹⁵⁶ Of greater concern, the pairing of overcrowding and negligent landlords created serious safety hazards. Tenants in older, uninsulated homes with central heat or faulty furnaces overused space heaters; trailers had bare wiring, light sockets screwed directly into walls, and rotting floors; fires were common. Lead paint remained present in many older homes; landlords, not required by law to test for lead, needed only to include in the lease a warning of its possible presence. Immigrants with limited English were unlikely to catch the warning, and more than once, a child was hospitalized with lead poisoning. In the absence of enforcement and with tenants who were not inclined to create a fuss, many landlords became slumlords, charging exorbitant rents while neglecting basic maintenance. In a shoddy three-building apartment complex in Sussex County, which locals refer to as the “Roxana Hilton,” the water became unsafe to drink, and the landlord simply refused to solve the problem, confident that his tenants' undocumented status would preclude them from notifying authorities.¹⁵⁷ In another instance, a Georgetown tenant repeatedly notified his landlord of a broken window, while the town housing inspector sent two letters to the landlord concerning the broken window as well as a cockroach infestation. However, despite the intervention of the housing inspector, the landlord stalled five months before replacing the window. The position of housing inspector did not exist in Georgetown before 1996. The first inspector quit after seven months, frustrated by the slow, unwieldy citation process and the town officials' apparent unwillingness to clean up the town. Between 1994 and 1997, officials took only one landlord to court.¹⁵⁸ Landlords, for their part, claimed that high rents were necessary

due to the extensive wear and tear on the properties. Although responsibility for the deterioration remained unclaimed, the existence of pervasive substandard housing conditions was beyond debate. This was especially concentrated and visible in the Kimmeytown area of Georgetown. *The Washington Post* reported in 1999 that Georgetown town leaders “believe the Guatemalans will tire of living in dilapidated houses and move to trailer parks and modest subdivisions throughout the county.”¹⁵⁹ The tendency to hope problems will solve themselves proved hard to budge, even in the context of such extreme circumstances. The housing shortage remains one of the thorniest challenges for immigrants settling in Delmarva.

Community Tensions

Sadly, in late 1993, it was a tragic accident that made Delmarvans acutely aware of the recent immigration. Henry Robledo, a twenty-seven year-old Guatemalan man who had lived in Georgetown for eighteen months, struck the car of a local girl, a seventeen year-old high school senior. The girl died five days later of head injuries. Robledo had been driving while intoxicated, without a license or insurance. Inevitably, the tragedy unleashed a storm of inter-ethnic tensions. While Robledo was being held at Sussex Correctional Institution awaiting trial, he was badly beaten by other inmates and sustained attempts to set his hair and feet on fire.¹⁶⁰ In addition to fueling anti-immigrant sentiments, the accident highlighted two issues common to immigrant accommodation in rural areas.

The first is the issue of transportation. In a region without public transportation options, where some residents regularly travel fifteen miles to buy groceries, access to a car is essential. For immigrant employees in poultry processing, there are two plants located within walking distance of housing: Perdue in Georgetown and Mountaire in Selbyville, Delaware. Both plants are located within town limits; not coincidentally, in both towns, over twenty percent of the population is of Latin American origin (in Georgetown, over forty percent).¹⁶¹ For poultry plant employees residing in these towns, the problem of transportation to work is solved on foot or on a bike. For everyone else, miles of road stretch between home and work. At Robledo's sentencing, the state prosecutor told the judge that Sussex roads were "plagued by new immigrants who lack basic knowledge of how to drive – but drive anyway."¹⁶² During Robledo's sojourn in the U.S., he had accumulated multiple traffic violations, including driving without a valid license, speeding, and reckless driving while intoxicated. State Police Cpl. Tony Asion, then co-chairman of the advocacy group the Latino Task Force, acknowledged that many immigrants don't attempt to get licenses because they cannot read the English-language manual used for the test, but they will drive and continue to drive after traffic citations out of necessity. Asion translated the Delaware driver's manual into Spanish, and the translation was published later in the year. However, this translation would not be of much use to the Latin American immigrants who lacked Spanish literacy. Sister Rosa, a Carmelite nun serving Georgetown's immigrant population, noted that many of the migrants "can hardly write their name. They don't even know when they were born."¹⁶³ For individuals

with such minimal exposure to literacy, filling out the paperwork for a license, let alone reading a driver's manual, is daunting.

Asion pointed out that the accident indicated another dilemma for the newly arrived immigrants – a lack of appropriate social outlets. As Asion observed, many immigrants – at the time primarily young men – worked long hours with few distractions, and often turned to drinking in their free time.¹⁶⁴ This is not a phenomenon unique to Delmarva, nor is it limited to international migration – in countries with massive rural to urban migration, the urban alcohol-selling establishments benefit from each wave of newcomers. Migration can be very lonely, the work draining, the disillusionment crushing. Alcohol is, as it has always been, an easy escape.

Especially during the early 1990s, alcohol consumption and the overall socializing habits of the young male immigrants caused a great deal of consternation for some locals. When the Latino Task Force surveyed Georgetown residents to assemble a list of Anglo and Hispanic concerns, the biggest concern for the non-Hispanic population was that they felt uncomfortable and intimidated in their own town. Groups of young Latin American men congregating outside on the street made residents very ill at ease. In the United States, hanging around in front of a store can be criminalized as “loitering,” whereas in the rural Guatemalan towns that many of Georgetown's migrants call home, socializing outdoors is the norm. Almost every town in Guatemala, no matter how small, will have a *parque* that provides a space for social interaction. For the migrants making a home in Georgetown, such a space proved harder to come by. Those who had front porches used them; others talked in

small groups on the sidewalks. Clusters of people who “didn’t look the same” and spoke a different language made some Anglo residents nervous. However, as State Police Cpl. Asion commented, “The Guatemalans were rather surprised to learn that they were intimidating people. They thought it was the other way around.”¹⁶⁵

As more migrants crowded into homes in Kimmeytown, residents in quiet Georgetown complained about noise. “They don’t come up and bug us,” one man told a reporter, “but we hear the racket.”¹⁶⁶ Others perceived the change in the neighborhood as more extreme; for example, a woman told the same reporter, “They hang out all the windows. They’ve knocked all the screens out. You don’t even want to drive through there.”¹⁶⁷ Georgetown began to experience white flight. One young Anglo-American mother explained that one reason behind her family’s move to the outskirts of Millsboro was that she didn’t enjoy the feeling that her Hispanic neighbors in Georgetown were staring at her. Other women chose to do their shopping in Rehoboth rather than Georgetown for the same reason – they felt that the Hispanic men in the Georgetown stores were staring at them. This may be explained in cultural terms; in many Latin American countries, it appears to be culturally permissible for men to look over women for a much longer time interval than is acceptable in the United States. Regardless of the reason, for many native-born Delmarvans, the staring only increased the sense of feeling uneasy in their own town.

At times, the cultural misunderstandings were more comical. Once, a woman returned home to find three Guatemalan men swimming in her pool. She shouted in alarm and the men panicked, jumped out of the pool, and offered her cash.¹⁶⁸ In Milford, Delaware, neighbors complained when an immigrant family hung slaughtered

goats on the clothesline. Town officials sent someone over to explain some things about American sensibilities, and the family moved the offending carcasses.¹⁶⁹ Not only did many of the newcomers lack cultural knowledge of life in the United States upon arrival, but many remained isolated and without guidance for months or years after settling. Some, according to State Police Cpl. Asion, didn't know how to use a washing machine or a stove, and one household tried to barbecue indoors. "But it's just a matter of education," he said. "If Americans were put in their culture, it would be the same thing. We are isolating these people and at the same time expecting them to learn."¹⁷⁰

The lack of cultural knowledge quickly engendered serious consequences for the new arrivals. By the first half of 1994, seven of the nine armed robberies in Georgetown targeted Hispanic immigrants. This is a common story in immigrant-receiving areas. New migrants do not utilize banks; therefore they often carry large amounts of cash. In no time, it is well-known not only that there are individuals walking around with wads of cash, but that these individuals are disinclined to report crimes to the police. When, in 1992, the Delaware State Police sent Asion to Georgetown to look into the issue, he found out that Georgetown's Guatemalan population was extremely wary of anyone in uniform, a natural outcome following the brutal violence many Guatemalans experienced at the hands of people in uniform during the civil war. Cultivating trust between immigrants and law enforcement would be a long-term challenge. In 1999, the Georgetown police hired its first Spanish-speaking officers. But, as State Police Cpl. Ed Justiniano pointed out at the time, simply having Hispanic officers does not guarantee the police department better

rapport with the immigrant community.¹⁷¹ Sharing a language does not necessarily mean sharing a culture, and in Georgetown especially, where most of the Latin American migrants were indigenous Guatemalans from the rural highlands, the disparity between the cultural backgrounds of the Spanish-speaking police officers and the newcomers was enormous.

Passing the Buck

“We’ve never had anything like this in southern Delaware,” a local historian observed. “It will be a real test for communities in Sussex County to deal with it in an open and progressive way.”¹⁷² Tensions between the newcomers and the established Georgetown community were aggravated by a lack of cultural knowledge and understanding on both sides. Town Councilwoman Mabel Givens argued early on for the need to bridge the divide, but her suggestions met strong resistance. “We need to come closer to try to understand each other,” she told a reporter in 1994. “When I say that, I get knocked down. ‘We didn’t bring them here,’ people tell me.”¹⁷³

People looked around for a good place to lay the blame, for the guilty party responsible for ‘bringing them here,’ and pointed squarely at the poultry processing industry. Arguments surfaced that the big companies – Perdue, ConAgra, Townsend’s (now Mountaire), and Allen’s – should provide more services for their foreign workers. “The poultry industry is doing very little to accommodate the people they are attracting from outside the borders,” said Sussex County Councilman George Cole in 1994, voicing the opinion of many Sussex residents. “They are encouraging them with

jobs, but once they come here they are not accommodating them. That burden is placed on the taxpayers.”¹⁷⁴ Companies like Perdue were quick to deny active recruitment or encouragement of foreign workers, and quick to remind the public that the poultry industry is an integral part of the regional economy. Bill Satterfield, executive director of Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc. (DPI), often repeated the point that “if we didn’t have these people, the whole industry would be smaller.”¹⁷⁵ In 1997, Frank Perdue went further to say that the Latin American immigrants were “a godsend.”¹⁷⁶ However, Perdue stuck firm to its rationale for not providing housing for their foreign workers, arguing that they didn’t provide housing for any of their other employees, and they would not treat these employees any differently. Perdue and other employers implemented occasional English-language classes and diversity training seminars, but such efforts remained sporadic. Blame also made its way to governments, for accommodating industry growth but not its workers.¹⁷⁷ The Sussex County Council endorsed a resolution in 1996 asking “private employers and local, state, and federal governments to provide adequate wages and housing to immigrants and help immigrants become more involved in local cultural, social and athletic events.”¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, the resolution asked for the establishment of a federal immigration office in Sussex. However, the Council revealed its ambivalence by also calling on federal immigration officials to “deport illegal immigrants and take action against employers who employ illegal immigrants.”¹⁷⁹ With an ambivalent public, government officials were in no rush to take a stand, and the big players in the poultry industry clung tight to a business-as-usual position. The best practices to facilitate immigrant settlement and participation in the community would be implemented not

through institutional support but rather through the gumption of a handful of individuals.

Chapter 5

Adjustment, Accommodation and Settlement: Success Stories and Promising Initiatives

Ambivalent Reception

A decade after initial growing pains of arrival lengthened into settlement, ambivalence continues to characterize most long-time residents' attitudes towards their Latin American neighbors. One contractor at a construction site offered two divergent opinions in the same breath,

Half my crew is illegal...hard workers. They live like animals, what I would consider barbaric, so that they can send money home. One Mexican kid, nineteen years old, his mother is ill. So he came here to work, sends all his money home to his mother so she doesn't have to work. He says he'll support her until she dies. It makes your heart bleed. But then you know I resent those people that swim across or walk across or whatever then get given amnesty. My ex-wife is Russian, came here legally. We got married while she was still on her tourist visa, and I paid a lot of money to help her get her citizenship. Did everything legally.¹⁸⁰

In Delmarva, this ambivalence generally translates into acceptance, albeit at times an uneasy, reluctant acceptance with reservations. Ambivalence towards immigration – “recognition of the economic utility of Latino immigrants coupled with anxiety about their sociocultural impact”¹⁸¹ – is a common theme across the United States. Research shows that fluctuations in both the macroeconomy and personal economic circumstances have little effect on public reception towards immigration; instead, non-economic factors such as ethnicity, language, and culture shape attitudes towards

immigration.¹⁸² However, in rural Delmarva, the recognition that the newcomers are hard workers seems to carry more weight. This is not to say that anti-immigrant sentiment does not exist; certainly in some quarters it is robust. Yet the refrain of ‘hard workers’ surfaces frequently. In large metropolitan areas, immigrants often live and work in ethnic enclaves, with little contact with the mainstream population,¹⁸³ whereas in small towns, the likelihood of complete isolation is greatly reduced, and immigrants and native-born residents interact frequently. Moreover, when ‘everybody knows everything about everybody,’ any observations of newcomers will likewise spread quickly. In a rural area in which a large industry relying heavily on immigrant labor is not only of significant regional economic importance but is also deeply tied to the farming culture of the land, the common refrain of ‘hard workers’ has a stronger resonance with the native population.

A poultry grower sees Latin Americans on the farm frequently, both when the “biddie bus” arrives bearing crates of chicks from the hatcheries, and when the catching crews come to round up the chickens for the slaughter. Latin Americans now make up the majority of workers on both the biddie bus and the catching crews. One Sussex County grower noted that the Hispanic crews do their job quickly and cleanly, “without a lot of cussing,” and she appreciates their “yes ma’am” attitude. “They wanna work,” she continued. “Only thing is, they send all their money home. You would like to see them spend it here and improve the area. But, if my family was there, I’d send money home too. You gotta do what you gotta do.”¹⁸⁴ Problems arise “with people not learning English and us being supposed to learn Spanish.” All supervisors in the poultry plants, for example, are required to take Spanish classes,

perceived by some as an added burden. Along the same lines, the grower mentioned that when her husband opens up mail in “four or five languages,” he is perturbed. While non-economic factors such as language influence this family’s response to immigration, the recognition of work done fast and well, coupled with the ability to empathize with dedication to families back home, leads to a pragmatic, if ambivalent, acceptance. A local realtor confirmed, “They [the immigrants] have gradually stabilized, buying homes. They work their butts off. These people came in the poorest of the poor, but they knew how to work. You can forgive a lot of sins when people are hardworking.”¹⁸⁵

Such ambivalence provides a tenuous foundation at best, but it does allow a space in which community bonds can form, settlers can put down roots, and activists can tackle the issues behind the tensions between newcomers and long-time residents, developing a series of ‘best practices.’

Best Practices

At a meeting in the spring of 2002, Sussex County Administrator Bob Stickels declared the lack of affordable housing “one of the most serious problems in the county.”¹⁸⁶ The state housing authority counted 4,324 families living in substandard housing in the county in 2003.¹⁸⁷ Three years later, an editorial noted that average monthly rents in Sussex climbed by 31 percent from 2000 to 2006, while the average Sussex income grew by only 17 percent between 2001 and 2005.¹⁸⁸ Even this modest income growth, however, didn’t reach all occupations; the average yearly income for

janitors in the state of Delaware, for example, rose by only \$260 between 2000 and 2005.¹⁸⁹ Between 1990 and 2000, the median home value in Sussex County rose from \$79,800 to \$122,400; by 2005, this figure jumped to \$203,400,¹⁹⁰ reflecting the inland movement of soaring coastal property values.

Several nonprofit organizations were already dedicated to the struggle for affordable housing by the time Latin American migrants settled in Delmarva. Many of these organizations, with the help of bilingual employees and outreach efforts, have extended their services to the Spanish-speaking immigrant community. Successful strategies fall into two main categories: creating affordable alternatives to the mainstream housing market, and homeownership counseling to assist clients in purchasing homes at the market price.

Affordable Housing Alternatives

Options for truly affordable low-income housing are few. Earning the minimum wage^{viii} in 2006, a worker could truly afford monthly rent of no more than \$320.¹⁹¹ The typical poultry processing plant employee earned slightly more, between \$8.00 and \$8.50 per hour, bringing annual income to between \$16,000 and \$17,000;¹⁹² ideally, affordable rent for this employee would not exceed \$425 a month.^{ix} Creating housing with rents or mortgages that fall within these limits is no easy task in a county where the fair-market monthly rents for one-, two-, and three-bedroom housing units are \$555, \$617, and \$844 respectively.¹⁹³ In this environment, the number of truly

^{viii} Legislation passed in 2006 raised Delaware's minimum wage to \$6.65 on January 1, 2007, and will raise it to \$7.15 on January 1, 2008.

^{ix} A unit is considered affordable if it costs no more than 30% of the renter's income.

affordable housing units that local nonprofits have built remains small. However, their strategies serve as valuable models for future expansion. I highlight below the housing initiatives of two nonprofit organizations, Delmarva Rural Ministries, Inc., and Sussex County Habitat for Humanity.

Delmarva Rural Ministries, Inc. (DRM) came into being in 1972 as a task force within the Delmarva Ecumenical Agency, which grew from the Delaware and Maryland Council of Churches. Its initial focus was meeting an urgent need for health services among the migrant farmworker population, but its mission has since expanded to meet the needs of a much broader clientele. Following its incorporation as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 1979,¹⁹⁴ DRM partnered with another local nonprofit, NCALL Research, to develop a farmworker housing project. The James E. Leonard Apartments in Wicomico County, Maryland, were completed in 1989, providing eighteen units for year-round farmworkers and sixteen units reserved for migrant farmworkers. The Elizabeth Cornish Landing Apartments opened in Sussex County, in 1995, also with eighteen year-round and sixteen migrant units, and the William Hughes Apartments opened in Northampton County, Virginia, in 1999, comprised of sixteen year-round and eighteen migrant units. These projects have been recognized on a national level, receiving awards from the Fannie Mae Foundation and USDA Rural Development, including special recognition for the Leonard Apartments' anti-crime program. DRM, the property managers, and tenants alike have reported great successes in creating clean, affordable housing with a sense of community.¹⁹⁵ This success stems from the individual attention of the property managers as well as activities organized to promote a sense of community.

In the Leonard Apartments, for example, the property manager noted that some tenants did not know how to operate appliances in the apartments or in the common areas, and that many unaccompanied migrant workers were sending all of their earnings home without setting some aside for rent. The property manager explained to researchers that she provides education on topics such as how to operate a washer and dryer and how to set a weekly budget. She also informed each tenant individually about the expectations and responsibilities entailed in their leases.¹⁹⁶ In addition, the property management company organized tenant activities such as soccer games and cookouts, providing soccer equipment and a playground at the complex. The property manager invited local police officers to one of these cookouts with the idea of promoting a better understanding between the police and the apartments' Latin American tenants, who tended to fear the police. These apartment complexes not only supply clean, safe housing, but through the individual efforts of the property managers, they also supply practical knowledge about day-to-day living in the U.S. and spaces for interaction and entertainment. In this way, tenants avoid many of the problems experienced by the immigrants renting overcrowded, decaying houses in Georgetown.

Building on the success of these apartments, DRM expanded, adding thirty-two more migrant farmworker units to the Leonard Apartments in 2000. Then, in 2004, the Elizabeth Cornish Landing Annex opened, offering twelve units to low-income community residents at large. The Annex is the first property DRM has developed that is not specifically designated for farmworkers. In 2005, DRM added sixteen more migrant farmworker units to the Elizabeth Cornish Landing complex,

and a large community building comprised of a community room, a daycare facility, and a satellite health care facility.¹⁹⁷ While these expansions are especially laudable for a nonprofit whose primary focus is health care, the number of residents living in these apartments at any one time is small. The farmworkers apartments are restricted to documented farmworkers only, and there are only twelve units available to non-farmworkers.

This small scale notwithstanding, these apartments offer a valuable model for affordable housing that also effectively meets the needs of a largely migrant, foreign-born population. The individual attention and guidance provided by the property managers are key, orienting tenants to the necessary details of apartment living, while the organized activities and available common spaces facilitate a cohesive community. Moreover, the stability and affordable rent in these apartments can enable families to move into homeownership. For example, one family, after years of living in migrant camps and occasionally out of their van, found steady employment in Sussex County and a stable living environment in the Elizabeth Cornish Landing Apartments. Soon they turned their attention to the goal of owning their own home, and through working with a local nonprofit that uses a self-help construction model to keep mortgages low, the Milford Housing Development Corporation, they helped build their house.¹⁹⁸

Homeownership, and the stability it provides for not only the adults but the growing children in a household, has positive ripple effects for an entire community. Habitat for Humanity is an organization that operates internationally under this principle. The Sussex County chapter incorporated in 1991, but remained entirely volunteer-operated until late 2004, when a grant allowed the hiring of an Executive

Director. Sussex County Habitat for Humanity (SCHFH) built an average of one house per year between 1991 and 2002, three houses in 2003, and five houses in 2004. Recently, they have picked up the pace; in September 2006, SCHFH organized a “Home Builders Blitz,” building three homes in one week with the help of professional builders. Having partnered with twenty-three families to build homes since their incorporation, SCHFH wants to house twenty-three more families in the next three years. Nineteen of these families will live in a Habitat subdivision, in land near Seaford, Delaware, acquired in 2004. This Habitat community will be home to white, African-American, and Latin American families. Of the seven partner families selected in 2006, five are of Latin American origin – four Guatemalan families and one Mexican family.

Executive Director Kevin Gilmore said that SCHFH has had good success partnering with Latino families.¹⁹⁹ For one thing, they often have no consumer debt or credit card debt, and are therefore good matches for Habitat’s no-interest mortgage. In addition, SCHFH looks to serve the most people in a home and is thus inclined to select partner families with children. Family selection is based on demonstrated housing need, willingness to actively partner with Habitat, and ability to make mortgage payments, so single adults also qualify, but families with children are selected more frequently. Overall, the successful completion of a Habitat house rests on each family’s ability to partner with Habitat, contributing time and “sweat equity.” Each adult in the household must contribute at least 250 hours, whether working on another family’s home, manning tables at events, or helping in the office, and family and friends can contribute up to half of those hours. Thus the willingness to work on

Saturdays and a network of friends and family willing to help speeds up the home-building process. Most people end up contributing more than the required number of hours, Gilmore added, and some stay involved with the organization after their homes are completed. One recent Habitat homeowner, originally from Guatemala, volunteers as a family sponsor, serving as a guide for two families currently going through the Habitat process. He also often translates at meetings. During a visit, he proudly shows off his Habitat home, which, like other houses in his neighborhood on the northern end of Georgetown, is modest, but new, comfortable and well-kept. Inside, the house is sunny and open, and kept warm enough that a potted banana tree gives fruit. The surface of the refrigerator is covered with colorful A-B-C magnets, school photos of the kids, and photos from Guatemala. A magnet from Allen's Family Foods holds up a picture of a quetzal, Guatemala's national bird.²⁰⁰

The Habitat model of volunteer partnership – with families, with local churches and businesses, and other community residents – allows SCHFH to sell homes for \$75,000, even in the inflated coastal real estate market. Mortgage payments are between \$300 and \$400 a month, payments that are truly affordable for even those earning 30% of the area median income. This organization formed to serve native-born residents of Sussex County but has quickly extended its reach to the Latin American immigrant population, in part due to recognition of need. A Habitat survey reports that 7.94% of Hispanic residents own their own home, compared to 81% of all county residents, and that 54% of Hispanic residents are living with more than one family per home.²⁰¹ Over half of the survey participants had been employed in the same job for at least two years, and over half were employed in poultry processing.

Some of the large poultry companies have taken note. One of the newly selected Habitat family members, a petite woman from Guatemala, works for Mountaire in Selbyville. Her supervisors gave her a week off so that she could volunteer at the week-long Builder's Blitz in September and get a jump-start on her 250 Habitat hours; in return she brought Habitat T-shirts as gifts.²⁰² Perdue in Georgetown has expressed interest in sponsoring a build, and they requested flyers for potential homeowners working in the plant.²⁰³ In the absence of adequate governmental support for affordable housing projects, companies like Perdue and Mountaire recognize that SCHFH, with only three paid staff members, provides their employees with an achievable path to stable housing, even if at the rate of only one or two employees a year.

Homeownership Counseling

Even when housing costs are too high to be truly affordable, homeownership counseling effectively links people with stable homes. In Sussex County, two nonprofits offer this service: NCALL Research, Inc. and First State Community Action. NCALL Research has made a concerted effort to reach Spanish-speaking community members. In addition, a Latin American real estate agent has implemented homeownership counseling methods of her own. Their experiences demonstrate that homeownership counseling takes time and commitment but yields results.

In the years following World War II, the National Council on Agricultural Life & Labor Research Fund, Inc., (NCALL) formed in Washington, D.C., as a lobby speaking for the interests of rural residents, especially farmworker housing, and grew

into a nonprofit. NCALL opened an office in Dover, Delaware, in 1976 to address a notable lack of farmworker housing efforts in the Mid-Atlantic states.²⁰⁴ Two decades later, NCALL adapted to include a shifting demographic, and its small Georgetown office began offering multiple workshops and counseling in Spanish. These services commenced in 1997, with the hiring of a bilingual housing counselor. Lucia Campos, an energetic woman originally from California, has held that position for nine years, guiding clients through the entire process of purchasing a home, from applying for a loan to closing. “We work with you,” Campos offered. “I hold my clients’ hands throughout. I see them and I see them and I see them again and again.”²⁰⁵ These services are completely free of charge, with the exception of the credit report, which is done by an outside agency. Despite the availability of free, quality services, reaching immigrants in the community remains a challenge. “Because we’re nonprofit, it’s word of mouth. I cannot tell you how many times I go out, and anywhere that I have my business cards – I could be in line at the supermarket, ‘Hey, you want to buy a house here? Here’s my card.’ We try to go to the poultry plants, during their lunch hour or change of shifts, giving out flyers, things like that, to invite families to come out to us. And we try to partner with other services like La Casita, La Esperanza, to let them know of our services so that if they have any clients going to them seeking housing or anything like that, they know where to refer them.”

A sign of the increasing numbers of Latin Americans buying homes, a handful of Spanish-speaking realtors now advertise their services in local bilingual newspapers. One of these real estate agents incorporates homeownership counseling into her own practice. Gloria Dunsmore moved to Delaware from Medellín, Columbia,

with her American husband and her daughter. Her primary work is as an educator; for the past four years, she has worked with both Even Start and Parents as Teachers, counseling Spanish-speaking families on parenting and child development, from prenatal care until the children are three years of age. She started working part-time for the real estate agency in March of 2006. “I don’t live with the money from this job,” she explained. “This is another way of helping people.”²⁰⁶ For foreign-born residents unfamiliar with the American system, the slew of requirements necessary to purchase a house – good credit scores, savings set aside for closing and down payments, proof of making payments on time, and a history of reported taxes stating true earnings – can be particularly daunting. In her experience, Dunsmore sees a lack of knowledge of the system as the biggest issue for Latin American prospective homeowners. Some clients do not know that they need to pay taxes, or how to qualify for credit. However, with homeownership counseling over many months, these obstacles can be surmounted. NCALL’s counseling complements her own; some people go to NCALL first and then contact her, while she sends others to NCALL, where she herself attended workshops to gain knowledge of the American mortgage system. Not every realtor will take the time to work with clients who do not already qualify to purchase a home, Dunsmore noted. Initial financial unpreparedness extends an already lengthy process and requires a significant investment of time on the realtor’s part. Dunsmore often calls clients back repeatedly, reflecting what she sees as a cultural difference: her Latin American clients like the attention of multiple calls while Americans do not. In addition, Dunsmore works around her clients’ schedules, frequently meeting with them in the evenings.

Thus far, she has sold seven houses, and she is currently working with approximately twenty additional clients, who represent varying degrees of financial preparedness. Originally from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Bolivia, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, these clients now work in Delmarva in a wide variety of occupations: they work in construction, poultry processing, plumbing, welding, and accounting; they work for an ice company, a bakery, a Mexican grocery store, a junkyard, and Wal-mart; they do maintenance on poultry houses, repair agricultural machines, and own a restaurant.²⁰⁷ The homes her clients have been able to purchase are located in western Sussex, in the price range of \$150,000 to \$250,000.

Financial literacy programs

Homeownership in the United States is inextricably tied to banking; thus, a good part of homeownership counseling is financial counseling. In this respect, NCALL recently launched financial counseling workshops, called “Growing Your Money” in English, and “Finanzas” in Spanish. Participants in these workshops learn about banking, direct deposit, credit, setting savings goals, and paying off collection debt.²⁰⁸ Campos elaborated on the need for financial education:

The majority of our Hispanic population – their education level is first or second grade. And none of them were taking advantage of any type of banking services. I mean, they were opening a savings account to cash their checks, but they were not understanding the idea is, you don’t just cash your check and leave no money there, because every month you have a service fee if you don’t maintain a certain balance. And so, then it started to become the non-confidence towards that banking institution: ‘Oh, my cousin opened a bank account with a hundred dollars, and when she tried to go get the hundred dollars out, she only had ten left.’ And I would be like, ‘Yeah, because there’s fees

involved. It costs the bank to have the account opened. Were you aware of that, was your cousin aware of that? Was she explained that the day she went to open her account?’ ‘Oh well, I don’t know.’²⁰⁹

This type of basic banking knowledge is an essential first step towards financial stability and strengthened links to the host community. In 2005, its first year, Finanzas had twenty-three participants and eighteen graduates; fifteen began working actively with a housing counselor and three clients had purchased homes by the end of the year.²¹⁰ In 2006, forty-six people graduated from the program.²¹¹ NCALL based Finanzas on a very successful initiative that took place at a Townsend’s poultry processing plant in Rogers, Arkansas (see Chapter 1, pages 11-12). NCALL staff traveled to Arkansas in 2003 to learn about the program there, which was run by a mortgage company in partnership with the plant. As Campos explained, the trip revealed significant differences between the immigrant populations in Rogers and in Georgetown.

When we met with them, I could see that the population was totally different from what we have here. In Rogers, the majority of the families were from Mexico, they all came from California, and ninety-five percent of the families were legal immigrants. Rogers was a town just like Georgetown, did not have capability to house all the families that were coming in. So they noticed that all of them were leaving around Christmastime – they were all going back home to spend Christmas, and the plant would suddenly be jobless for weeks at a time. So they said, how is it that we can offer better services – one to the community, because now they’re not overcrowding, we’re going to get them decent housing, and also be able to provide a year-round employment status for the poultry plants. So they thought, homeownership is a good way to attract people to stay, and it’s not as easy when you’re a homeowner to say, Well I’m going to be leaving for a couple of months, because I can just come back and rent somewhere else or move in with family until I find somewhere else to rent. So they were very successful; the families that they were giving the financial literacy to – the outcome was homeownership. Out of their three to six families [in a class], all of them were becoming

homeowners. When we came back, okay, what is our challenge? Our challenge is that we're meeting with Central American families, a lot of them are only under employment authorization, and a couple of years ago was when the INS reforms were going through. Some of their work permits were not renewed, some of the families were getting deportations, so we were working with a different type of environment altogether. It was just very very hard.²¹²

Drawn by employment opportunities at multiple poultry-processing plants, Latin American immigrants began to move to Rogers in 1993, just as Georgetown confronted its own immigration experience. However, the immigrants who moved to Rogers came from rural California, where they had worked in agriculture,²¹³ and many had likely gained legal status through IRCA and the Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) Program. NCALL had to adapt the financial literacy program to fit the needs of the predominately Guatemalan immigrants in the Georgetown area, who were less established in the United States. Campos continued:

So our focus was no longer homeownership, it was basically just the education piece. It's a hard sell, because a lot of people who give money to nonprofits want to see end results, that the outcome was homeownership. It was very hard to measure the education. They want to see bank accounts opened... So that was our challenge, that even though we were going into the plants to give information, how many of those families or individuals that were taking the classes were actually opening a bank account or **could** open a bank account. So it's been hard. It has grown in the past year or two. We started out with Perdue being very good because everyone wanted to take the class; they were getting off the line to take the class. So we had a really good response with them, but trying to sell the project outside of the plant, for families to attend classes, we were having just one or two people appear, and then follow-through for the five weeks was also really hard. So now we've developed an all-day Saturday class. And we've seen that it is working; we usually have ten to twelve people signed up. We cut down on some information, and talk a little more about credit. The other thing is, a lot of our families are being taken by the check-cashing places, and they pay so much money. A lot of banks now offer that if you have a passport and an ITIN number, you can open a checking or a savings

account. So we're telling our families, instead of cashing your check there, try to open an account. We've had some success, we really have. Now our classes are growing a little bit better, with word of mouth, and we're holding them once a month now.

Nationally as well as locally, banks are indeed eager to include a growing market of foreign-born clients, and many now allow bank accounts to be opened with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers, ITINs.^x For over a year, WSFS Bank has allowed the use of ITINs, and at the newly-built Millsboro branch, they are attempting to go one step further with their own financial literacy classes, following the initiative of bilingual employee Heather Garza. American-born Garza lived in Mexico for six years with her husband, and now uses her Spanish-language skills regularly in Delaware. When she began working at the WSFS branch in Rehoboth, she observed a great need for financial education geared towards the immigrant population. Many immigrants would come into the bank just to cash their checks, and then walk out the door with large sums of money. Garza found herself repeatedly explaining things like how to fill out deposit slips, which was extremely time-consuming, although it did generate customers for the bank. One man came into the bank frequently to cash checks, and eventually, following Garza's advice, opened an account. Soon, his immediate family members followed suit, then his second cousins opened accounts, and ultimately twenty people opened accounts with WSFS due to this man's experience.²¹⁴ Thinking that a class would allow her to explain such information to

^x An ITIN is a nine-digit tax processing number issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to individuals who are required for U.S. Tax purposes to have a taxpayer identification number but who do not have, and are not eligible to obtain a Social Security Number. ITINs are issued regardless of immigration status because both resident and nonresident aliens may have U.S. tax return and payment responsibilities under the Internal Revenue Code. (Source: Internal Revenue Service)

several people at once, Garza proposed the idea to her supervisors at the bank. With their full support, she gave two classes in the fall of 2006. She chose to use La Esperanza Community Center as the location for the classes, believing participants would feel more comfortable in there than in the bank. However, La Esperanza's classroom was only available on Mondays between eleven and noon, and the number of people who showed up for the class at this time was very small. Garza plans to try again with a Saturday class. The two classes she held confirmed the need: one woman who attended already had a bank account, but told Garza she didn't know how to use it, and two other participants thought that only U.S. citizens could open bank accounts. Although the class got off to a slow start, it is a very promising initiative that could easily be put into practice by other banks with Spanish-speaking employees.

Utilization of bank accounts offers protection from not only price-gouging on check cashing and muggings, but also other unpredictable circumstances. In March of 2002, a fire raged for several hours in Georgetown's Crestwood Gardens Apartments, whose tenants were entirely Spanish-speaking immigrants.²¹⁵ Fortunately, no one was injured; however, many residents had their savings in cash in their apartments, as much as ten thousand dollars, and did not possess renter's insurance.²¹⁶ Knowledge of the American banking system can help prevent victimization through mugging as well as accidental loss through fire and other events. In doing so, it offers some protection from marginalization. In addition, becoming a member of a bank is a form of participation in the host society.

Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Services

Citizen's Bank stands on the Georgetown circle alongside other imposing brick buildings, such as the county courthouse and the town hall, yet it has been able to bring in a number of Latin American immigrant clients. Spanish-language services, as well as a convenient location within easy walking distance of a residential area home to many immigrants, draw in the new clients. The bank has translated its literature into Spanish, including a pamphlet detailing step-by-step how to write a check, make a deposit, and other procedures of a checking account. While this is undoubtedly helpful, what really brings in the clients is the presence of one bank employee who speaks some Spanish. People regularly walk in the bank and ask for "Miss Rose," demonstrating the effectiveness of word-of-mouth advertising. Although her Spanish is not fluent, it is enough to meet her Spanish-speaking clients halfway.

This story and the examples of homeownership and financial counseling described above illustrate the significance of linguistically appropriate services. In the perspective of some Delmarva residents, offering information or services in Spanish is seen as catering to people who "need to learn English and learn our ways or go home."²¹⁷ The difficulty arises in that few people are able to pick up both the language and "our ways" immediately. For adults especially, learning a new language takes a long time, but the need to acquire practical knowledge of the host society can be urgent. For this reason, providing information and services in Spanish is a very important practice. This is a particular challenge for most rural new destinations, where proficient bilinguals are scarce, but the faster linguistically-appropriate infrastructure can be established, the better off the entire community will be.

In Sussex County, help came first from outside sources. Originally from Spain, two Carmelite Sisters of Charity, who had been doing community work in New York and Washington, D.C., arrived in Delaware in the fall of 1994. They had heard of the growing Spanish-speaking population in Delmarva and arrived ready to work. Once they rented a house in Georgetown, Sister Rosa Alvarez began transporting pregnant women and children to medical appointments, while Sister Asención Banegas started helping people with immigration paperwork, working out of the house.²¹⁸ From this beginning, together with the work of retired Chilean lawyer Gonzalo Martínez, Reverend Jim Lewis, Sister María Mairlot, and others, arose La Esperanza Community Center, founded in 1996. (La Esperanza is Spanish for ‘Hope’.) La Esperanza has since moved into a new two-story building, and in the November 2006 the staff celebrated its tenth anniversary with a black-tie fundraising gala. In its tenth year, La Esperanza offered a wide array of services: immigration and legal assistance, English language classes, citizenship classes, prenatal and postnatal care, Medicaid services, and a family violence prevention and intervention program.

Initially, La Esperanza concentrated on addressing certain needs of new immigrants, but as the organization grew, it has also connected to the broader community. Executive director Zaida Guajardo told a newspaper reporter the story of a poultry company executive reluctant to visit the community center. “When he came, he planned on being here for many twenty minutes... He ended up staying for two hours. His initial impression, like some other people, is that we somehow cater to illegal immigrants or encourage the problem, but in reality we are trying to help as many people as possible, and trying to get them documented is a big part of that

struggle.”²¹⁹ Relations with the poultry companies seem to have solidified; Perdue Farms donated \$10,000 to La Esperanza in 2001,²²⁰ while in the fall of 2006 Mountaire held a job fair at La Esperanza’s building. Furthermore, then-Mayor Bob Ricker attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for La Esperanza’s new location in 2001; earlier that year, he publicly remarked that the presence of Latin American immigrants was ‘dragging down our standard of living’ – a remark greeted with outrage from many quarters of the community. At the ceremony, Ricker stated, “We’re making some great strides forward and the bridge has been crossed...This is a truly dedicated and very special group of people who are very brave, very hard-working, and very caring. I’ve learned more in the last four months about how much they care about Georgetown and adapting to life in America.”²²¹ Later that month, Delaware’s governor and lieutenant governor also toured the new facility and met with board members to learn about issues affecting Sussex County’s Latin American immigrants.²²² The outside help of bilingual Spanish nuns catalyzed a community response, and the collaborations of several activists and different organizations enabled La Esperanza to become a firmly-established entity in the local landscape. The center offers a wide variety of linguistically and culturally appropriate services aimed at easing the accommodation of those immigrants who arrive from the greatest “social distance,” but of equal value are the organization’s efforts to develop connections with the larger community.

One of the most important outcomes of these community collaborations is La Red Health Center, whose mission is “to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate, high-quality, cost-effective, primary and preventative medical care to all

residents of Sussex County who are underinsured, uninsured or who face other barriers to medical care.”²²³ (La Red is Spanish for ‘The Network.’) La Red’s executive director, Brian Olson, identified several access barriers confronting many of Sussex’s immigrants: finances, transportation, educational attainment, health literacy, and cultural competency, beliefs and traditions.²²⁴ Through a combination of outreach programs, transportation assistance, and income-adjusted fees, La Red tries to lower these barriers. Many patients lack ‘health literacy;’ they are unfamiliar with the American health care system and benefit from a great deal of “hand-holding” and guidance, similar to the financial literacy and homeownership counseling programs. The same practice – one-on-one guidance and education – has been successfully applied to housing, banking, and healthcare.

The center grew out of a healthcare access hotline run by La Esperanza, but it is now a separate nonprofit organization and the only Federally Qualified Health Center in Sussex County. Besides primary care services from prenatal visits to geriatric health, La Red now runs a bilingual mental health and substance abuse program, a diabetes prevention and management program, a childhood immunization outreach program, and HIV prevention outreach, testing and counseling. In addition, La Red links patients to other medical services throughout the county and provides transportation to those who need it. They have found three significant benefits from the practice of providing transportation: ensuring patient compliance, maintaining a good rapport with private physicians by not increasing their no-show rates, and, given the bilingual staff, providing a built-in translator to offices without that capacity.²²⁵ In 2002, after the first year of operation, 96% of patients were of Hispanic origin; by

2004, only 69% of patients were.²²⁶ La Red's 'best practices' are so effective that they have expanded to meet the needs of the community at large, outside of the target immigrant population. In fact, many native-born Delmarvans and Latin American immigrants share the same access barriers to medical care: low income, lack of insurance, and low educational attainment. In Sussex County, 13,000 people do not have health insurance,²²⁷ and 23.5% of Sussex County residents age 25 or over do not possess a high school diploma.²²⁸

Establishment of a healthcare facility that can deliver linguistically appropriate services is extremely important in rural new destinations. In Kent County, Delaware, Delmarva Rural Ministries operates the Kent Community Health Center, which offers services similar to La Red with the addition of dental care. In other medical facilities treating non-English speaking patients, medical interpreters fill in the gaps. However, as mentioned above, qualified bilingual professionals are scarce in rural new destinations, and there are not enough interpreters to staff every medical facility in Delmarva. Therefore, in the short-term, it is more effective to establish a facility with a bilingual staff and a concentrated non-English speaking patient base. In later years, there may be more bilingual professionals in the labor market and a greater supply of interpreters, but medical facilities are currently stretched thin.

Community members' collaborations in Georgetown also produced other linguistically and culturally appropriate service providers, such as Primeros Pasos ('First Steps'), a daycare and early education center, and Abriendo Puertas ('Opening Doors'), a shelter for Spanish-speaking victims of domestic violence. Primeros Pasos opened in 1998, hoping to reach a population of young mothers who were culturally

disinclined to leave children with strangers, having lived in a society where the extended family structure always supplies baby-sitters. In Georgetown, with extended family absent and mothers and fathers working long hours, infants and children ended up in trailers, where one adult and a television supervised fifteen to twenty kids.²²⁹ Many immigrant mothers were very receptive to the idea of early childhood education once this function of the daycare center was explained. Abriendo Puertas also fills an unfortunately growing need in the community. As immigrants, especially if undocumented, women are especially vulnerable to abuse, marginalized by fear and lack of knowledge of the system. In addition to an overall fear of U.S. authorities, some abused immigrant women fear that if they report the violence, the abusers will arrange for someone in their country of origin to hurt their families.²³⁰ In both the situations of daycare and shelter from domestic violence, linguistically and culturally appropriate services are crucial to encourage people who would for reasons cultural or otherwise be disinclined to access services despite great need. Furthermore, as of 2002, Abriendo Puertas offers both Spanish and English literacy training, through funding granted by Verizon Foundation. “Literacy is power,” asserted Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence’s director Carol Post. “This grant will ensure that shelter residents are able to develop a critical means of independence for themselves and their children. With literacy skills, their chances of breaking the cycle of abuse and poverty increase dramatically.”²³¹ In this initiative, the service organization goes beyond providing Spanish-language assistance and passes on a powerful linguistic tool – literacy.

The array of linguistically and culturally appropriate services described here centers on Georgetown primarily due to sheer numbers; by many estimates, over half of Georgetown's residents are Latin American immigrants. Another reason for the concentration of services is that Georgetown's immigrant population is largely comprised of rural migrants from Guatemala's highlands who arrived in the U.S. at a significant "social distance" – that is to say, with enormous differences between the old society and the new – and thus experienced greater difficulties adjusting to their new home. An individual from a remote, rural village in Guatemala might earn a living through subsistence agriculture (or weaving if female), be accustomed to walking as the primary means of daily transportation, shop in markets where bargaining is the norm, speak a Mayan language such as Mam, Kiché, or Q'anjob'al as his or her first language and Spanish as a second language, and be illiterate, having received only a few years of formal schooling. The experiences of this individual would place him at a great social remove from the position he will assume as a wage laborer in a car-centric society in which the ability to read and write is assumed. With a concentrated population of migrants matching this description to varying degrees, Georgetown is a natural hub for Spanish-language service providers, and the agencies there draw clients from all over Sussex County and from several Maryland counties.

For matters that must be addressed within other towns, local officials do their best to bridge the language barrier. In Selbyville, Town Administrator Gary Taylor explained how he handles situations with non-English-speaking Latin American residents.

We use this thing here, called Language Line. What it is, you get somebody in here that speaks any different language, and what you do is you put one of those people on the speakerphone, and they interpret for you. It's a private company, it's called Language Line Services. It works great, with our police, with us – I mean, we do it if they come in – they'll come in sometimes, they'll wanna talk to me about some of their bills. Sometimes they bring their kids and their kids will do it for them. Other times they don't have any kids to bring with them and there'll be three or four of them here, you just can't understand them. So, put 'em on that thing, it'll tell you what they're saying, and I can converse back and forth with them. Usually in about ten minutes we're all finished. So it probably costs ten, fifteen bucks to do that. It's worth it.²³²

Interpretation through the telephone is not ideal or appropriate in certain situations, but in other instances such as this one, it allows a simple interaction to occur with minimal hassle. It's not free, but it would appear to be an investment in town harmony.

Provision of Spanish-language services can decrease marginalization in many ways: through the extension of information necessary for living safely and by the rule of law in the host society, through education about one's human rights regardless of immigration status, or through increased accessibility of healthcare, childcare, and shelter from extreme marginalization due to abuse. However, there can be too much of a good thing. Longtime community organizer Allison Burris Castellanos voiced the possibility that Georgetown's immigrant population is more dependent than immigrants elsewhere in the county, due to the concentration of bilingual services. "We're caught up in trying to accommodate, doing too much translating," she explained. "It keeps people unempowered."²³³ Activist Reverend Jim Lewis expressed this concern. "I was raising leadership questions at La Esperanza, 'are we developing leadership?' and the answers were 'no.' But looking back at the population, it was so new and young and vulnerable that it was not as possible to develop leadership as it

will be when they have been there longer.”²³⁴ The establishment of Spanish-language services clearly benefits the entire community, by overcoming the initial miscommunications that occur when Latin American immigrants arrive in an essentially English-monolingual town. However, it is important to pass on the knowledge and linguistic tools needed to function independently in the host society, along with the services.

Services at the Workplace

Linguistically appropriate services can be even more effective when they are delivered at the workplace. In Delmarva, different applications of this practice have proven very successful. However, most employers are not utilizing services at the workplace to the extent possible and are thus missing opportunities to contribute to community integration.

In July of 2005 in Somerset County, Maryland, a twenty-four year-old Mixtec woman arrived at the hospital, where doctors found cavities in her lungs and diagnosed her with tuberculosis disease. She had been living with her husband, her children, and another family in a trailer and working at a local tomato packing house. The Somerset County Health Department acted quickly to obtain permission from the packing company to bring medical services to the workplace. There they found employees working long shifts in multiple assembly lines and only one line worker who spoke English. Health Department employees placed tuberculin skin tests (PPD tests) in 160 packinghouse workers, who had multiple names, questionable dates of birth, and did not know their addresses. For purposes of identification, the Health

Department gave each person a numbered card. The PPD tests returned 81 positive results.²³⁵ Health Department nurses then set up a station in the packing house to do physicals, take vital signs, and set up follow-up treatment for the patients with positive results. During follow-up treatment, they found two more cases of tuberculosis disease, including a patient who was living in a house shared by three families. The line employees at the packing house, mostly living in overcrowded conditions and disinclined to utilize area health services, represented a population at great risk of a tuberculosis outbreak. The Somerset County Health Department worked very hard to contain this risk, but their efforts would have had very little chance of being effective without the cooperation of the tomato packing company.

Provision of services at the workplace presents the opportunity to reach hundreds or thousands of people in one location. Large companies like Perdue and Mountaire have Occupational Health services on location. Perdue offers fifteen on-site Wellness Centers and recently started a Health Improvement Program for employees.²³⁶ When poultry companies have hosted other workplace programs, the outcomes have been positive. For example, NCALL worked with Perdue's Georgetown plant to bring *Finanzas* to its line employees (see this chapter, page 15), and NCALL reported greater success there than at locations outside the plant. However, Perdue did not extend this practice to its other locations such as the Milford plant, stating that the greatest concentration of employees in need of this service is at the Georgetown location.²³⁷

Mountaire Farms in Selbyville is currently working on instituting multiple workplace service programs. They have been in touch with the community college in

Georgetown to have an instructor from the college do onsite English tutoring for employees in the purchasing department and will be seeking bilingual instructors for an ESL/literacy training program for maintenance technicians. In addition, Mountaire, Perdue, and Allen's have been communicating with the Delaware Department of Labor about the inclusion of ESL programs in state worker training grants.²³⁸ Mountaire is also searching for a banking institution to partner with them in giving financial education sessions with an onsite enrollment process. If implemented, these programs would be very effective in delivering valuable English skills and financial literacy.

Educational Support Systems

Schools can be hit especially hard by a new immigration, as population increases strain scarce resources. In rural new destinations, language is of course a big factor, as schools lack bilingual professionals to screen students for placement and communicate with parents. In Sussex County, the schools have been especially challenged. Schools are under-funded and under-supported to begin with; referendums rarely pass. In general, education has not been highly valued in a rural area where the majority of adults do not graduate from college. Even in 2000, only 16% of residents over age 25 have earned a bachelor's degree or higher; fewer than 1% of residents hold a doctoral degree.²³⁹ When developers invited a population spike by filling in farmland with high-density housing in the late 1990s, state agencies did not adjust infrastructure accordingly, and schools as well as roads soon began to show the strain.

The fact that a fraction of these new students do not speak English only stretches public schools' resources further.

In many immigrant destinations, new and old, schools have been the setting for dissonance between students, parents, and teachers. Language barriers engender miscommunications, while cultural differences create wide divisions. When immigrant parents are not familiar with the American school system of notes sent home from the teacher, parent-teacher conferences, and report cards, they may not respond to such communications in the expected manner. Both feeling intimidated by English-speaking teachers and working long shifts can preclude parents from demonstrating interest in their children's school performance in a way that is apparent to teachers, and assumptions of uninterested parents can develop.²⁴⁰ Moreover, most students who do well at school don't do it alone – they benefit from parental help and encouragement with homework. Non-English-speaking parents may feel unable to help their children with English-language homework.

In addition to cultural and linguistic barriers, financial issues affect the school performance of children in many immigrant families. While required or expected purchase of school supplies is a potential burden, of greater impact are overcrowded living conditions chosen out of economic necessity. As one ELL teacher in Cape Henlopen School District explained, "I was just talking to one of the teachers who said, 'This student is great in school, but he never does any homework.' And I said, 'I don't know that particular child's home life, but I've been in some homes where there are two or three families living in one tiny space. They have to put mattresses in the kitchen and dining room to survive, and there is no space to do homework.'"²⁴¹

In such a challenging environment, the ‘best practice’ is to institute educational support systems. In Sussex County, Georgetown has developed a model of educational support, and Selbyville is moving in that direction.

La Casita Homework Program opened in October 2001, the idea of Sister Margaret Giblin. La Casita is an after-school program with the simple goals of providing a space for students of non-English-speaking parents to do their homework and receive basic tutoring if needed. Retired teacher Joe McCarron took over as director within a few months. In its first five years, the program grew from an average daily attendance of 18 students to 80 students (now in two buildings). Officially, students from first to sixth grade attend the program, but a few kindergarteners and high school students also end up at La Casita. McCarron believes part of La Casita’s success is that they have stuck to the concrete aim of helping with homework. “We pride ourselves on not being very original,” he joked.²⁴² La Casita functions as an “extra arm” of the local elementary and middle schools, using remedial materials from teachers at the schools, for example, and using the same Reading Counts computer program as the district. Another factor in La Casita’s success is the strong parental participation. “People feel ownership here, there’s no fear,” McCarron explained. “We don’t hide behind desks.” Even the name ‘La Casita’ is intended to be non-threatening. In 2004, parents organized their support and formed Familias Unidas de La Casita. Familias Unidas supports La Casita financially through annual yard sales and book fairs, and in the physical upkeep of the buildings – for example, parents carpeted the building and did all the painting. In their first year, the group put on a Halloween party for the students and provided the down payments for two students to purchase musical

instruments; in their second year, they held a first annual Mexican and Guatemalan Independence Day celebration.²⁴³

The high levels of participation from the parents create opportunities to connect the parents and other members of the town. La Casita has invited students' parents to meetings on several topics, including a presentation on getting a mortgage given by someone from a local nonprofit, a presentation on drugs in the community given by a Spanish-speaking police officer, and a meeting with three elementary ESL teachers about State Testing, which over forty parents attended.²⁴⁴ These meetings bring people together in a comfortable setting and help to foster a sense of membership in the larger community.

Although McCarron kidded that La Casita's program is "unoriginal," they have in fact organized a wide variety of creative activities for the students. School holidays have been utilized for parent-chaperoned field trips to places like the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia and the National Aquarium in Baltimore. Activities closer to home have taken kids to the Delaware Solid Waste Authority, to learn about landfills and recycling, and biking, with a presentation about bike safety. La Casita's students have had Easter egg hunts, pumpkin-decorating contests, and soccer games with the local Boys and Girls Club. Moreover, La Casita also started a summer program with the goal of maintaining students' English proficiency over vacation. This goal shifted slightly as La Casita's staff recognized an opportunity for cultural enrichment, and now the summer program partners with La Esperanza to give Spanish-language instruction two days a week. In the 2004 Spanish-language classes, students learned about a different Latin American country each week. A volunteer played the marimba

for the students, and the Rehoboth Art League gave classes tailored to Latin American art. The summer program allows ample time for field trips to local state parks, the State Fair, and historical sites. Each year, in preparation for the State Fair, a regular volunteer brings a horse to La Casita and gives a presentation about the grooming and riding of horses. The Rehoboth Art League has exhibited some of the students' artwork at the State Fair. Summer field trips as well as outside activities during the school year link both students and parents to different cultural aspects of life in Delmarva and the Mid-Atlantic, while the summer program also emphasizes the students' heritage and Spanish-language skills.

La Casita serves as an excellent model for a 'best practice' that could be replicated in other towns in Delmarva as well as across the country, starting from the relatively simple goal of providing a space to work on homework and receive help if needed. The program has been successful academically; several of La Casita's students have been recognized for academic excellence, with nominations to the Honor Roll, the MERIT program, and the EXCEL program, and it is rare for students there to receive 'Unsatisfactory' marks on their homework. Although La Casita has gradually increased its paid staff, it still relies heavily on volunteers. These volunteers are family members of children who attend La Casita, local high school students, retired schoolteachers, students in teacher certification programs, and participants in RSVP, the senior citizens volunteer program; they represent both Hispanic and non-Hispanic community residents. The diversity of volunteers reflects the way that La Casita's efforts belong to the entire Georgetown community, immigrant and non-immigrant.

The other side of the partnership in the educational support system is the school itself. North Georgetown Elementary partners with several educational support services and has developed additional programs of its own. In 2001, the school counted seventy-nine students of Latin American origin, out of a total enrollment of 487, and thirty of them were Limited English Proficient (LEP). By the 2006-2007 school year, 308 out of 621 students are of Latin American origin, and 218 of them are LEP.²⁴⁵ In other terms, children of Latin American immigrants comprise 49.6% of the student body, and 35.1% of all students are learning English. There are only seven staff members at the school who speak Spanish. Despite the challenges of such a swift change in enrollment in a rural school, North Georgetown Elementary has received the state's superior school distinction for the past three years, and in 2006 was named a No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.²⁴⁶ Principal James Hudson would be the first to say that the school hasn't done it alone. A good bit of North Georgetown's success relies on its partnerships with a network of after-school programs – not just La Casita, but the Georgetown Boys and Girls Club, and the Richard Allen School. Every day, about two hundred students go to after-school programs, reinforcing subjects covered in school. North Georgetown also initiated an early-bird program. Students get off the schoolbus early, eat a quick breakfast in the cafeteria, and then go to classrooms with teachers who don't have homeroom. While other students eat breakfast and go to homeroom, the early birds start the day with the attention allowed by a teacher to student ratio of one to five. Principal Hudson said that the early bird program is working very well with English Language Learner (ELL) students, because the ELL teachers get an extra hour with

their students, a significant chunk of time. The teachers and students “start early and keep on working through.” With both before- and after-school programs, many students attend a very strongly-supported school day.

In addition to community support, North Georgetown’s ELL teachers credit a supportive administration, a proactive approach, and “not seeing the kids as a problem” as the keys to the school’s achievements thus far.²⁴⁷ One of the teachers recently demonstrated this proactive mentality, when she independently applied for a grant from the MBNA Foundation. The banking institution awarded her \$3,000, which she spent on books in both English and Spanish, family literacy kits, and a listening center with multiple headphones and books on tape. A larger library of Spanish-language books allows her students who don’t yet speak English to participate in the school-wide Reading Counts program, while family literacy kits facilitate students and parents learning English together and the listening center enables English learners to hear stories before they are able to fully read the books.²⁴⁸ With limited school resources, one teacher took the initiative to seek outside funding, a practice that could be duplicated elsewhere, especially given the existence of banks and the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA).

In Selbyville, one person has decided to offer an after-school program on her own. The owner of Pepper Ridge trailer park on Pepper Road, Cheryl Pepper set aside one trailer as a community center. Two afternoons a week, the children of her tenants bring their homework to the center, where Pepper and other volunteers provide remedial tutoring and make sure students complete their homework. After homework has been checked, students can pick out books to read or games to play such as

Addition Bingo. Pepper pays for supplies, snacks, and the electric bill out of her own pocket, buying a few games and books at a time to gradually increase the center's collection. The after-school program used to be funded through a grant in partnership with the Interfaith Mission of Delaware. During that time, they organized citizenship classes for the adults in the trailer park, bringing in someone from the state police to do fingerprinting, an ESL teacher, and someone to give a U.S. history lesson. Twenty-one people became citizens.²⁴⁹ After the collaboration with Interfaith Mission fell through, Pepper decided to run the program on her own. Recently, Frankford Elementary started offering an after-school program two days a week, so Pepper shifted her classes so that they would not conflict. The children in Pepper Ridge trailer park can now attend after-school support four days a week. The educational supports in the Selbyville area are relatively new, but they moving in the right direction to establish simple programs of great benefit.

Mutual Cultural Education

While many of these best practices for integration have focused on giving newcomers the tools to “learn our ways,” one very important best practice involves mutual cultural education. In its most positive sense, integration is a two-way process rather than the unidirectional assimilation of the classic model. In a rural Delmarva, an area whose population was predominately poor or working class and often tied to the land, not only did the peninsular geography prevent many outsiders from coming in, but few residents ventured out, especially into the realm of international travel. Thus when international migrants settle in a rural area, it may be especially challenging for

the locals to understand where their new neighbors are coming from. For the sake of a more integrated community, it is equally important for long-time residents to learn about the newcomers as it is for the newcomers to learn English and other skills necessary for living in the U.S.

In some new destinations, residents have chosen to travel to Mexico themselves to learn about the communities immigrants are leaving behind (see Chapter 1, pages 30-31). Although this practice generates very positive responses and should be encouraged in Delmarva, it is not equally feasible for everyone, and there are other ways to advance cultural education closer to home. The November 2006 screening of *Estamos Aquí (We are Here)*, a documentary about Guatemalan immigrants and community adaptation in Georgetown, provided one such alternative. The editor of one Georgetown newspaper urged his readers to go see the film, regardless of their attitudes towards immigration, in an editorial entitled “Get to know your town.” “Too often, a lack of information plays a large role in shaping our ideas about sensitive political issues like illegal immigration,” he wrote. “The more information you can gather, the more informed your decision can be, and seeing *Estamos Aquí* is a step in that direction.”²⁵⁰ The documentary premiered at the Rehoboth Beach Independent Film Festival with two sold-out screenings. One day later, the film was shown free of charge at the community college in Georgetown and later that week in Delaware’s two other counties, and weeks later an encore screening took place again in Georgetown. The audience at the Friday night premiere at the film festival included the usual predominately white, older film festival supporters as well as a large contingent of activists and more prominent members of the Latino community, including several

“celebrities” featured in the documentary; at the festival’s Sunday afternoon screening, the audience was almost entirely the usual festival-goers. The next day, at the free showing at the community college, the auditorium was packed, with late arrivals sitting in the aisles, and the majority of the audience was of Latin American origin. At all three screenings, the end of the film was greeted with an outpouring of applause, and at the free screening, that applause swelled into a standing ovation.²⁵¹ Validation of immigrant experiences of working hard and struggling to raise a family in a new country, the film was very well-received. As one Guatemalan mother of four who cleans houses in the area remarked after seeing the film, “It’s a true story.”²⁵²

One strength of the film from the standpoint of mutual education is the inclusion of footage from Guatemala. In addition to interviewing residents in Guatemala about the hardships faced in some of the rural, indigenous areas of the country, the documentary gave a brief history of the civil war, although the director intentionally left out any mention of the U.S. role in the 1954 coup that toppled Arbenz and ignited political unrest.²⁵³ This glimpse into current aspects of life in Guatemala and its turbulent history is an extremely important step in reaching a mutual understanding. The college-educated editor of the Georgetown newspaper, himself a recent arrival to Sussex County from Pennsylvania, mentioned that he first learned of Guatemala’s civil war from the documentary,²⁵⁴ and it is safe to assume that many other folks who saw the film were unaware of the Central American nation’s history. The documentary also included many facts and statistics about immigration to the U.S. After the encore screening (which was not well-publicized and therefore sparsely attended) an elderly man commented, “Boy, that was an education.”²⁵⁵

Focusing entirely on Georgetown's Guatemalan population, the documentary did not mention that Latin American immigrants to Delmarva hail from a variety of countries, and the film also gave the impression that every Guatemalan migrant in Georgetown is from the one town of Tacaná in San Marcos province. Then an activist featured in the film, a union organizer originally from Spain, claimed that Tacaná has no running water or bathrooms. Despite instances of misinformation, *Estamos Aquí* presented an overall positive message of immigrant settlement and community integration, and this message was not only very well-received but also sparked greater interest in the local immigration situation. The high turnouts at the screenings reflected both the immigrant population's excitement at being recognized on the big screen and the native-born population's willingness to learn about their immigrant neighbors. Film is an incredibly effective medium for reaching large numbers of people, and in this sense *Estamos Aquí* is an example of the practice of mutual education.

Many Delaware newspapers have recently highlighted the stories of individual immigrants, and this sharing of stories with an English-speaking audience is a smaller-scale practice of mutual education that is easily replicated. In another example, the Delaware Poultry Initiative Partnership, which involves two Mountaire, one Allen's, and two Perdue processing plants, has developed a diversity training seminar for all of its supervisors, combining the effectiveness of services at the workplace with mutual cultural education. The focus of the first seminar will be on Guatemalan culture, to be followed by seminars on African-American, Chinese, Haitian, Korean, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and European-American cultures.²⁵⁶ These endeavors may be seen as

mere drops in the bucket, but the task of mutual education is one that will require just that, many small efforts slowly chipping away at a wide gap in understanding.

As of this writing, there are two bilingual weekly newspapers in Delaware, *Hoy en Delaware* and *El Tiempo Hispano*. The first is owned by José Somalo, who lives in Georgetown and works for Perdue in Salisbury, Maryland, and the second is owned by Gabriel Pilonieta Blanco, a Venezuelan immigrant who lives in northern Delaware. While *El Tiempo Hispano* is based in upstate Delaware, it also includes many articles about issues in Sussex County. Although the Spanish-language names of the two newspapers reveal their primary target readership and the English translations of articles sometimes contain errors, the owners' choices to produce bilingual rather than Spanish only newspapers reflect the desire to be a bridge between the English- and Spanish-speaking populations. Pilonieta Blanco, who started *El Tiempo Hispano* in early 2006, explained,

The primary focus of the newspaper is education. Education signifies a two-way street. To educate ourselves about the country where we're living, the laws, the ways of thinking, the customs, the services, and also, to share who we are for those who don't know us. It's a two-way street, because the newspaper is concerned with letting the Hispanics know how to obtain certain things that are needed: how to be informed about certain things that they have to know by law – health resources, educational resources that are available to them. But also, we have tried to show the American community who our leaders are, what our dreams are, as a community. [*La idea principal del periódico es educar. Educarnos significa un camino de dos vías. Educarnos sobre lo que es el país donde estamos, las leyes, la forma de pensar, las costumbres, los servicios, y también, enseñar quienes somos a los que no nos conocen. Es un camino de dos vías quiero decir porque, el periódico se preocupa por hacerle saber a los hispanos como lograr ciertas cosas que se necesitan. Como estar informados sobre ciertas cosas que tienen que saber por ley – recursos de salud, recursos de educación, que están disponibles para ellos, pero también hemos*

*tratado a demostrarle a la comunidad norteamericana quienes son nuestros líderes, cuales son nuestros sueños, como comunidad.]*²⁵⁷

In an illustration of that two-way street, native Delmarvans, especially those working in construction, are also learning some Spanish. One man, the owner of a small construction company in Sussex County, started hiring Latin American workers about four years ago; currently he works with one Salvadoran employee and two American employees. He speaks to the Salvadoran employee in Spanish. “I’ve just learned it a little bit at a time, you know, ladder, hammer, nails, the basics,” he said.²⁵⁸ At a much larger construction operation, the Carl M. Freeman Companies, foremen and site superintendents are also learning the basics, through two-hour, once-weekly classes conducted over eight weeks. This initiative is another excellent example of combining the best practices of services at the workplace and mutual education. The program emphasizes construction terminology, site safety, and basic greetings, but to a sixty-two-year-old site supervisor who completed the course, the language training offered much more. “I find the guys respect the efforts we made. It doesn’t matter if you’re Hispanic or Eastern European. They like to know you are interested in them. When that happens, you can develop some relationships with these guys.”²⁵⁹ In addition to the chance for connection with coworkers, the eight classes offered some perspective. “On the one hand, you become more cognizant of the language,” he added, “but you learn just enough to make yourself look like an idiot.” This in itself is very valuable, as people experience the difficulty of learning a second language at an older age and develop empathy for immigrants’ efforts to learn English.

Native Delmarvans' endeavors to learn a few words of Spanish show respect and acknowledge mutual humanity, but they will not diminish the need for immigrants to learn English. Most migrants recognize English as the key to a better life in the United States. Learning English is also the most important step in their part of the project of mutual education. One Guatemalan man, who has worked off and on in the U.S. for the past seventeen years, spoke about the importance of learning English.

The primary thing in my opinion is speaking English. Because if that were the case, if we could all speak English, we would be on good terms with everyone. With all Americans, we would have a good relationship, a good communication. But not all of us have the advantage of communicating with American people. It is difficult for us, and maybe an American isn't saying something bad to us, but we misunderstand it. Maybe he didn't say that to us, he said something else...If we could all speak English, everything would be easy. There would be more communication. [*Lo principal pienso yo es hablar ingles. Porque si de esa manera, si todos habláramos ingles, tuviéramos una buena relación con todos. Con todos los americanos, tuviéramos una buena relación, una buena comunicación. Pero no todos tenemos la ventaja de tener comunicación con señores americanos. Se nos hace difícil, y quizás el americano no nos está diciendo nada mal, pero nosotros lo entendemos mal. Quizás no nos dijo eso, nos dijo otra cosa... Que todos habláramos ingles, fuera fácil todo. Hubiera más comunicación.*]²⁶⁰

He explained that while he never attended English classes, he picked up some English through years of working for American bosses. For others who don't have that option, basic English classes are being held in churches across Delmarva, in the Selbyville Public Library, in schools in the Indian River School District, at La Esperanza, and many other locations. Several places have long waiting lists for their English classes, but at the same time, many immigrants find it difficult to fit in classes while working long hours. In whatever way it can be managed, obtaining even partial English skills

will expand the realm of opportunities for immigrants to take part in the practice of mutual cultural education.

Networking

With all of these efforts towards community integration happening in Delmarva, one of the best practices possible is to bring them together. Networking allows people to share good ideas and resources, and in creating connections between different parts of a community, it is itself a form of integration.

In Salisbury, Maryland, an organization called Bienvenidos a Delmarva (Welcome to Delmarva) started five years ago with the aim of bringing together people working on immigration issues in Wicomico and other nearby counties. Bienvenidos has also hosted some outreach fairs and other events, but their primary activity is hosting monthly meetings.²⁶¹ These meetings have brought together people from the Wicomico Sheriff Department, Catholic Charities, Wicomico County Board of Education, Hispanic Ministry, Legal Aid Bureau, Wicomico and Somerset Counties Health Departments, Center for Poultry Solutions, Crisfield Head Start, St. Alban's Episcopal Church, and Congressman Gilchrest's office, among other organizations. At Bienvenidos meetings, people identify current issues, such as an increase in crime targeting Latin American immigrants, and the group works on putting together promising initiatives, such as offering monetary incentives for police officers who take and pass a Spanish language competency test, and enlisting Salisbury University students to participate as translators to accompany Spanish-speakers to set up bank accounts.²⁶² Bienvenidos has also looked to Sussex County to see what has worked

and what hasn't. Networking is a promising practice that could also be easily established in other areas, and expanded to link people together across Delmarva.

Onward – Adelante

Successful practices such as the ones described here achieved a great deal in enabling Delmarva communities to overcome initial tensions between immigrants and long-time residents, and several additional promising initiatives will only build on these positive outcomes. With time and continued steps towards integration, Delmarva's Latin American immigrants will be accepted as more than 'hard workers' in their towns. "These people are bringing good things to this country," one long-time Delmarvan declared at Smith's Family Restaurant in Georgetown. "Better soccer games, for one."²⁶³ ESL teacher Allison Burris Castellanos agreed, in a somewhat more serious tone, "I believe they have more to contribute than hours of work. And we are not benefiting from these other cultures."²⁶⁴ In order for immigrant residents to be able to participate and contribute fully in their communities, the best practices already in use must be supported and expanded, new initiatives must be developed to overcome challenges looming on the horizon, and local, state, and federal government policymakers must support these efforts.

Chapter 6

Current and Future Challenges

The moments of crisis and confrontation that surfaced in the early years of the Latin American migration to Delmarva have fizzled out; the shock of the “changing face” has faded. Reporters’ headlines instead read, “Georgetown, immigrants settle into relationship: Unlike in other towns, Hispanics find acceptance,”²⁶⁵ and “While immigration stirs anger, a Delaware town has found peace.”²⁶⁶ Perhaps this headline says it best: “Georgetown ain’t no Hazleton.”²⁶⁷ In November of 2006, the city council of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, made national news when it passed a regulation mandating stiff fines for landlords who rent to undocumented immigrants and the forfeiture of business licenses for employers who hire undocumented immigrants.²⁶⁸ While similar regulations have been considered in multiple cities across the country, none have appeared in rural Delmarva. The successful implementation of the best practices discussed in Chapter 5, together with a generally ambivalent public and widespread recognition of the role of immigrant labor in an important regional industry, brought Delmarva communities this far without retaliatory restrictive measures. However, as time has passed, some of the early challenges have grown, and new issues have arisen.

Housing

The best housing practices have worked slowly and steadily, with strategies that are successful but that require time. “Housing is the number one problem,” State Representative Joe Booth noted over coffee at the Smith Family Restaurant in Georgetown. “It’s being addressed, but not at a rate that can keep up with the influx. It was the initial problem, and I don’t know if it will ever be solved.”²⁶⁹

Although the public outcry has long faded, many aspects of the initial housing crisis are still present. Extremely substandard housing is persistent. For example, in a trailer park north of Georgetown, a fire-damaged trailer sits with no repair other than a board over the window, and the inhabitants continue to pay the \$1,000-a-month rent.²⁷⁰ In another case, also in a trailer, the landlord allegedly refuses to repair a roof badly leaking water and winter air; a sheet of plastic, hung under the ceiling, drooped heavily with water.²⁷¹ Some landlords clearly continue to take advantage of their immigrant tenants, charging exorbitant rates and doing very little to maintain their properties. On the other hand, some landlords report problems due to a lack of communication on the part of their tenants. For example, one landlord stopped by his rental to find a large hole in the floor and the ceiling. Apparently, the ceiling began to leak, but the tenants were afraid to call the landlord. The leak progressed, and the property was seriously damaged.²⁷²

Whether culpability lies with landlord or tenant, the results look very similar: people live in decrepit buildings with compromised safety, and property values fall. Determined to prevent this scenario, the town of Selbyville has taken a proactive approach to monitor the relationship between tenants and landlords. Gary Taylor,

Selbyville's Town Administrator, explained that Selbyville does not rely on annual inspections; instead, rental monitoring is a year-round process.

If we see an overcrowding issue start, we will go to the landlord. When they send their rental license in, they must show who is living there, they have to have their lease. And if we go over there and we say, who are you?, and they give us a name that's not on the lease, then we have a problem. And we go right to the landlord. And the landlord must correct it, or we pull the license. So it works very well. We don't look at it as a hammer, we look at it as a way to really maintain quality living standards for the people that live in our town, whether they be Hispanic – I mean we have other people that rent in town that aren't Hispanic and theirs get inspected too. They are all on the same schedules.²⁷³

Selbyville, with a population under two thousand people, contains fewer rentals than a town like Georgetown, and perhaps the numbers are working in its favor. But Taylor credits a proactive town council and a forthright business model.

We were very lucky that we had a council that paid attention to it right away. We control all of our rentals, whoever's living there. When you see a crisis like this start, it's better to work with it than work against it. Working against it just creates more problems. Working with it makes the problems go away. Because they're not really problems. The people aren't causing the problems, it's the landlord's responsibility. I look at the landlord as a businessperson. They come here and they open a business. Their business is renting property. The people that are living in them deserve to live in housing that is not substandard. If you make sure that the landlord abides by the rules, everybody's happy.²⁷⁴

In light of the persistence of deteriorated rental housing, Delmarva towns will need to consider a closely-monitored relationship between tenants and landlords.

The second and more challenging aspect of the housing issue is the dwindling affordability within a twenty-mile radius of the coast. Lucia Campos, the homeownership counselor at NCALL Research, admitted that options are scant for some of her Spanish-speaking families. "For our very low, low-income families that

only have employment authorization, we refer them over to Habitat for Humanity. Or, we try to work with them here to try to see what they can afford, which is getting harder and harder every day, because we are getting hit by you know, “beach-front” property in Georgetown. And everyone wants to live sort of in the Georgetown/Millsboro area because it’s central to all the poultry plants.” She added, “I don’t just see the poultry plant industry families that are trying to buy a house. Schoolteachers, nurses, medical assistants, anyone who has a decent job, they’re saying, ‘I can’t afford anything that’s out there.’ And I look at them, ‘Yeah, you’re right. Let’s see what we can do.’”²⁷⁵

For Phil Owen, Mountaire’s Director of Human Resources at the Selbyville location, the issue of housing is a big concern. “In twenty years, where’s my workforce going to be?” he asked. For several months, the Selbyville plant has had a number of job openings that they haven’t been able to fill.²⁷⁶ Owen noted the lack of housing since the ‘beach resort’ label reached Selbyville. Currently approximately 350 of his line employees live in town in Selbyville, while approximately 500 commute from Georgetown. “I don’t know who in the state to ask this question to: where is my workforce going to come from, looking forward? I know that it’s low-paying work,” Owen acknowledged. “If I can’t offer affordable housing to my workers, will I stay here or move to another state?”²⁷⁷

Housing has always presented a huge challenge for immigrants working in rural Delmarva’s economy. Now, unchecked development sweeping inland from the coast has reshaped that challenge.

Transportation

The community concerns over transportation that surfaced in the early years of immigrant settlement have, for the most part, not been addressed by any of the best practices described in Chapter Five.^{xi} As with housing, this issue has only become more pressing as Delmarva's population has grown.

Every summer, students from Russia, Eastern Europe, and the U.K. arrive on J-visas to work in the beach resorts from Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, to Ocean City, Maryland. Coming for the summer season, these migrants don't have the option of buying cars; many promptly buy bicycles. This population has demonstrated the current unfeasibility of cycling as a form of transportation in the area. Accidents are frequent, due to crowded roads, lack of bike lanes, and the students' ignorance of cycling regulations, and have resulted in some deaths.²⁷⁸ Less frequently, Latin American migrants use bicycles as transportation. Like the J-visa students, most do not wear helmets and are often cycling on the wrong side of the road. With the designation of bike lanes and the implementation of bicycle safety programs, cycling could ease some of the need for transportation, but the current state of affairs precludes this option.

Instead, many Latin American immigrants have purchased cars, an American rite of passage that youth in Delmarva often begin working towards before they even turn sixteen. However, this step towards integration is only partial for undocumented

^{xi} Sister Rosa, Delmarva Rural Ministries, and La Red have addressed the transportation problem as it applies to healthcare access. DRM uses a mobile healthcare unit, the MATCH van; Sister Rosa and staff at La Red use vans to bring patients to their appointments. While these practices are extremely beneficial, they do not solve the problem; patients remain dependent on the service providers.

Delaware residents. In Delaware, an applicant for a driver's license must furnish ICE documents if he or she uses a foreign passport for identification.²⁷⁹ Community activist Allison Burris Castellanos views the driver's license to be the most important issue confronting the immigrant population, asserting that finding solutions for things like housing, English acquisition and other education, and domestic violence hinges on mobility, which in Delmarva hinges on the driver's license.

"Around here people say if you want to find an illegal immigrant, just look for North Carolina plates," one Georgetown resident commented.²⁸⁰ Representative Booth said that people often ask him about the presence of so many North Carolina plates, and he pointed out that the state of Delaware loses potential revenue from those vehicle registrations.²⁸¹ On the other hand, as of January 29, 2007, the state of Maryland allows foreign-born residents to present Out-of-Country passports and drivers' licenses as primary sources of identification.²⁸²

One Guatemalan immigrant linked the possession of a driver's license to the bigger pursuit of the American dream:

We need transportation, we Hispanics. And more than anything, English, which is something we need to contribute to also. We want to work. There is work, there is a lot of work. But we also need a good relationship with our employers, with our friends, with everyone, in order to rise above, as that Ricky Martin song says – we all join hands. Everyone, everyone fighting for only one cause, a better future – not just for me, but for everyone. For everyone. This country is big, and it is very blessed. If it would give us a chance, an opportunity to obtain something of this country, at the very least a driver's license. Many, many people are stuck. Many want to buy a car, but there is no way to. The policies are the way they are. One has to accept it. But I would like there to be a chance, at least the license, even if they don't give the federal work authorization, if they don't give the residence permit or the green card. Well, I have mine. I have a license. But I would like for them to give the opportunity not only to me but to many people, and for

the policies to change. [*Necesitamos transportación, nosotros los hispanos. Y más que todo, el ingles, que nosotros también aportemos eso. Queremos trabajo. Hay trabajo, hay trabajo. Pero necesitamos también ambos una buena relación con el patrón, con el amigo, con todos, para que también todo esto se levante, como dice esa canción de Ricky Martin nos agarremos de las manos. Todos, todos luchando por una sola causa, un mejor futuro, no sólo para mí sino también para todos. Para todos. Este país es grande, y es muy bendecido. Que nos de un chance, una oportunidad de obtener algo de este país, a tan siquiera la licencia. Muchos, muchos están estancados. Muchos quieren comprar carro, pero no hay los medios. La política es así. Hay que aceptarlo. Pero me gustaría que hubiera un chance, tan siquiera la licencia, aunque no den el permiso de trabajo estatal, o que no den la residencia, la green card nosotros decimos. Bueno, yo tengo lo mío. Tengo la licencia. Pero me gustaría que le dieran la oportunidad no sólo a mí sino a muchas personas. Que cambie la política.*]²⁸³

He added that if more migrants were allowed to obtain drivers' licenses, employers would have more punctual and more readily available workers.

Currently, many undocumented migrants in Delmarva drive to work, to the grocery store, and many other places of business. Walking and cycling are neither safe nor practical methods of transportation in this area, and public transportation is not yet an option. This results in thousands of people – participants in the Delmarva economy – driving without licenses, without insurance, and without having received proper instruction on motor vehicle rules and regulations.

Persistence of linguistic barriers

“As an editor,” *The Sussex Countian*’s Patrick Varine said, “it’s frustrating, because I feel like I’m missing half the town, missing half of what’s happening.”²⁸⁴ Three semesters of Spanish instruction in college isn’t enough to allow him to

communicate fully with his non-English-speaking neighbors, many of whom presumably feel as if they were missing a good deal more than half the town.

Although Spanish-language services took shape at a rate impressive for this rural area, they cannot keep up with the number of non-English-speakers in the region. This shortage is currently felt across the board, from police departments to banks to medical offices to schools.

With the added distance of language barriers, local police departments face an uphill battle in overcoming many immigrants' distrust of law enforcement. The Sheriff's Department of Salisbury, Maryland, has only one Spanish speaker on the force.²⁸⁵ Selbyville, with twenty percent of its population of Latin American origin, has no bilingual police officers. "We'd love to have one," said Gary Taylor. "The state police gobble up all of them. Every time we see someone that we would like to bring on board who is bilingual, the state police pull them over to state because they pay them so much more. We'd love to have one."²⁸⁶

Sussex County Federal Credit Union (SCFCU) reported similar difficulties retaining bilingual staff. At one point, SCFCU employed three Spanish-speakers, but two of them left for better job opportunities in New Jersey and Florida.²⁸⁷ Now all Spanish-speaking customers must be referred to the Seaford branch, where the one Spanish-speaking employee remains. A credit union representative pointed out that it is much easier to train a person in banking than to teach him a foreign language, but that they have had a hard time recruiting people despite the need. Other financial institutions have leapt ahead with marketing literature in Spanish but do not have the staff to back it up. Gloria Dunsmore, the realtor from Columbia, showed me a glossy

packet of Spanish-language materials from American Home Mortgage; however, when she called them, she found out that they did not have any Spanish-speaking employees.²⁸⁸

In the real estate field, despite the availability of Spanish-language homeownership counseling and a number of Spanish-speaking real-estate agents, there are still gaps, namely in the lack of Spanish-speaking attorneys in real estate. NCALL's Lucia Campos explained that she accompanies her clients to closing so that she can translate everything for them. Otherwise, it is the homebuyers' responsibility to bring their own translator. "There are many families who have been sitting there at the closing table having no idea, just saying 'Sign here,' and they just do it," Campos said. "And I don't know the conscience of that attorney allowing that to happen."²⁸⁹

As a fluent bilingual, Campos often notices situations where interpretation is needed. For example, one instance occurred as she was sitting in the waiting room at a dentist's office, watching a little girl fill out forms for her mother. Eventually the receptionist told the girl that the dentist would not be able to see her mother until she brought someone eighteen or older to translate. Campos stood up and offered her services, which the receptionist gladly accepted. She first turned to the girl and asked her age. "Nine!" Campos recalled, incredulous. "I just looked at the mom, and she said, 'Well, I don't know anyone else who could have come with me to the dentist, and I have this pain in my jaws and in my teeth that I just can't live with.' She took her out of school to be her interpreter."²⁹⁰ Campos ended up translating for the woman during her appointment, and as she was leaving, the dentist asked for her card. After Campos explained that she already works full-time, the dentist told her how they have

had to refuse to see many clients because of the lack of an interpreter. In the absence of an English-speaking adult, the dentist cannot trust the medical history forms and does not want to endanger patients. As it turned out, the mother she helped that day was diabetic, but her medical history contained no mention of that condition, probably because the nine year-old girl was unfamiliar with the term.

When people are asked to bring their own interpreters, they must find someone who is not only bilingual but who is able to be at a specific place at a specific time. “Many times, it’s the children,” Pastor Israel Figueroa, head of the Iglesia de Dios Maranatha (Church of God Maranatha) in Seaford, Delaware, confirmed. “Or many times it’s people who are not really fluent in the language.” [*Muchas veces los intérpretes son los niños. O muchas veces son personas que no dominan mucho en el idioma.*]²⁹¹ He reported an instance in which someone with a tenuous grasp of English translated at a doctor’s appointment. The doctor told the patient to take a medicine once a day, and the translator, feeling unsure, asked the doctor to write down what she said. The translator then confused the word “once” for the Spanish word for “eleven,” which is also written “once,” and told the patient to take the medicine eleven times a day. “The next day, that person was in the hospital,” said Pastor Figueroa.

As the immigrant population in southern Delmarva grows, the Peninsula Regional Medical Center (PRMC) serves not only Spanish speakers but Mixtec speakers, and has been relying heavily on phone-line translation, either the Language Line service or calling the County Health Departments to use their interpreters over the phone. At a Bienvenidos meeting in November of 2006, a PRMC staff member related that the hospital had tried to use the Language Line to explain an epidural to a

Mixteca in labor.²⁹² Unfortunately, the phone line service wasn't functioning that day. This experience illustrates the inadequacy of relying on Language Line for medical situations. Recently upper management at PRMC recognized that phone-line translation is unacceptable for a language spoken by a large number of local residents, and they committed to giving a free legal certification course for medical interpreters. Through offering the required course free of charge, PRMC should be able to increase its pool of Spanish-speaking interpreters. Serving its Mixtec-speaking patients will be harder, since the available pool of people fluent in this language is much smaller.

The PRMC staff member shared other challenges the medical community faces in offering linguistically appropriate care. For example, not one medical specialist in the area offers interpretation services. There is also a shortage of male interpreters, who for personal or cultural reasons would be more appropriate in many cases involving male patients. Compounding these challenges is the need for interpreters to be cultural brokers as well as translators, knowledgeable about particular cultural perspectives on health and medicine. Building a qualified pool of interpreters will be a long-term effort.

In the schools, one situation especially necessitates a sensitive and knowledgeable cultural broker. When school personnel determine that a child has a learning disability, an IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting is held, with a potentially intimidating panel in attendance: a social worker, a psychologist, a learning specialist, and the child's teachers and therapists. The Education Program Coordinator at La Esperanza, Jill Berna, often translates at IEP meetings, although her Spanish is not fluent. While she feels okay about translating at routine IEP meetings, she is

uncomfortable at meetings held to inform parents of severe disabilities. A meeting as sensitive and important as that requires not only highly specific Spanish vocabulary but the ability to explain concepts in a way that the parents understand. Moreover, many of the parents in Georgetown come from a culture in which education is not inclusive of learning-disabled children, and they may not have equivalent terms for different types of disabilities.²⁹³ “That is one area that really needs to be revamped,” an ELL teacher at North Georgetown Elementary confirmed, pointing out that an IEP document can be thirty pages long. Another teacher emphasized the need for an advisory option for the parents in addition to translation. “Sometimes the parents just say, ‘Yes. Yes. Yes. Thank you, thank you for taking care of my child.’ And then we are just leading them to sign.”²⁹⁴ For these situations, the schools need specifically trained and qualified interpreters.

As community members seek to dismantle linguistic barriers by making services available in Spanish, it is also important to recognize other linguistic barriers as they start. For example, one long-time Sussex County resident asked me about a building with a Spanish-language sign that she and her daughter would pass regularly when they took her granddaughter for walks in a stroller. The building in question is a church, but without a translation, it represented something unknown and unidentifiable, in a town that hadn’t changed much during the several decades prior to the 1990s. “We have to put Spanish below the English on our signs; why shouldn’t they have to put English below the Spanish?” the woman wondered.²⁹⁵ Although this instance may seem trivial, little things add up quickly with a sensitive topic such as immigration. Community integration is about inclusion, and non-Spanish-speaking

residents will feel excluded from places in their towns with monolingual Spanish signs just as non-English-speaking residents feel excluded in English-only environments. In the same spirit of inclusion with which José Somalo and Gabriel Pilonieta publish their bilingual newspapers, it is important to be aware of both sides of the language barrier.

Persistence of ethno-cultural barriers

At Cape Henlopen High School in Lewes, Delaware, a guidance counselor noticed that a student of his abruptly stopped coming to school. The child of Latin American immigrants, the student was engaged in his classes and had shown no signs of wanting to drop out of school. Three weeks later, the boy returned to his classes. His father had brought him to work the watermelon harvest in Laurel.²⁹⁶

In the American school system, students must get permission to miss school for long periods of time, or they risk the disciplinary consequences stated in the attendance policy, which can include automatic lowering of grades or failure for the year. When students miss classes for a week or longer, it is customary that students inform their teachers in order to obtain their homework in advance and keep up with their classes during their absences. The family who brought their son to help in the watermelon fields did not have the knowledge of the American educational culture needed to fully support their child's efforts in school.

Likewise, teachers may not have much knowledge of what their immigrant students are experiencing. An elementary school ELL teacher expressed the need to

get such information to the mainstream classroom teachers. “There are many wonderful classroom teachers who are sympathetic to the students and their needs. But there are other teachers that just aren’t aware, that just don’t see the picture – like they say, ‘I don’t know why he can’t do this.’ Because they haven’t encountered enough [ELL] children to think through... This is just a tiny thing – the issues are bigger than this – but a tiny thing would be like, in first grade, the children can’t rhyme [in English]. Well they can’t rhyme because they don’t have a pool of vocabulary to pull from, to know that the words end the same.”²⁹⁷ Some teachers, unfamiliar with the process of learning a second language, may attribute an inability to rhyme to developmental delays or other. “If you try to learn a foreign language,” the teacher smiled, “guaranteed you will be sympathetic to that child. You’ll know exactly what they’re going through.”

Many of the ethno-cultural barriers that remain between immigrants and native Delmarvans stem from inadequate mutual cultural education. In some cases, such as immigrant parents’ unfamiliarity with American schooling or teachers’ unfamiliarity with second language acquisition, targeted education campaigns could be effective. In other cases, the source of the problem lies broader and deeper. One Ecuadorian immigrant to Sussex County commented that an overall low level of education, stemming in part from the rural and historically isolated nature of the peninsula, often contributes to instances of division and discrimination.

Especially in this area, there are many people who don’t have much education, or who haven’t traveled, or who don’t know even New York, Pennsylvania, or Maryland. And they don’t know that cultures and languages are what make the planet richer. That is the principal problem. Locally, I can tell you that the general lack of education in the

community is a serious problem. As much in the [Anglo-] American community as the black community, as the Hispanic community – in all of these communities, we suffer the problem of education. *[Especialmente en este area, hay mucha gente que no tiene mucha educación, o no ha viajado, o no conoce tan siquiera New York, Pennsylvania, o Maryland. Y no saben que las culturas y las lenguas es lo que hacen más rico el planeta. Ese es el principal problema. Localmente, te puedo decir que la falta de educación en general de la comunidad es un problema grave. Tanta en la comunidad americana, la comunidad negra, la comunidad hispana – todos estas comunidades sufrimos del problema de la educación.]*²⁹⁸

When such ignorance nurtures prejudices, these barriers become much harder to dismantle.

A Sussex County resident called the police upon seeing fifteen cars parked on the property across the street from his, where he knew the tenants were Latin American immigrants. The two-acre property contained ample room for the vehicles, which were only there, as it turned out, for a World Cup party. The authorities who investigated the neighbor's complaint found one person living in the rental who was not on the lease.²⁹⁹ In suburban or rural America, where residents use cars as their primary means of transportation, ten or fifteen cars parked outside of a house is not an uncommon sight, especially during the holidays, or the Superbowl, or graduation, or anything else that people like to celebrate. In general, only if a gathering is causing a disturbance will someone call the police on his neighbors. The Sussex County resident's quickness to call the police demonstrates a high barrier of distrust and prejudice.

A Sussex electrician, doing a job in someone's home, was surprised to hear the client request that his coworker work outside the house only. Born in Mexico City, his coworker has lived in the U.S. since he was eight years old. He is married to an

American, and they have two kids together with another on the way. In addition to electrical work, he works weekends at a sushi restaurant and attends night school. “They asked me, ‘Can he just work downstairs? Can he just work outside?’” the electrician recalled. “They just wanted him to work on the lights in the garage and on the deck. They didn’t want him inside their house. But I needed his help inside.”³⁰⁰ Upset by the request, the electrician simply ignored it and finished the job with his coworker’s help.

The prejudices held by adults are naturally passed on to the next generation. A Mexican-American Sunday school teacher at a Catholic church in Georgetown described an incident that occurred when the Sunday school integrated their fifth through eighth-grade classes.

The Hispanic children are very quiet, very soft-spoken, very timid. And one of the girls made this comment like, ‘Why do they have to be here?’ and I said, ‘Well that means I shouldn’t be here either.’ And she looked at me and she said, ‘What are you talking about?’ I said, ‘Uh, have you noticed? I’m Hispanic. I’m Mexican.’ And she said, ‘Oh no, you can’t be!’ I said, ‘Oh yes I am! Last time I checked, my parents are very Mexican. What did you think?’ And then she says to me, ‘Oh my gosh – I never – I didn’t think of you being that way.’ And I said, ‘Well, why not?’ She says, ‘I don’t know, you just don’t look like them.’ And I’m like, ‘Yes I do,’ and she says, ‘No you don’t.’ And I said, ‘Well, then I can’t tell you that you look like everyone else in the classroom. All of us look different.’ And she just sat there. She participates a lot, and that day she was really quiet, just checking me out.³⁰¹

With her unaccented English and light complexion, the Sunday school teacher does not match her seventh-grade student’s racialized conception of a Hispanic or Mexican person. Observing her students, the teacher sees the early formation of barriers of prejudice. “It’s funny how all of them just have their own ways of saying and pointing

at, you know, you're not part of us. A lot of it comes from home. And you sit there and you're thinking, okay, they're trying to give you a Catholic education, but at the same time, they're telling you it's okay to be prejudiced, you know, that you're not the same as everyone else. So are they really doing you any good? It's one of those things that I think generations can come and go and you're always going to have that."

The next generation

"We are just hitting the edge of that bubble," said Bill McGowan, community development agent at the University of Delaware's Cooperative Extension program, speaking about Delmarva's second generation.³⁰² In the early 1990s, Latin American migration to Delmarva was comprised of young men. Within a few years, women joined the migration, and children followed soon after. The second generation is now in school, with some in high school but the majority in elementary school. Already, even in families with young children, there are signs of disconnect between first and second generation Americans.

When Allison Burris Castellanos worked at the Primeros Pasos daycare center in 1998, only two of the twenty-five families with children enrolled there had a telephone. Now, she says, those same families have cell phones and minivans. However, the increased acculturation towards an American lifestyle notwithstanding, there is a growing intrafamilial gap. Castellanos described a scene often repeated during visits with the families she has known for years. "The kids will say, 'Allison! Guess what I did in school!' But their parents are standing there too, so I'll ask them

to tell me in Spanish. They'll try, and then say, 'I can't, it's too hard.'"³⁰³ The kids' initial excitement to share their school accomplishments with an adult is not enough to overcome their difficulties communicating in their parents' language. Cheryl Pepper, at the Pepper Ridge trailer park community center, says that the children there have asked her to attend their parent-teacher conferences at school. She occasionally empties out the kids' backpacks and finds notes and other papers meant to be shown to parents crumpled at the bottom.³⁰⁴ It is certainly not unusual for young students of all backgrounds to fail to deliver notes home, but parents familiar with the American school system would be more likely to look for such correspondence themselves. However, children should feel able to seek approval from their parents directly, not just from English-speaking family friends, and should ask their parents, not their after-school program instructors, to attend parent-teacher conferences.

Throughout the history of immigrant experiences, parents and children have acclimated to the language and lifestyle of the host society at different rates and retained differing degrees of the culture of their country of origin. Children have a head start over their parents in language acquisition, and their participation in the school system often facilitates rapid absorption of local culture. When children acquire English and pick up American customs at a speed far greater than that of their parents – a scenario labeled *dissonant acculturation* – the widening intergenerational distance can threaten the family structure and place children at risk.³⁰⁵ Dissonant acculturation can undermine parental authority, as parents rely on their children's language skills and cultural knowledge to navigate in the host society or determine major family

decisions. Dependent on their children's knowledge, parents cannot fully fill their roles as authority figures who set clear and consistent boundaries.

As children become more and more Americanized, some may feel embarrassed by their parents' foreign customs and limited or accented English,³⁰⁶ a dynamic that only further widens the gap between parents and offspring. For example, a student may intentionally neglect to inform her parents of school functions because she is embarrassed to have them attend and be seen with their different dress and lack of English skills.³⁰⁷ This action distances the parents from their daughter's schooling, which for some parents is the most important motivation for settlement in the host country. Families in which the parents enter a host society at the greatest social distance are at risk of this extreme of dissonant acculturation. For these families, community and institutional validation of their home culture and language can help impede widening intergenerational distance.

Dissonant acculturation is only one category of intergenerational outcomes. Other scenarios leave the family structure more intact. In *consonant acculturation*, both parents and children adapt to the new society at the same rate. This situation most often occurs when parents have the resources, such as higher education or economic status, to keep up with the cultural and linguistic adaptations of their children. In a scenario of *selective acculturation*, the family is able to retain a greater degree of the home culture and language while adapting to the host society.³⁰⁸ The support of a strong co-ethnic community increases the likelihood of selective acculturation. Partial retention of the parents' language and customs moderates the cultural shift, and this slowed transition allows both generations to acclimate at a similar pace and

intergenerational conflict is reduced. In addition, this dynamic often produces fully fluent bilinguals in the second generation.³⁰⁹

For the Latin American immigrants who speak Mam, Mixtec, or another language as their native language, the cultural and linguistic preservation of selective acculturation is even more challenging. While many indigenous Guatemalans choose not to speak their native languages in the U.S.,³¹⁰ thus completing the process of language shift begun with the disparagement and stigmatization of Mayan languages in Guatemala, other families in Delmarva are trying to pass on their first language to their children. After all, it may be the only way for the children to speak to their grandparents. These families face an uphill battle, however, trying to teach their native language in competition with not only Spanish but English. One such family tries to keep the linguistic and cultural connections strong through visits to Guatemala as well as home videos brought back from their town. Their old neighbors speak to the video camera in Mam, and the video is watched often in their home in Georgetown. The mother's Bible, too, is in Mam. But while their oldest child speaks Mam, the younger three siblings understand but do not speak it. In this setting, the odds for minority language maintenance are not very high. However, in the spirit of bolstering families' endeavors of selective acculturation, community centers or after-school programs could work towards some sort of inclusion or recognition of the various languages and cultures hidden behind the Spanish.

At a meeting of the executive officers of the Latin American Student Organization (LASO) at Cape Henlopen High School in Lewes, Delaware, students discussed options for a LASO-sponsored field trip, the discussion switching easily

between Spanish and English. The students wanted to plan an end-of-the-semester trip to the skating rink or the bowling alley, but they were also hoping to organize a trip to a Hispanic heritage museum, or a museum with some exhibits about Latin America. There is an organization called *El Centro Cultural* (The Cultural Center) in Georgetown, but it exists more as a network of people and does not actually have a building to house a cultural center. In Wilmington, Delaware, ninety miles to the north, there is an organization called the Latin American Community Center (LACC), but they do not have cultural exhibits. The closest option appears to be Washington, D.C., a three-hour drive away. The students estimate that chartering a bus for the field trip will cost their organization \$750. LASO formed in September of 2005, and the relatively young student organization has limited financial resources. The executive officers decide to research charter bus companies and weigh their options.³¹¹ If there were a museum or cultural center closer to home, the students would not have to choose between organizing that trip and sponsoring other activities. In rural new destinations, a common challenge is the inexistence of the affirmation provided by external opportunities to learn about the immigrant culture.

Community and institutional support would validate families' efforts and recognize the worth of their cultural and linguistic knowledge. Such support can come in the form of a cultural center, bilingual or multi-lingual events or publications, or increased education on a variety of immigrant cultures and languages, including focused units in the classroom or after-school program. Some attention to the lesser-spoken languages of the Americas that now exist in Delmarva should be a part of these initiatives. Small efforts – such as a display about notable figures of Hispanic descent

in the hallways of Lulu Ross Elementary School in Milford, Delaware³¹² – are steps in the right direction, and could be taken one step further by highlighting notable indigenous Latin Americans. Community and institutional support for immigrant families is an investment in the healthy development of the second generation – the next generation of Americans – and therefore an investment in the future of the whole community.

Inadequate funding for English-language learning

Almost by definition, public schools are not adequately funded. In rural Delmarva, that is especially true, and school districts have been unable to hire teachers to meet the demands of increased enrollment of English language learner (ELL) and limited English-proficient (LEP) students. For example, in the Indian River School District, which is Sussex County's largest school district and includes towns home to several major poultry operations, the number of ELL/LEP teachers stayed essentially the same (thirteen in 2002, fourteen in 2005) despite a dramatic increase in ELL/LEP enrollment.³¹³ In the 2001-2002 school year, there was one teacher for twenty ELL/LEP students in the school district; in the 2004-2005 school year, there was one teacher for every thirty-eight ELL/LEP students. Similar ratios across several school districts not only fail to provide students with the instruction they need, but overextend ELL/LEP teachers.

In Cape Henlopen School District, there are three ELL teachers. Together they cover seven schools – four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high

school. “I take care of three buildings, a middle school and two elementary schools – Rehoboth and Lewes,” explains teacher Terry Bolick. “So I have the greatest distance to drive, because I’m at both ends of our district. So it’s a little crazy.”³¹⁴ Since she spends substantial time driving between towns, Bolick eats her lunch on the road. “Because I’m here and there, I don’t even have a lunchtime. I know I should. I eat in my car because, if I take the time to have a lunchtime and sit down someplace, that’s a group of kids I could be seeing. I don’t have a planning time, either. That shouldn’t be either. But, the same thing. It takes me more than a half hour to get from Mariner to Rehoboth. So, eat up that time, then a lunchtime and a planning time, when would I see my kids?”

Increasing the number of ELL teachers in the Cape district from three to four would ease this hectic schedule. “We have, as ELL teachers, we’ve put in for one more teacher. Because if we had one more, then we’d each have two buildings. And two buildings is a lot easier to handle, because I could see each child every day – because I could see one school in the morning and one school in the afternoon, I’d see everybody every day. It would make a huge difference.” Currently Bolick works with each child two days a week, for 45 minutes a session, with the exception of some children who arrived in the U.S. only recently and speak very little English; these students work with her for three sessions a week plus every other Friday. “It looked like we were going to get another teacher last year,” Bolick continued. “But it didn’t happen. And now, the district’s talking about a budget shortfall, and we’re at the bottom, you know, of consideration.”

Bolick teaches through a ‘pull-out’ method; the students are pulled out of their regular classes to work with her in small group sessions. Moving from school to school, she doesn’t have a permanent classroom in any building.

This classroom is [another teacher’s], and she’s actually sharing it with another special-ed teacher. In the afternoon she works in the regular classroom with her kids, like a push-in, so she allow me to work in her classroom because she’s not here in the afternoons. In Rehoboth, [the school psychologist] lets me keep my stuff – because I was like a bag lady, I had these wheeled bookbags that were overflowing, and then I went to a cart that was on wheels, and I was breaking my back carrying it down the steps. And so, fortunately, I keep my stuff in her office and then just cart it back and forth. In the basement, there’s a room we call the ex room, meaning exercise room, where it used to be recess on rainy days. Now it’s a multi-purpose room. The middle section is used by the band teacher, the end section is used by the custodians, and the front section is used for games if a class earns rewards. It’s not a bad room to be in, but it’s not our room. You know, I can’t hang things up. Of course I would want a room – a place that is theirs, and I would hang their work up. You need visuals, that’s one of the key things you need for a language program.³¹⁵

The current arrangement clearly poses many challenges, but Bolick sees one change as a clear top priority. “The biggest issue is just another teacher. If there was another teacher, and you could give time to the kids – that’s the biggest thing.”

Milford School District elementary ELL teacher Richard Biscayart also teaches in three buildings, but fortunately for him, they are all in the town of Milford. However, his job still keeps him running; he works with all 280 ELL elementary school students in the district, with the help of one paraprofessional who works as a translator. He also sees students through a pull-out method, and he moves through the hallways at a breakneck pace, stopping at several classrooms to collect his students. “It wastes some time, but it is good for the teacher’s exercise!” Biscayart jokes. In 1997, Milford’s three elementary schools had only sixty ELL students. Now ELL enrollment

in the elementary schools is at almost 300 students, and the school district's three ELL teachers are overextended. "If we were doing it right," Biscayart noted, "we would need four ELL teachers." Since the distance he drives between schools is less, he has time for a lunch, although that lunch must double as his planning period.

In November of 2006, ELL teachers in the Indian River School District (IRSD) presented the numbers to the Joint Finance Committee of Delaware's General Assembly. Despite the enormous growth in the district's ELL/LEP enrollment, state funding for ELL/LEP in the IRSD has actually declined, from \$137,200 in the 2001-2002 school year to \$98,731 in the 2006-2007 school year.³¹⁶ Through their presentation, the teachers hoped to alert the state government to the current size of the ELL population, the challenges of meeting No Child Left Behind requirements, overall poor reading scores in the Delaware State Testing, the need for early childhood education, and the concern over increasing drop-out rates among Hispanic students. "I think we opened some eyes," said North Georgetown's Principal James Hudson. "Obviously, it's a political hot potato. Maybe you want to call it that, I don't know."³¹⁷ He added that the long-term goal would be to have ELL funding based on a unit count of students.

It may seem politically difficult for state governments and district school boards to designate funds to the education of the children of immigrants, but in reality, it should be one thing that everyone agrees on. A teacher mentioned that his school receives notes and phone calls from residents with the question, 'Are you making sure you teach them kids English?'³¹⁸ In order to do that, school districts need enough teachers, and in order to have enough teachers, school districts need funding.

Lack of bilingual skills development

The staff at La Casita occasionally sends Spanish-language notes home with the students. One such note explained that some teachers would hold a meeting at La Casita to talk with the parents about the best ways to help their children in school. A middle-school student, over-excited from a day of classroom Halloween parties, grabbed one of the slips of paper and started to read it. “Aww, Spanish!” He made a face and put down the paper. “That’s too hard!”³¹⁹ Despite the fact that the language spoken in his home is Spanish, the student was immediately dismayed by the prospect of reading a short note in the language.

An ESL teacher at a community college said she frequently sees high school students who are fluent in Spanish but whose writing is filled with inaccuracies, betraying a significant lack of knowledge of Spanish grammar. As these students graduate, some will take jobs calling for bilingual skills. Homeownership counselor Lucia Campos, who was educated in both the U.S. and Mexico, finds frequent encounters with incomplete bilingualism concerning. “There are a lot of people who never went to school in Mexico, never took a Spanish class, just what they learned at home – which is half Spanish, half English now – trying to do translations,” she said. “If you have an education, if you’re going to school and learn Spanish, you at least have the basics. But, just because my mom spoke Spanish – no. You probably will not be able to read and write it the right way, because you never took the literacy part of it. I’ve had a few people that would say, ‘Oh we just hired someone who’s bilingual, it’s

such-and-such,’ and I’m like, ‘Oh, she speaks Spanish? I know her mom and her dad are Mexican, but...’ And of course the Spanish is all over the place. Half in Spanish, half in English. Well, then you’re not really doing a service, you’re doing a disservice.”³²⁰

In Delmarva, a rural area where one of the biggest challenges is developing an adequate pool of qualified bilingual professionals to handle everything from interpreting at IEP meetings to translating during the closing for the purchase of a home, we are squandering a resource. Children raised in a Spanish-speaking home while growing up in an English-speaking community are poised to become full bilinguals, but there is very little in the Delmarva region to support or foster Spanish literacy. Some ELL teachers have ordered Spanish-language books for their classrooms or school libraries, and the Selbyville Public Library has a collection of kids’ books as well as literature in Spanish. Although this is a start, elementary students or others not yet literate in Spanish still need a Spanish-literate person to read the books with them.³²¹ Starting in middle school, there are traditional Spanish classes, but these quickly bore students who already speak Spanish at home.³²² These students need a higher level Spanish class focused on reading, writing, and grammar. Although it is hard to imagine schools with already strained resources funding additional salaried teaching positions, supplementary programs such as individual Directed Reading courses for students could be arranged through existing Spanish-speaking staff. Moreover, encouraging Spanish literacy can be as simple and affordable as choosing not to discourage it. For example, a kindergarten teacher asked students to bring books to share with the class. One child, the son of a Guatemalan mother and an

American father, brought in a book written in Spanish. Despite the fact that most of the students in the classroom were from Latin American backgrounds, and despite the presence of a Spanish-speaking paraprofessional who could have read the book, the teacher told him he could bring in only English-language books. The boy was embarrassed in front of the class and his feelings were hurt.³²³ The teacher effectively communicated the message that Spanish is permissible in the home, but not acceptable in a school setting.

In the long run, it will be much more cost-effective for Delmarva to encourage and support the development of full bilingualism from an early age, rather than emphasizing English monolingualism in local students and then scrambling for qualified bilingual professionals through recruitment efforts or training programs.

Dreams deferred

“For your average student, the educational costs are \$8,000 a year. To educate that child from kindergarten through high school, you’re looking at around \$104,000,” calculated Joe McCarron, director of La Casita. “It’s economic insanity to not use what you invested in. You could say I feel fairly strongly about the DREAM Act.”³²⁴

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, also known as the DREAM Act, was first introduced in the Senate in July of 2003, and subsequently introduced in both the House and Senate in each of the last three congresses. It would create a mechanism for undocumented students to seek legal permanent resident status, and it would eliminate the federal provision that prevents universities from

offering in-state tuition to undocumented state residents. The proposal was reintroduced in November of 2005 and is still pending in Congress. This legislation primarily applies to those students who are not quite second generation Americans; foreign-born children who immigrate before the age of twelve are considered the 1.5 generation.³²⁵ These children grow up as Americans and attend American schools. However, depending on the circumstances through which their relatives brought them to the U.S., they may be undocumented residents.

“These kids are not prepared for the sudden stop after [high school] graduation. Their parents are busy working, feeling that they are doing the best thing for their kids – so no one prepares them for the reality,” observed José Quiñones, Community Relations Director at Delmarva Rural Ministries, Inc.³²⁶ As these students complete high school, they are faced with the limitations of their legal status. Some have no recollection of the country of their birth and find out that they have no rights to the country of their upbringing. In situations of limitation, frustration, and few options, there is a risk of downward assimilation into the underclass and cycles of poverty – in other words, assimilation into a marginalized segment of the American population. Furthermore, as McCarron argues, there seems to be little economic sense in investing in an individual’s education for thirteen years, only to prohibit the individual from pursuing or utilizing that investment. The DREAM Act would create more options for these students by allowing a path to legal residency contingent on moral behavior and school enrollment or workforce participation, and it would make a college education more accessible by allowing the students to pay in-state tuition in the states where they have been residents for a certain number of years. This is national legislation, but

states have also acted within their own legislatures. Currently, there are nine states that have passed legislation permitting in-state tuition for undocumented students (California, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, and Washington).³²⁷

Since Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia are not on that list, undocumented students in Delmarva still face very restricted options upon graduating from high school. At some community colleges, prospective students are asked only for proof of local residence, not immigration status. These colleges provide a wide array of classes and a very important service to the community; however, students there eventually reach a limit as well and are intended to transfer to four-year universities to complete their studies. One student, after eleven years of living in Delaware and graduating from a high school in Sussex County, is about to complete his Associate's Degree through a community college. "I have my goals set," he explained in English. "I want to get my Bachelor's, my Master's, and work for my PhD. It will take me time, but I think I will get it if I continue working." He hopes to pursue his studies at University of Delaware, but he cannot afford to pay out-of-state tuition. "Just by being here, I learned the American way, how to utilize the schools and everything," he continues. "And it's just sad that at the end, I don't know if I'm going to stay here. But you know, I take the good with the bad. I have been blessed."³²⁸

A member of the National Honor Society, a consistent Honor Roll student and a volunteer at La Casita and La Esperanza, another undocumented student has dreams of attending college and studying architecture following her completion of high school this year. Her application to legalize her status in the U.S. is on the waiting list to be

processed, but the enormous backlog in immigration processing delays applications for years and years. In March, she told a reporter that many Hispanic students reach a point where they completely lose interest in school, believing that without papers they have no future, and that some students are dropping out of school due to this dwindling motivation.³²⁹ Over the next several years, this dilemma will only grow larger in Delmarva communities. Our state lawmakers are in the best position to address it.

A proactive approach

At first, these challenges may appear daunting. However, a closer look reveals that we already have the tools needed to successfully tackle them. The successful practices already in place throughout Delmarva illuminate the best ways forward. It is worth keeping in mind that all of the best practices described here represent proactive approaches. In the words of Selbyville's Town Administrator, "It's better to work with a crisis than against it. Working with it makes the problems go away. Because they're not really problems" – they're opportunities.

Conclusion

Moving Forward: Charting a Course for an Integrated Peninsula

As relatively high numbers of Latin American immigrants settled in towns of the once-isolated Delmarva Peninsula, interactions between native-born and newcomers have paralleled the original linear assimilation model of Park and Burgess: contact, competition or conflict, accommodation, and eventual assimilation. Anxiety over the sociocultural effects of immigration has not been enough to outweigh the recognition that Latin American settlers are now an integral part of a major regional industry. Instead, after an initial period of interethnic tensions, residents seemed to have resolved, in a matter-of-fact Delmarva way, to ‘go on about their business.’ While not exactly an open-armed welcome for new arrivals, this ambivalence allowed processes of accommodation to begin. Numerous best practices for immigrant integration developed throughout the peninsula, including many more than the examples discussed here. As processes of accommodation continue across Delmarva, one might expect to see evidence of Park and Burgess’s last stage, eventual assimilation. However, research shows that assimilation is manifested in many different ways, not all of them positive; immigrants can also assimilate into a marginalized, impoverished segment of society. Delmarva communities currently face many challenges in achieving positive integration, especially concerning the

development and education of the second generation. Rather than waiting and watching challenges deepen into problems, Delmarva residents should encourage practices that enable immigrants to contribute fully and as equal members of their communities, starting now.

“I think Sussex Countians are quite pragmatic,” one observer noted. “We’ve moved on. The issue is going to be immigration law.”³³⁰ The effectiveness of immigrant integration efforts will indeed be heavily influenced by whatever federal immigration reforms are passed by Congress, if any at all. Despite individuals’ best efforts, there will always be a limit to integration in the absence of legal residency status. However, while *immigration* policy remains in federal jurisdiction, *immigrant* policy lies squarely with local concerns. In other words, it is at the local level that immigrants interact with the native-born, in neighborhoods, labor markets, school districts, etc. Therefore it is not enough for state and city governments and organizations to think of immigration as a federal issue outside of their control; it is precisely these local actors who must implement best practices to strengthen our communities.

“Governments at all levels,” writes Demetrios Papademetriou, co-director of the Migration Policy Institute, “must recognize and embrace their role as setters and overseers of minimum standards, as promoters and financiers of flexible and innovative initiatives, as evaluators of what works and what does not, and as advocates for and enforcers of inclusiveness, fairness, and equality.”³³¹ These government roles represent general responsibilities towards all constituents, but they can also be seen as guidelines for government participation in immigration integration.

To date in Delmarva, the best practices for immigration integration have come through the initiative of individuals or nonprofit organizations. When state, county, and city governments, as well as employers, to join in their efforts, they will have an enormous impact. Recommendations with a focus on government policymakers and employers follow below. With time and through mutual efforts, other ideas and best practices will emerge. The recommendations here are solid stepping stones on the way to a more integrated peninsula, and while some are specific to the immigrant population, others directly benefit all residents.

1. Governmental support for organizations exhibiting best housing practices.

One doesn't need to spend much time in Sussex to observe, as one D.C. journalist did, that "a boom in real estate, retail, and restaurants is changing life in Sussex County more than immigration."³³² While the state benefits from the growth spurt, it should also take steps to alleviate the housing problem faced by Delaware's working families. The best way to do this is not to build government-financed housing projects. Instead, the government should take some measures to support the nonprofits that are already making good headway on the issue. This could entail, for example, selling a plot of land to Habitat for Humanity for a less-than-market-value price so that Habitat could start work on another subdivision. County councils can waive certain fees for nonprofits building affordable housing. Delmarva's state governments can also look to model the housing practices of Delmarva Rural Ministries or contract DRM property managers for existing low-income housing units. Furthermore, state

governments should fund additional homeownership counseling workshops throughout the region. The key is not to come up with something different, but to financially and logistically support what is already working on a small scale.

2. Consistently enforced rental housing regulations.

In Georgetown in the 1990s, town housing inspectors and the relevant authorities were not serious about regulating landlords. Rental properties, their owners, and their tenants will all be better off if decent standards are consistently enforced.

3. Drivers' licenses regardless of immigration status.

The licensing process is the most effective way to educate drivers about current traffic laws. The roads would be safer, fewer people would drive without insurance, and state revenues from vehicle registration would increase. Drivers' licenses are not meant to indicate immigration or citizenship status. They are meant to serve as proof that an individual is licensed to operate a motor vehicle. Allowing migrants to obtain drivers' licenses regardless of legal status would also provide a standardized form of identification for undocumented individuals.

4. Bike lanes, bike paths, and bicycle safety programs.

Safe conditions for cycling would provide a viable transportation alternative. Bicycle safety education would be necessary for both immigrants and the general

population. Delmarva is not a place where many people commute by bicycle, but with improved infrastructure, it could be.

5. A pool of qualified interpreters.

State or local governments should assist in the compilation of a list of trained interpreters. Training is necessary to help bilingual individuals specialize in the areas of medicine, education, real estate, or anywhere else there is a great need. Governments could subsidize the cost of training interpreters so that a list can be assembled quickly. Individuals receiving the training could pay for most of the training themselves, since they will later receive fees for their services, but they could agree to be on call to interpret pro bono twice a month, fifteen times a year, or some other specified frequency. In addition, public agencies as well as private sector businesses could advertise to recruit bilingual individuals in other areas of the United States where a higher rate of Spanish-English bilingualism occurs. Some people who are part of the migration already coming to Delmarva from neighboring states and urban areas might bring bilingual skills with them.

6. Increased provision of services at the workplace.

English classes, financial literacy seminars, and other public education campaigns are often more successful when they take place at the workplace. This is especially true if employees are on the clock while attending these sessions, or if they earn some sort of credits through the employer. Many immigrants report a lack of time or difficulty finding a babysitter as reasons why they do not currently attend English

classes, for example. Employers, especially large employers, have the ability to make classes much more accessible for their employees. In return, employees are likely to feel a stronger sense of company loyalty for an employer who helped them learn English, set up a bank account, or purchase a home, which reduces employee turnover.

7. Increased funding for ELL/LEP education.

Students and teachers alike deserve additional ELL/LEP instructors. In most cases, just one more teacher per district would help a great deal. School districts must petition state governments for higher allocations of ELL/LEP funding.

8. Family literacy programs.

When immigrant parents learn English with their children, they are moving towards consonant acculturation, as both generations adapt linguistically to the host society together. When immigrant parents learn to read and write in Spanish (or another first language) with their children, they are practicing selective acculturation, retaining linguistic ties to the country of origin and building overall literacy skills. Both lessen the chance of intergenerational distance and conflict, and both develop literacy tools which will serve family members throughout their lives and be reflected in generations to come.

9. In-state tuition policies for undocumented students.

If high school seniors have the aspirations to attend four-year colleges, they should have access to the same in-state tuition options as their classmates. Current

restrictions effectively punish the students with the highest educational aspirations. In addition, these restrictions contribute the high drop-out rate among Latino students by deflating some students' motivations. Moreover, the state misses opportunities to foster a workforce with a certain skills set and educational level.

10. *Establishment of cultural and social venues.*

While the organization, upkeep, and most of the funding for such initiatives should come from the private sector, city or county governments could assist in the establishment stages through in-kind donations of land or waived fees. Local governments could partner with nonprofit organizations to establish cultural centers and museums. *El Centro Cultural*, already in existence, should have a physical address and not just a P.O. Box. Cultural venues should also include and highlight native Mesoamerican and South American cultures. In addition, the town of Georgetown could perform a huge public service by assisting in the creation of a permanent soccer field. Thirty-nine teams participated in the 2007 tournament of *La Liga Familiar Delmarva* (Delmarva Soccer League) – some 780 players total – and close to 2,000 spectators attended.³³³ Creation of a public park with a soccer field would benefit all area residents interested in playing, coaching, or watching soccer, who by all indications appear to be present in high numbers. A park steering committee could be established to oversee maintenance of park grounds and to hold fundraisers when necessary.

11. *Expanded networks.*

Networking facilitates the greater dispersion of best practices and strengthens otherwise isolated efforts. The model of *Bienvenidos a Delmarva* should be expanded beyond Maryland's Eastern Shore, starting with creation of its counterpart in Sussex County, through monthly or bimonthly meetings. Eventually, a regional task force should connect rural Delmarva, bringing Virginia's two counties into the network. The Delmarva Task Force on Immigrant Integration would work across state lines to coordinate best practices.

A mutual responsibility

"On the front lines of America's immigration battle,"³³⁴ Delmarva residents have thus far waged more peace than war. However, immigration presents complex challenges, and the rapid population growth sweeping across the region ensures that the future will be anything but simple. Within these changes lies opportunity. Rural Delmarva's historical experiences with ethnic diversity were limited to segregation and social separation. The practices Delmarvans put in place now will determine whether we repeat the old patterns or establish new ones. As Ileana Smith, the director of a local community college and a Cuban immigrant herself, reminded viewers at a screening of *Estamos Aquí*, "We have the opportunity to live together and create a better community."³³⁵ While complete integration will likely remain in the realm of utopian imaginings, we have the opportunity to dismantle some of the barriers that divide and disrupt the forces that would marginalize. The tools are already in our hands.

Appendix 1. Sample Interview Questions

Since the goals of data collection were qualitative and not quantitative, I did not use a uniform questionnaire. Instead, I prepared a list of five to ten specific questions for each individual based on that person's experiences and expertise. The interviews continued as open-ended conversations. Therefore the lists of questions that follow are not meant to reflect exact transcripts but rather to give a sample of some of the more general questions.

About emigrating from Latin America:

What brought you to Delmarva? How long have you lived here?

Have you lived in other parts of the U.S.?

How has your experience finding work in Delmarva been? Finding housing? Transportation?

Do you have experience with the education system here?

How would you describe your level of English fluency? In what ways have you been able to learn English?

Are there any organizations, churches, or individuals that have helped you settle in Delmarva?

What do you see as the most importance issues affecting the Hispanic population in Delmarva?

How would you describe you relationships with Americans?

Did the events of September 11th affect your experiences living in the U.S. in any way?

Do you plan to return to your country of origin?

For nonprofit organization staff:

How long have you been with [organization]?

When did [organization] begin offering services in Spanish? Or, What was the impetus for the establishment of this organization?

How do you spread the word to Spanish-speaking immigrants about the services you offer?

What changes in local, state, or federal policies could help support the work that you do?

For large employers:

Does your company offer any sort of programs or classes to assist its foreign-born employees in adapting to life in Delmarva?

Is there ever an issue of language barriers with Latin American employees who do not speak Spanish?

Does the shortage of affordable housing affect your workforce?

Do you have any thoughts on a possible legislative solution to the need for 'unskilled' immigrant labor?

For small employers:

How long have you had your business? How many employees do you have?

When did you first hire Latin American employees?

How did you come into contact with these employees?

Do you ever experience language barriers when communicating with Latin American employees?

Would your business be affected if immigration to the U.S. was limited or curtailed?

For local government officials:

How long have you been a resident of this town?

Can you pinpoint a specific year or two in which immigrants began arriving in your town in large numbers?

Would you say the demographic change has had an impact on your town?

How has your town taken steps to face challenges related to housing? Law enforcement? Educational concerns?

Do you have any thoughts on the problem of undocumented immigrants being unable to obtain drivers' licenses?

What do you feel should be done about the issue of American-raised graduates of Delaware high schools who are undocumented?

For bank employees:

What forms of identification are required to open a bank account here?

With what sort of marketing or outreach does your bank try to reach Spanish-speaking customers?

Are there obstacles that make it difficult for immigrants to utilize your bank's services? If so, what are they?

(If bank held financial literacy classes) Why did you decide to offer financial literacy classes? How did the classes go? What worked well, and what would you do differently?

For ELL/LEP teachers:

When did this school begin an ELL program?

How has the program changed in the past decade?

What might a typical day look like for an ELL student?

How well do you feel this method of instruction serves the students?

How much instructional time do you have with each of your students?

Is there regular communication between ELL and mainstream classroom teachers about their mutual students?

What factors do you see contributing to success in the classroom?

What are the challenges your school district will face in coming years?

How does the school communicate with non-English-speaking parents?

Does the school support Spanish literacy development? If yes, how so?

How would you like to see the ELL program at your school develop or change over the next several years?

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