4 Immigrants as Transformers: The Case for Immigrant Food Enterprises and Community Revitalization

Maryam Khojasteh

Introduction

> In the 20th century, the Rust Belt housed industrial powerhouses like the U.S. steel, coal, and auto industries, but today it is entrepreneurial partnerships between immigrants and local communities that are fueling the region's economies. … The WE Global Network recognizes that if we're to remain competitive in the global economy, we must support and maximize the efforts of local initiatives that welcome, retain, integrate, and empower immigrant communities.
>
> —David Lubell, executive director of Welcoming America

David Lubell's words at the launch of "The Welcoming America Global Network"—a regional initiative that promotes the economic contribution of immigrants in the Midwest—represents the core of numerous government programs that have been established in recent years to attract immigrant communities and tap into their potential for economic development (McDaniel 2014). Some initiatives, such as "Welcoming Pittsburgh," aim to provide an immigrant-friendly environment for the newcomers, while others, such as Chicago's "New Americans Plan," focus on promoting immigrant entrepreneurship. Scholarly works, for the most part, echo these initiatives in regard to the impact of immigrants on communities by showing how newcomers have revitalized commercial corridors, occupied vacant housing, and stimulated real estate markets, especially in areas that have experienced disinvestment (Vigdor 2017; Schuch and Wang 2015).

While these studies and initiatives provide a promising case to support immigrant revitalization, the complex and sometimes contested mechanisms and processes through which immigrants reshape their communities are less understood. This is because the contribution of immigrants to community revitalizations is viewed largely through an economic lens, which leaves out the multifaceted ways that immigrants build their communities. The most visible, yet underappreciated, way that immigrants define the boundaries of their environment is by establishing businesses that offer cultural (food) products. The visibility of immigrant food businesses not only (re)shapes the physical environment, but also restructures social and racial processes embedded within the built environment. This chapter explores the contribution of immigrant food entrepreneurs to community development in two neighborhoods, one in Buffalo, New York, and the other in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In this chapter, community development encompasses a broader definition to include the ways that immigrants impact the health and well-being of residents by providing increased access to affordable, healthful, and cultural foods. The conditions under which these food enterprises operate (Buffalo) and the interaction between the newcomers and the established residents (Philadelphia) provide an opportunity to unpack some of the complexities that exist in the relationship between immigrants and their environments.

Public health and food-related scholarship has paid a great deal of attention to understanding how the predominant food environment of the host country impacts the health of newcomers. These studies largely focus on the impact of dietary acculturation on health outcomes of immigrants (Zhang et al. 2019). The health and living conditions of immigrants who work on farms, in processing plants, and in the food service industry have also been subjects of many inquiries that illuminate how labor regulations—or the lack thereof—impact some of the most marginalized, yet crucial, actors in the food system (Moyce and Schenker 2018; Mucci et al. 2019). While these studies are important in making visible the cruelty of the food industry, they often present immigrants in the US food system as victims of abuse and discrimination. This narrative focuses on how immigrants are shaped by their new physical environment and does less to argue how newcomers are active agents in reshaping the food systems of their new communities.

Similarly, literature on immigration's effects on receiving communities tends to view immigrants as those in need of assistance and not as agents of change. More often than not, immigrants are understood through a bifurcated cost-benefit framework of analysis (Brettell and Hollifield 2014). This narrative, which runs strong in political debates and public perception of immigrants, centers on the fiscal implication of immigrants and provides a static understanding of the ways immigrants could shape their new communities. In reality, the relationship between immigrants and their new environment is dynamic and interactive. Through pathways such as entrepreneurship, immigrants play an active role in (re)shaping their new environments. The decisions made by immigrant entrepreneurs on where to locate, what products and services to offer, and who to serve have definite impacts on the well-being of communities.

Some local governments celebrate immigrant entrepreneurs as heroic actors who build up communities (Waters 2018). However, they fail to incorporate immigrant businesses in the overall economic development strategies. As a result, the particular needs and challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs are off the radar of officials charged with the promotion of small business ownership, such as local chambers of commerce (Center for an Urban Future 2007). To most local governments and scholars, the appreciation for immigrant-run businesses ends with their contribution to generating revenue and increasing the local tax base, and is less concerned with the nature of services and products they provide. All the while, immigrant food entrepreneurs are shaping community food systems around their own needs, culture, and social relations.

The latest wave of immigrants from Asian and Latin American countries has had a significant role in transforming the US food system at both national and community scales. On the national level, these entrepreneurs have introduced new seeds and agricultural practices, formed alternative food supply chains, and shaped the pattern of food production in the United States (Imbruce 2015). On the community level, immigrant entrepreneurs impact the quality and quantity of foods available in a neighborhood by operating food-related enterprises (Emond, Madanat, and Ayala 2012). This is especially important since many immigrant-run businesses are located in places often underserved by the general market, where access to healthy and affordable food is scarce (Kim 2010).

Most public health scholarship that informs public policy and interventions undermines the value of small-scale food stores in healthy food provision, largely because of an overemphasis on supermarkets as the prime outlet for healthy foods (Zhang et al. 2016; Gordon et al. 2011). However, the mixed results of recent supermarket interventions to promote positive diet-related health outcomes have pushed public health scholars to consider the diverse ways that individuals procure food besides shopping at national chain supermarkets (Dubowitz et al. 2015; Cummins, Flint, and Matthews 2014). A handful of studies have examined the potential of immigrant-run food businesses to increase food access and contribute to food security (Emond, Madanat, and Ayala 2012; Short, Guthman, and Raskin 2007). These businesses, despite their small size, often carry a diverse range of products, from meat to fresh produce. A study of Latino grocery stores (*tiendas*) in San Diego, California, compared the availability, quality, and cost of fresh produce at *tiendas* with supermarkets and concluded there is no significant difference between the two food markets in terms of access to fresh produce. In fact, the cost of meeting the USDA's recommended weekly produce serving was three dollars lower in *tiendas* compared with supermarkets (Emond, Madanat, and Ayala 2012). Research shows that particular ethnic diets are beneficial to health, as they are largely based on plant-based dishes (Ooraikul, Sirichote, and Siripongvutikorn 2008). A study of food shopping venues in a diverse community supports this claim by demonstrating an association between shopping at ethnic markets and a lower body mass index among Guyanese participants, arguing that ethnic markets offer access to a diet that protects against obesity (Hosler, Michaels, and Buckenmeyer 2016).

Immigrant food businesses in urban environments increase access to culturally appropriate, affordable, and healthy foods, and rebuild communities while doing so. For example, these businesses provide access to jobs and income, and transform communities by turning once abandoned properties into places for business transactions and social interactions. Immigrant merchants play a critical role in community building by supporting ethnic-based organizations and using their power to influence planning and political decisions that may impact their communities. The success stories of immigrants revitalizing disinvested communities have been embraced and celebrated by local governments and planners (Center for an Urban Future 2007). However, this narrative of immigrant revitalization reflects an incomplete understanding of the dynamic, and sometimes contentious, relationships between immigrants, their new environments, and the established residents.

The remainder of this chapter sheds light on some of the existing challenges that immigrant food entrepreneurs face in creating healthier food environments (Buffalo) and contributing to community and economic revitalization in urban neighborhoods (Philadelphia). The Buffalo case study is a qualitative examination of two Middle Eastern grocers located in a "food desert" who manage to carry healthy and affordable foods in a low-resource environment. The promising examples from Buffalo argue for inclusion of ethnic groceries in healthy food initiatives and financing to leverage these existing community assets in creating healthier urban food environments. The Philadelphia case study uses historical literature, business inventories, field observations, and interviews with storeowners to demonstrate how recent Mexican entrepreneurs successfully revitalized a run-down public food market that used to be owned and managed by Italian immigrants.

My status as a university-affiliated immigrant from the Middle East both helped and hindered my access to these immigrant communities. In Buffalo, I had relatively easy access to Arab business owners. However, my identity did only so much in gaining their trust; the participants were hesitant to speak freely about their perception of the local government. In Philadelphia, my university-affiliated status was more important than my immigrant status, since to many (undocumented) workers it was not clear "who I am working for." I am grateful to my translator, who not only aided with conducting the interview but also helped to gain the trust of the Mexican community.

Buffalo, New York: The Role of Immigrant-Run Grocery Stores in Shaping Urban Food Environments

> Fruits and vegetables are good items for everyone. Everyone wants fresh produce, even American[s]. … If they know I have fresh produce, everyone will come.
> –Ali,[1] a new Buffalonian grocer of Iraqi heritage

Realizing the unmet demand for fresh produce in his neighborhood, Ali established a small-scale grocery store in Buffalo, New York, that provides cultural products for customers from Iraq, Turkey, India, and Pakistan and brings access to fresh produce for a broader range of customers who may not have walkable access to healthy food retailers. Ali and his fellow immigrant food entrepreneurs who have settled in Buffalo in recent years are shaping the city's food environment one block at a time.

Buffalo, a Rust Belt city characterized by abandoned and vacant properties, outmigration, and departure of businesses, has seen a slow resurgence in recent years, with the population increasing by 5% from 2005 to 2009 (US Census Bureau 2009). These recent changes can be partially attributed to the arrival of new immigrants and refugees who have diversified their traditional destinations and now settle across the United States. The foreign-born population of Buffalo increased by 40% from 2005 to 2009, a growth rate eight times higher than that of the city overall. These newcomers have changed their neighborhoods in small and incremental ways, by starting businesses and offering newly available products to serve community needs. Despite their role in rebuilding communities, these actors are often invisible in the local government's economic development strategies, which often focus on physical improvement projects to attract large companies and businesses, such as the downtown and waterfront revitalization projects (Shibley, Hovey, and Teaman 2016).

Buffalo's recent economic growth has had little translation into actual development for low-income communities. Today, only a few supermarkets serve the city, and they are often out of the physical reach of low-income residents who don't have access to a private vehicle (Widener, Metcalf, and Bar-Yam 2011). Despite the lack of access to large-scale food outlets, immigrant neighborhoods are home to many small-scale grocery stores that offer fresh produce and culturally appropriate foods. The increasing population of immigrants and refugees begets a growth in demand for cultural products unmet by the general market. As a result, Buffalo has witnessed visible growth in immigrant-run eateries and food businesses throughout the city. As of 2013, the most recent year for which statistics are available, there were 56 ethnic food places, a significant enough number to draw the attention of news outlets and magazines about the growing diversity of Buffalo's food landscape (Kelly 2013).

Using a private business vendor, store audits, and consultation with a community partner, two full-service Middle Eastern grocery stores were chosen from the northern neighborhoods of Buffalo with a foreign-born population share similar to that of the city (7% vs. 9%). The nearest supermarket is located outside the neighborhood, in an adjacent suburb with limited pedestrian and public transportation access. While it is classified by the USDA Food Atlas as a "food desert," the neighborhood is anything but "deserted"; it is home to a vibrant commercial corridor of ethnic eateries and grocery stores.

The stores provide a wide variety of dairy products, dry goods, fresh and frozen meat, poultry, and seafood, beans, grains, herbs, spices, and fruits and vegetables. The diverse array of fresh produce sets these stores apart from other small-scale urban food stores. While the quantity of fresh produce may be less than at larger food markets, its availability is critical to the success of these businesses. Both storeowners showed an acute understanding of the market conditions and unmet demands of the residents for fresh produce. They shared the fact that fresh produce attracts customers to their stores, shaping about 10% of their total sale, and increases the overall sale, as those who come for the fresh produce often end up purchasing multiple items.

The variety of foods mimics the line of products available at supermarkets but with lesser-known brands and names. The store audits show that besides a few specialized food items, the main inventory is staple food products found in many cuisines. Thus, it is not surprising that both stores reported that nonethnic customers represent 5%–10% of their customer base. The immigrant food entrepreneurs, aware of a need to diversify their clientele and services, allocate parts of their stores to catering services. This strategy helps them survive as a small business with low profit margins and to advertise their name to a wider population. The catering divisions also provide face-to-face interaction among community members, which builds social connections and facilitates information sharing among the immigrant communities (Liu, Miller, and Wang 2014).

To evaluate how conventional metrics would assess these stores' provision of "healthy" food, I used a modified version of a previously validated tool known as the Nutritional Environmental Measure Survey (Glanz et al. 2005). Both stores scored relatively high (38 and 24) on a scale of 0 (no healthy foods) to 54 (no unhealthy food), mainly because of the availability of fresh produce and absence of tobacco and alcoholic beverages. However, the limits of this type of metric are significant. For example, the tool does not consider a store's capacity to enable customers to prepare a homemade meal. To Zahra, an Iraqi storeowner with 25 years of business experience, providing convenience for residents where they can meet most of their needs with a one-stop shopping trip is an intentional goal when she selects products for her store. She explains, "Because I am a cook and I am a mom, I know what people will need to prepare meals and I bring them … my customers even ask me to give them recipes."

To provide this breadth of ingredients, these businesses need to navigate multiple challenges to offer culturally appropriate fresh produce at their stores. Ali reported how the absence of ethnic wholesalers in this region impacts his business: “It confuses our customers. They need produce on [a] daily basis, but if they come and they don’t find it and they don’t know when we will get it again, they may go and never come back again.” Since these stores are small, it is not profitable for distributors to provide them with direct delivery. The immigrant storeowners overcome this challenge by making multiple trips to the nearest city with an established network of ethnic wholesalers; both storeowners travel twice a month to Detroit, Michigan, to access suppliers. Making these trips comes with additional costs and challenges for the entrepreneurs, such as arranging truck rentals, incorporating long-distance and time-consuming procurement trips into their schedules, and delegating work responsibilities. Despite the personal efforts that the storeowners make to meet this demand, other factors, such as weather or truck availability, could affect their commitment to offer fresh produce on a fixed schedule.

The immigrant entrepreneurs also need to overcome the challenge of navigating the regulatory environment and establishing relationships with local government agencies. Ali noted that the challenge is to “stick to [the regulations]. The laws are changing every now and then so we have to keep up with changes.” To Zahra, the bigger challenge is establishing a relationship with government agencies: “If you are new and nobody knows you, you are gonna get people to trust you… [running the business] used to be harder ’cause they didn’t know what we are gonna sell. So we had to explain it to them. We get a lot of stuff in bulk, and we have to package it and label them; it is required by law. They send inspectors to check if we do.” Local agencies, such as the County Health Department, may be unfamiliar with ethnic products and their handling, which could delay the licensing process, hence restraining the entrepreneurs’ ability to sell and generate revenue in a timely manner.

While not-for-profit organizations, such as the Small Business Development Center, help immigrant entrepreneurs with the start-up process, a staff member from the Office of Licenses shared that local government does not have any formal program or strategy to attenuate their particular challenges. This is especially important since local governments have the capacity to offer financial support to foster healthy food retailing. For example, the FRESH program in New York City offers a combination of tax reductions, sales tax exemptions, and grants for infrastructure changes to operators who meet particular health guidelines. Importantly, the local government could play a central role in connecting local and regional growers with ethnic grocers and distributors/wholesalers. Such a strategy could promote the operation of small-scale grocery stores throughout the city and provide a viable commercial strategy to support the new refugee farmers and growers, currently supported by grant-based nonprofits, with limited capacity to scale up their food production. Finally, the local government could improve their understanding of the needs and challenges of immigrant entrepreneurs by establishing partnerships with ethnic community organizations (see chapter 11 of this volume for Ostenso, Dring, and Wittman's analysis of food policy councils' successes and failures toward this goal in Vancouver). Through such relationships, the local government could better connect entrepreneurs to existing resources, share information about federal and state funding opportunities, and notify entrepreneurs about changes in regulations and laws.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Continuous Wave of Immigrant Food Entrepreneurs and Community Revitalization

South Philadelphia, a reemerging immigrant neighborhood, is a prime example of how interactions between the new wave of immigrants and the children of the earlier European immigrants have created a vibrant, yet contentious, urban food landscape. This study focuses on two food stores, a Mexican-owned fish market and an Italian American butchery, in the South 9th Street Food Market (hereafter the Market) that provide staple food products and represent enterprises owned by the new wave of immigrants (hereafter new immigrant entrepreneurs) and by the descendants of the earlier immigrants (hereafter old immigrant entrepreneurs).

Noticing the largely African American clientele and diverse array of seafood in a small fish market, one may not immediately assume that a Mexican family owns and runs this store. Jose—a Mexican immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1998—is no stranger to managing his own business. He had years of experience producing and selling garden products prior to his migration to the United States. Describing his experience entering the US food industry, he explains, "I had to shift my business because of need…the need to survive when you arrive to this country. In my first [work] opportunity here I was introduced to the fish market." That fish market is still owned by an Italian American entrepreneur located not too far away from Jose's own business today. Working at the fish market not only met Jose's "need to survive" but also gave him an opportunity to learn new skills and gain necessary market information to establish his own business 20 years later.

The relationship between the old Italian food entrepreneurs and the new immigrant entrepreneurs, largely from Mexico, is a dynamic that has shaped and rebuilt the Market. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, South Philadelphia was the second-largest Italian enclave on the East Coast, becoming a gateway neighborhood for European immigrants. Upon their arrival, Italian immigrants formed a food market along South 9th Street. The Market was a major employment center for the incoming Italians, often single men, who worked at the Market and lived in nearby boardinghouses. The prosperous years of the Market were short lived; it faced a persistent and gradual decline following World War II, with outmigration of Italian immigrants and their children to the surrounding suburbs. However, the post-1965 wave of new immigrants and refugees from Asian and Latin American countries provided a renewed source of population, labor, and entrepreneurial activity for the Market. There were few Italian American businesses left at the Market when the new immigrants started to open businesses. The contribution of the newcomers to the Market and the real estate in the area flipped the predominant narrative from one that was formally identified as "blighted" by the Philadelphia Redevelopment Agency to one centered on community-led revitalization.

These community changes, however, did not happen in a vacuum. The community-led development occurred in the midst of racial controversies. Jose, in fact, cited his experience of abuse and discrimination at work as a motivation for him to seek self-employment: "I was bad treated because of my look and I am thankful for that because it motivated me to do more things and move forward. I had to go to school to educate myself because of Geno my neighbor. He said that if in his store they speak English then I should learn it too. He was saying the truth and instead of being mad I did the opposite and learned the language with a positive attitude."

Exemplifying this racist sentiment, nearby business owner Joe Vento attracted national attention to the Market over the years with his anti-immigration rhetoric. A third-generation Italian American himself, who held his own grandparents as the frame of reference for "doing it the right way," Joe Vento took issue with the undocumented immigrants and their lack of "assimilation," threatening those who hired undocumented workers and supporting multiple anti-immigration legislative actions locally and nationally. Joe's tactics were particularly loud and aggressive, but he was not alone in his stance. Many Italian American merchants threatened by the influx of new immigrants used a variety of tactics (e.g., unified awnings showing the business establishment's years in operation) to remind visitors of the Italian identity of the market and ultimately of its ownership (Vitiello 2014). Geno, son and heir of Joe Vento, did not take the "Speak English or Press 2 for Deportation" sign off his (in)famous steak shop until 2016, against the dying wish of his deceased father.

While these narratives center on tensions over ethnic identity, a closer look into the reciprocal relationship between the old and new immigrant food entrepreneurs provides a detailed picture of the processes that enabled the Market's revitalization. Many Italian American property owners rent their vacant business spaces to the new immigrant entrepreneurs. The already established physical commercial infrastructure—such as storefronts and warehouses—helps new immigrants acquire spaces for commercial purposes. In return, new businesses have revitalized this once run-down commercial corridor, stimulating growth and bringing vitality back to the Market. This vitality is a result of the diverse products now found at the Market. Once entirely a food market, the Market now provides access to other essential products and services, such as clothing, sporting goods, and entertainment, that serve the growing immigrant community. The combination of these businesses with the Italian food vendors—which often offer specialty food items such as cheese, olive oils, and handmade pastas—attracts both regular and loyal customers as well as clientele seeking a "cosmopolitan" experience.

The increased diversity of customers has worked in favor of the Italian American entrepreneurs. Francesco, a fourth-generation Italian American butcher, takes pride in serving a racially and economically diverse clientele: "We have a diverse group … we have a large black following … a lot of welfare … we have a large yuppie following now. We have whites, blacks and not as many Asians as we used to have, they now shop at their own supermarket around the corner. We have a mixed Jamaican clientele … they go for their own traditional stuff. You go from a person on welfare to an executive of a company and everybody gets along here. The store on Saturdays is a big melting pot." Francesco has responded to this increased diversity by expanding his business to tap into the growing demand of his customers. Francesco expanded his great-grandfather's small butchery into a large store with two new divisions (catering and poultry) that are managed by his wife and son. Similarly, many Italian businesses have benefited from the increased diversity, as it has forced them to keep expanding their businesses to stay competitive in the market. For example, a small Italian cheese store across the street that opened in 1939 has now evolved into a multidepartment company with its own importing division supporting more than 300 employees.

Instead of following most Mexican food vendors in providing cultural products, Jose chose the fish market based on his personal experience and the profitability of this sector. He explains, "People ask me do you know what color the business is?…I said business is neither black nor white. While the black people say it is black, the white people will say it's white, [I say] it is green, whoever has the money can buy the product." He points to the opportunity he found in the fish market by adding that "African Americans consume a lot of fish. As Mexicans, because of our geographic zone [at home] we don't have it a lot on our daily menu…but African Americans, Africans and Jamaicans have it. I have some products that come from Jamaica. If they ask for a product I will find it for them."

Successful new Mexican food entrepreneurs have managed to open additional stores in the surrounding neighborhoods. Upward mobility centered around individuals' successes has a special appeal in the American narrative of immigration, but the benefit of these success stories goes beyond an individual or a household to influence the community at large. For example, Jose has already helped two of his relatives establish their own fresh produce businesses by providing them with market information, financial support, and access to facilities such as refrigerators. Jose also contributes by shortening and facilitating the self-employment pathway of other community members and by creating additional businesses at the Market, which function as a continuous source of income and taxes. Italian American entrepreneurs have a similar trajectory in sustaining and expanding their businesses, but with a distinct difference: instead of helping their families and relatives to have their own businesses and spread horizontally across the market, they train, employ, and retain them within the same family business. This often results in a vertical and consolidated growth of Italian businesses, providing them with access to increased prosperity and subsequently more power and leverage over the market.

To Francesco and his fellow Italian American entrepreneurs, the Market functions as a "melting pot," which provides them with greater opportunities to grow their businesses. To these businesses, the increasing popularity of the Market among "yuppies" is not a concern but rather a business opportunity. However, beneath the surface of this "melting pot," there exists a complex range of challenges to the success and growth of the Mexican entrepreneurs. To many Mexican businesses, continuous growth of the Market, combined with the fast pace of gentrification in the area, makes them unable to keep up with the increasing rents. Consequently, the very same people who contributed to the growth of the Market may be forced out of their businesses if they do not compete in this "prosperous" market. To be sure, the Market still provides opportunities for Mexican entrepreneurs, as new Mexican businesses have opened in the Market since this study was initiated. However, the growth of businesses does not seem to go hand in hand with their increased power: of the 12 seats on the board of directors at the South 9th Street Business Association, all are allocated to entrepreneurs with Italian heritage. The embedded racial conflicts in the Market and the unequal distribution of power could ultimately cost the Market its newly regained vitality and its "cosmopolitan" status.

Conclusion

The case studies presented showcase how immigrant food entrepreneurs are increasing access to healthy foods, contributing to community wealth, and rebuilding social and economic dimensions of their receiving communities. These examples demonstrate the multifaceted impact of immigrants on community revitalization and that the process through which the newcomers interact and reshape their new environments is filled with physical challenges (e.g., lack of access to infrastructure) and racial conflicts (e.g., lack of power and control over their environment).

The Buffalo case study shows how small-scale immigrant-run grocery stores are improving food access in urban environments. These ethnic grocery stores are offering healthy produce while navigating multiple systemic barriers, such as lack of access to ethnic distributors and the need to gain the trust and approval of government agencies. Both issues highlight how Buffalo, unlike traditional gateways such as New York City, is relatively new to hosting a diverse group of entrepreneurs. In traditional gateways, immigrants benefit from already established networks and civil societies that play a great role in incorporating immigrants. In Buffalo, such a connection between multiple actors—whether that be government agencies, ethnic community centers, or refugee settlement institutions—needs to be established. Local government—particularly planning, economic development, and public health departments—can play a significant role in initiating such a network by taking a proactive and comprehensive approach toward strengthening the community food system. In the absence of local government support, nonprofit organizations fill this gap. In 2018, United Way of Buffalo and Erie County allocated funding to 13 organizations to strengthen the community's food system, of which two work directly with refugee farmers (Somali Bantu Community Organization) and immigrant food businesses (West Side Bazaar). However, the degree to which these organizations work and speak to one another is unclear (Niagara Frontier 2018). Connecting ethnic grocers to refugee producers and regional farmers, supporting the establishment of a food hub, training health and licensing staff about ethnic food products, and effectively disseminating information are among the many ways that local government could play an active role in promoting the businesses of these community actors.

The Philadelphia case study provides an example of how immigrant food entrepreneurship is playing a central role in market revitalization. In fact, the interaction between the old and new immigrant food entrepreneurs accomplished the same goals sought by many community economic development professionals who focus on both people and place-based strategies, such as training a new generation of entrepreneurs and stimulating development in a previously run-down area.

The city government in Philadelphia acknowledges the contribution of immigrants to the city's growth and strives to provide a welcoming environment to protect the well-being of the immigrant communities, whether through mandating language access to all city services or declaring Philadelphia a sanctuary city. However, the local government tends to focus more on the outcome (i.e., revitalization) rather than the process that could enable or hinder the incorporation of the newcomers. Scholars argue that a promising outcome of immigrant revitalization is conditioned on the social, political, and economic context of their receiving communities, where a hostile and anti-immigration attitude could hamper immigrants' incorporation (Reitz 2002). This has been observed to some degree in the case of the South 9th Street Market. On the surface, the Mexican entrepreneurs have become economically incorporated by joining the Market and establishing businesses. However, the existing racial conflicts have prevented the newcomers from becoming fully integrated within the Market, as they are often excluded from decision-making processes that could ultimately impact their businesses. In this case, the overall pro-immigration approach of the city government could only do so much to protect immigrants, leaving the newcomers to navigate ethnic conflict and tensions with the established residents on their own. A prime example of individual-level effort is the owner of South Philly Barbacoa, a Mexican restaurant in the Market that has gained national recognition after being featured on multiple cooking shows and documentaries. The owner uses her own undocumented status and newly gained platform to advocate for the rights of undocumented workers in the food industry, even if that means being more visible to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents who have been actively present in South Philadelphia since 2017.

This chapter demonstrates the opportunities that immigrant food entrepreneurs create in their new environments while giving a reminder that urban food environments are extremely diverse, complex, and contentious places. Until the day that these community actors' successes, needs, and challenges are formally incorporated into cities' plans and policies, local policymakers will continue to create policy for urban food environments that remains ignorant of some of those environments' most transformative actors.

Note

1. All names are changed to protect the identities of the study participants.

References

Brettell, Caroline B., and James F. Hollifield. 2014. *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines*. New York: Routledge.

Center for an Urban Future. 2007. *A World of Opportunity*. New York: Center for an Urban Future.

Cummins, Steven, Ellen Flint, and Stephen A. Matthews. 2014. "New Neighborhood Grocery Store Increased Awareness of Food Access but Did Not Alter Dietary Habits or Obesity." *Health Affairs* 33(2): 283–291.

Dubowitz, Tamara, Madhumita Ghosh-Dastidar, Deborah A. Cohen, Robin Beckman, Elizabeth D. Steiner, Gerald P. Hunter, Karen R. Flórez, Christina Huang, Christine A. Vaughan, and Jennifer C. Sloan. 2015. "Diet and Perceptions Change with Supermarket Introduction in a Food Desert, but Not Because of Supermarket Use." *Health Affairs* 34(11): 1858–1868.

Emond, Jennifer A., Hala N. Madanat, and Guadalupe X. Ayala. 2012. "Do Latino and Non-Latino Grocery Stores Differ in the Availability and Affordability of Healthy Food Items in a Low-Income, Metropolitan Region?" *Public Health Nutrition* 15(2): 360–369.

Glanz, Karen, James F. Sallis, Brian E. Saelens, and Lawrence D. Frank. 2005. "Healthy Nutrition Environments: Concepts and Measures." *American Journal of Health Promotion* 19(5): 330–333.

Gordon, Cynthia, Marnie Purciel-Hill, Nirupa R. Ghai, Leslie Kaufman, Regina Graham, and Gretchen Van Wye. 2011. "Measuring Food Deserts in New York City's Low-Income Neighborhoods." *Health and Place* 17(2): 696–700.

Hosler, Akiko S., Isaac H. Michaels, and Erin M. Buckenmeyer. 2016. "Food Shopping Venues, Neighborhood Food Environment, and Body Mass Index among Guyanese, Black, and White Adults in an Urban Community in the US." *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 48(6): 361–368.

Imbruce, Valerie. 2015. *From Farm to Canal Street: Chinatown's Alternative Food Network in the Global Marketplace*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Kelly, Erin. 2013. "Map for Adventurous Eaters." *Buffalo News*, May 20, 2013. https://www.buffalorising.com/2013/05/a-map-for-adventurous-eaters/.

Kim, Wook-Jin. 2010. *Korean Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Inner-City Minority Neighborhoods: Who Are Those Who Stay and Who Are Those Who Leave?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Liu, Cathy Yang, Jonathan Miller, and Qingfang Wang. 2014. "Ethnic Enterprises and Community Development." *GeoJournal* 79(5): 565–576.

McDaniel, Paul. 2014. "Immigration and Economic Revitalization in America's Cities." Immigration Imapct. http://immigrationimpact.com/2014/06/02/immigration-and-economic-revitalization-in-americas-cities/.

Moyce, Sally C., and Marc Schenker. 2018. "Migrant Workers and Their Occupational Health and Safety." *Annual Review of Public Health* 39:351–365.

Mucci, Nicola, Veronica Traversini, Gabriele Giorgi, Giacomo Garzaro, Javier Fiz-Perez, Marcello Campagna, Venerando Rapisarda, Eleonora Tommasi, Manfredi Montalti, and Giulio Arcangeli. 2019. “Migrant Workers and Physical Health: An Umbrella Review.” *Sustainability* 11(1): 232–254.

Niagara Frontier. 2018. “United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, General Mills Foundation Funding 13 Organizations to Strengthen Community’s Food System.” *Niagara Frontier Publications*, April 12, 2018. https://www.wnypapers.com/news/article/current/2018/04/12/132237/united-way-of-buffalo-erie-county-general-mills-foundation-funding-13-organizations-to-strengthen-communitys-food-system.

Ooraikul, Buncha, Anchalee Sirichote, and Sunisa Siripongvutikorn. 2008. “Southeast Asian Diets and Health Promotion.” In *Wild-Type Food in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention*, edited by Fabian DeMeester, 515–533. Totowa, NJ: Humana Press.

Reitz, Jeffrey G. 2002. “Host Societies and the Reception of Immigrants: Research Themes, Emerging Theories and Methodological Issues.” *International Migration Review* 36(4): 1005–1019.

Schuch, Johanna Claire, and Qingfang Wang. 2015. “Immigrant Businesses, Place-Making, and Community Development: A Case from an Emerging Immigrant Gateway.” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 32(2): 214–241.

Shibley, Robert, Bradshaw Hovey, and Rachel Teaman. 2016. “Buffalo Case Study.” In *Remaking Post-industrial Cities: Lessons from North America and Europe*, edited by Donald K. Carter, 25–45. New York: Routledge.

Short, Anne, Julie Guthman, and Samuel Raskin. 2007. “Food Deserts, Oases, or Mirages? Small Markets and Community Food Security in the San Francisco Bay Area.” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 26(3): 352–364.

US Census Bureau. 2009. Total Population: 2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau.

Vigdor, Jacob L. 2017. “Estimating the Impact of Immigration on County-Level Economic Indicators.” In *Immigration and Metropolitan Revitalization in the United States*, edited by Domenic Vitiello and Thomas J. Sugrue, 25–39. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Vitiello, Domenic. 2014. “The Politics of Place in Immigrant and Receiving Communities.” In *What’s New about the “New” Immigration? Traditions and Transformations in the United States since 1965*, edited by Marilyn Halter, Marilynn S. Johnson, Katheryn P. Viens, and Conrad Edick Wright, 83–110. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Waters, Stephanie. 2018. *Immigration Policies*. Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia Office of Immigrant Affairs. https://beta.phila.gov/2018-01-08-immigration-policies/.

Widener, Michael J., Sara S. Metcalf, and Yaneer Bar-Yam. 2011. “Dynamic Urban Food Environments: A Temporal Analysis of Access to Healthy Foods.” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 41(4): 439–441.

Zhang, Qi, Ruicui Liu, Leigh A. Diggs, Youfa Wang, and Li Ling. 2019. “Does Acculturation Affect the Dietary Intakes and Body Weight Status of Children of Immigrants in the US and other Developed Countries? A Systematic Review.” *Ethnicity and Health* 24(1): 73–93.

Zhang, Y. Tara, Barbara A. Laraia, Mahasin S. Mujahid, Samuel D. Blanchard, E. Margaret Warton, Howard H. Moffet, and Andrew J. Karter. 2016. “Is a Reduction in Distance to Nearest Supermarket Associated with BMI Change among Type 2 Diabetes Patients?” *Health and Place* 40:15–20.

This is a section of doi:10.7551/mitpress/11862.001.0001

The Immigrant-Food Nexus

Borders, Labor, and Identity in North America

Edited by: Julian Agyeman, Sydney Giacalone

Citation:

The Immigrant-Food Nexus: Borders, Labor, and Identity in North America
Edited by: Julian Agyeman, Sydney Giacalone
DOI: `10.7551/mitpress/11862.001.0001`
ISBN (electronic): `9780262357555`
Publisher: The MIT Press
Published: 2020

The open access edition of this book was made possible by generous funding and support from Arcadia – a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin

The MIT Press

MIT Press Direct

© 2020 Massachusetts Institute of Technology

This work is subject to a Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND license. Subject to such license, all rights are reserved.

BY-NC-ND

The open access edition of this book was made possible by generous funding from Arcadia – a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin.

ARCADIA
A charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin

This book was set in Stone Serif by Westchester Publishing Service.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Agyeman, Julian, editor. | Giacalone, Sydney, editor.
Title: The immigrant-food nexus : borders, labor, and identity in North America / edited by Julian Agyeman and Sydney Giacalone.
Description: Cambridge, Massachusetts : The MIT Press, [2020] | Series: Food, health, and the environment | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2019022932 | ISBN 9780262538411 (paperback)
Subjects: LCSH: Immigrants—Social conditions—United States. | Immigrants—Social conditions—Canada. | Ethnic food—Social aspects—United States. | Ethnic food—Social aspects--Canada. | Food habits—United States. | Food habits—Canada. | United States—Emigration and immigration—Social aspects. | Canada—Emigration and immigration—Social aspects. | United States—Emigration and immigration—Government policy. | Canada—Emigration and immigration—Government policy.
Classification: LCC JV6475 .I464 2020 | DDC 338.1/973086912—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019022932