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Ethnic Place Making : Thirty Years of Brazilian Immigration to South Framingham, Massachusetts

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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Laura Aldea Skorczeski for the Master of Science in Geography were presented on April 15, 2009, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Laura Aldea Skorczeski for the Master of Science in Geography presented April 15, 2009.

Title: Ethnic Place Making: Thirty Years of Brazilian Immigration to South Framingham, Massachusetts.

Over the past thirty years, Massachusetts has become a hub of Brazilian immigration. Within Massachusetts, the town of Framingham has the highest concentration of Brazilian residents; one census tract in the southern part of this Boston suburb is an astounding 57.4 percent Brazilian. The presence of the Brazilian population in downtown Framingham, also referred to as South Framingham, has transformed the area into a landscape of Brazilian ethnicity.

When Brazilians began arriving in South Framingham in the early 1980s, the downtown Central Business District was a blighted landscape. This thesis analyzes how Brazilian identities have become imprinted on the landscape of South Framingham and, in the process, how Brazilian business owners revitalized downtown. Starting with initial Brazilian immigration to Framingham, I present a chronological analysis of how the area developed into an ethnic enclave and, most recently, how the area has become a landscape of ethnic contention. While Brazilian immigrants have improved the economic vitality of South Framingham, the current economic recession and other local factors may diminish the future success of

Brazilian business owners and, consequently, their visibility in the landscape of downtown Framingham.

ETHNIC PLACE MAKING: THIRTY YEARS OF BRAZILIAN IMMIGRATION
TO SOUTH FRAMINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

by

LAURA ALDEA SKORCZESKI

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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in
GEOGRAPHY

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For my parents,
who have always encouraged me to follow my heart
and never ceased to support me.

For my husband,
who never fails to make me laugh
when I need to regain perspective.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose and Scope.....	1
Methodology.....	3
Literature Review.....	5
CHAPTER	
1 Brazilians Arrive in Framingham.....	9
Setting the Scene: A Brief History of Downtown Framingham.....	10
Patterns of Brazilian Immigration.....	18
Brazilian Immigration to Framingham.....	20
Why Massachusetts? Why Framingham?.....	25
Brazilians Enter the Local Economy.....	29
2 The Development of a Brazilian Ethnic Enclave.....	32
Landscape Signatures of Ethnicity.....	35
The Retail Streetscape.....	37
The Social Landscape.....	43
The Residential Landscape.....	50

3	Downtown Framingham: A Landscape of Ethnic Contention.....	55
	Revitalization Efforts Downtown.....	57
	Increased Immigration and Customs Enforcement Presence....	62
	Reactions to Changes in Population and Place.....	65
	Efforts to Reach Out to the Immigrant Population.....	75
4	Transnationalism in Downtown Framingham.....	80
	Transnationalism in Migration Research.....	81
	Elements of Transnationalism in Downtown Framingham...	84
	Transnational Economic Activity and Adaptation.....	88
5	Concluding Remarks.....	92
	Differences between Landscape and Place.....	94
	Projections for the Future Landscape of Downtown.....	95
	REFERENCES.....	100

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

1	Number of Foreign-born Brazilians Resident in Massachusetts.....	21
2	Ten largest Brazilian populations in Massachusetts.....	23

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE

1	Location of Middlesex County and Framingham, Massachusetts.....	11
2	Downtown Framingham in 1953 from Memorial Building.....	12
3	Downtown Framingham late 1970s.....	13
4	Map of Framingham delineating South Framingham.....	13
5	Central Business District map.....	14
6	Brazilian businesses on Concord Street.....	16
7	Storefront picture: reflection of ties to Governador Valadares.....	24
8	Brazilian population: Census tracts in Middlesex County.....	33
9	Portuguese-language signs for Brazilian events.....	36
10	Brazilian and American flags downtown.....	40
11	Examples of Brazilian flags downtown.....	42
12	Portuguese sign: Downtown health center.....	44
13	Igreja Pentecostal Shalom, Hollis Street.....	46
14	Comunidade Presbiteriana Nova Vida, Union Avenue.....	47
15	Portuguese language section of downtown library.....	47
16	Library resources for Brazilian immigrants.....	48
17	Town monument honoring immigration.....	49
18	Two representations of Brazilian identity in residential areas.....	53
19	The Arcade Building, 1979.....	59
20	The Arcade Building, 2007.....	59

21	Signs of protest: “Stop SMOC” sign.....	68
22	Provocative cartoon posted by CCFIILE.....	74
23	Anti-racism time capsule marker.....	77
24	<i>Bate Papo</i> magazine cover.....	86
25	Examples of remittance businesses.....	90

INTRODUCTION

Massachusetts is currently the primary destination for Brazilian immigrants in the United States (City of Boston 2006). Brazilian immigration to the United States increased dramatically in the 1980s (Sales 1998; Margolis 2004) and was motivated primarily by economic problems in Brazil (Goza 1994; Margolis 2004). Within Massachusetts, the town of Framingham has the highest percentage of Brazilian residents. Framingham, a suburb of Boston located twenty miles west of the city, is the most populous town in New England according to the U.S. Census. With a population of 66,910, Framingham is defined by the census as an “urbanized area,” and while northern Framingham is primarily residential and typical of suburban towns, the southern part of town is heavily mixed use and more characteristically urban. The majority of Brazilian immigrants in Framingham lives in this downtown area, also known as South Framingham, and as a result downtown is now a landscape of Brazilian ethnicity.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze how Brazilian identities have become imprinted on the landscape of South Framingham and, furthermore, how the ethnic identity of this place has influenced the economic, social, and political realms of the downtown area. Immigrants continually shape and change communities in the United States, from rural towns to major cities, and examining the ways in which individual

immigrant communities alter these places may help scholars, community organizers, and politicians to better understand the role of the immigrant in shaping places. This understanding is especially necessary in the twenty-first century as immigration becomes an increasingly controversial and divisive topic for policy makers and citizens because it can help inform the immigration discussion. This thesis analyzes the role of Brazilian immigrants in the suburban town of Framingham, Massachusetts, in order to elucidate the complex ways that a place may be transformed by an ethnic community and how this transformation relates to broader social issues.

The organization of this thesis is based upon Brian Godfrey's three "emblematic types of urban landscape defined by ethnicity" (2007, 333). Godfrey discusses "incipient urban landscapes of ethnic arrival," "consolidated urban landscapes of ethnic enclaves," and "defensive urban landscapes of ethnic contention" (2007, 333). Although these archetypes are not necessarily comprehensive or representative of every ethnic landscape, they do depict a progression of ethnic place making that is reflected in the material and cultural landscapes of urban areas. Godfrey states that his typology "assumes particular temporal periods.... But this does not imply an irrevocable progression or a unilinear 'stage' model" (2007, 333). The issues highlighted by Godfrey's typology of ethnic landscapes provide a useful framework for analyzing how downtown Framingham has been changed by the Brazilian population over the past twenty-five years, and how these changes have come to influence the political and social atmosphere of the town. This thesis applies the central themes and characteristics of Godfrey's

archetypes to downtown Framingham in the first three chapters: 1) the beginning of demographic and cultural landscape changes; 2) the demographic domination of an ethnic group and the establishment of a “coherent sense of place” (2007, 333); and 3) ethnic contention and an effort on the part of the established ethnic group to resist gentrification. The fourth chapter provides a discussion of the theory of transnationalism and analyzes the ways in which the transnational nature of downtown businesses contributes to the ethnic landscape.

Methodology

Methodology for this thesis included interviews, census data analysis, historical and archival data analysis, and photography. During July, August, and December 2007 and January 2008, I conducted interviews with twenty individuals, including downtown business owners and workers, town residents, members of community organizations, past and present presidents of the Chamber of Commerce, and a reporter who covers the majority of stories on downtown Framingham for the local newspaper. The names of all individuals interviewed are either omitted or changed in accordance with Human Subjects Review Committee guidelines. Data from the interviews provide narrative insight into the Brazilian experience in Framingham, while the demographic shift toward Brazilians as the dominant population in South Framingham is quantified by data from the 2000 U.S. Census.

Materials from the Historical Society of Framingham and the Framingham Public Library collections document the changes in the landscape of downtown

Framingham and contribute to an understanding of Framingham's history and the influence of its Brazilian residents. Many of these documents speak to the fact that downtown Framingham is a historically important "central-place activity node" (Wood 1997) that was more or less abandoned upon the arrival of Shopper's World, the first shopping mall in Framingham, and the flourishing of commercial activity that ensued along Route 9. The Brazilian population moved into the neglected downtown space, and many documents address the ways in which Brazilians transformed, and revitalized, South Framingham. Local newspaper articles identify ways that Brazilians have made an imprint on the landscape of downtown Framingham, as well as the difficulties they have faced throughout their presence downtown. In addition to providing facts about Brazilian immigration specific to Framingham, local archives also inform a discussion of how the Brazilian and non-Brazilian populations in Framingham have very different perceptions of the identity of downtown Framingham, and hint at the tensions this dichotomy creates.

Photographs of downtown Framingham illustrate how the landscape, and more specifically the commercial streetscape, reflects Brazilian ethnic identities. Photographs demonstrate the abundance of Brazilian flags and the use of the colors of the flag to identify downtown stores and businesses as Brazilian or Brazilian-friendly. The transformation of downtown over time is visible in photographs from various decades, especially with regard to what kinds of businesses are located in the downtown retail spaces.

Literature Review

Perhaps because it is not as large a phenomenon as immigration from some other countries, such as Mexico, relatively little has been published on the topic of Brazilian immigration to the United States. Sociology studies of Brazilian immigration to the United States and Canada (Goza 1994) have focused on specific issues such as the formation of social class among Brazilian immigrants to the U.S. (Beserra 2003), church affiliations among Brazilians in Massachusetts (Martes 2001), or the ways in which Brazilian identity is propagated in Boston, Massachusetts (Sales 1998). Maxine Margolis is possibly the most prolific writer on Brazilians within the United States and has lent an anthropological perspective on the topic through her ethnography of Brazilians in New York City (1994) and her discussions of how the U.S. Census undercounts Brazilian populations (1995). Among these valuable contributions from academia on Brazilian immigration, however, geographers are noticeably absent. This means that there is much opportunity for geographers to build upon the work of other disciplines by examining the spatial aspects of Brazilian immigration and communities of Brazilians in the United States. This is best accomplished by analyzing Brazilian communities through the lenses of population and ethnic geography, and contextualizing Brazilian immigration in light of contributions from geographers in these areas.

Population geographers have been analyzing population phenomena since the 1950s (Gober and Tyner 2003). Because population geography is deeply tied to demography, it has been characterized by “an almost exclusive commitment to

positivism, empiricism, and quantification, even as the social sciences have moved to more multifaceted approaches to the study of human behavior” (Gober and Tyner 2003, 186). While population geographers have addressed patterns of immigration represented by census data, they have largely avoided theorizing about the social and cultural processes behind immigration (White and Jackson 1995). It is also problematic that population geographers, who rely heavily on demographic data produced by the government, have rarely criticized or challenged the social categories utilized by demographic data (White and Jackson 1995). Just as Silvey and Lawson (1999) argue that the ‘cultural turn’ should inform migration studies to a greater extent, White and Jackson argue that population geography would also benefit from the incorporation of contemporary social theory (1995). The meshing of demographic analysis and cultural theory that was advocated by White and Jackson has become the basis of the recently established ethnic geography subdiscipline.

Established in 1992, ethnic geography has its roots in cultural-historical and population geographies (Estaville, Hardwick, Allen and Miyares 2003) and has been influenced by the “new cultural geography” (Miyares and Airriess 2007; Godfrey 2007). Ethnic geographers acknowledge the socially constructed nature of ethnicity and seek to explore how ethnic groups come to be either self-defined as different (Miyares and Airriess 2007) or defined externally by the dominant culture (Godfrey 2007). Geographers who study ethnicity and ethnic identities “emphasize such geographical expressions as migration, settlement, landscape impress, place

development, homelands, acculturation, assimilation, and territorial tensions” (Estaville, Hardwick, Allen and Miyares 2003, 587).

Although ethnic geography incorporates studies of non-immigrant populations, such as Native American and African American geographies, studies of immigrant populations are well represented by ethnic geographic research. Ethnic geography offers a way of analyzing immigrant landscapes in the context of recent social theories, especially regarding the socially constructed nature of landscapes (Smith 2002; Godfrey 2007; Arreola 2007). For this reason, geographers have found landscape analysis to be an appropriate method for researching immigrant geographies (Berry and Henderson 2002; Smith 2002; Godfrey 2007) and examining how these populations have cultivated place as an expression of various identities.

One popular theme among geographers researching immigrant populations within ethnic geography is transnationalism (Bailey, Wright, Mountz, and Miyares 2002; Miyares and Airriess 2007; Arreola 2007; Miyares 2007; Price 2007). Globalization and technological advances have allowed immigrant populations to maintain strong ties to their homelands while living elsewhere (Price 2007). Transnational identities may create a sense of “in-betweenness” among immigrants (Miyares and Airriess 2007; Price 2007), or in the case of those who cannot travel because of legal status, a sense of “permanent temporariness” (Bailey, Wright, Mountz, and Miyares 2002; Miyares 2007). Transnationalism is evident in the material culture, especially through remittance services; remittances are one of the most commonly cited forms of transnationalism, as money coming from one place

often contributes significantly to the economy of another (Arreola 2007; Price 2007). This is only one example of how transnationalism is manifested; others include increased rates of travel and communication between countries. Transnational ties between Framingham and Brazil, along with the ways in which these ties may influence the future landscape of downtown Framingham, is discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

Examining Brazilian immigration to Framingham, Massachusetts, in the context of ethnic geography produces new insights that are informed by current social and cultural theories. Examining the context for Brazilian immigration to Framingham and the Brazilian expressions of identity in the landscape that have resulted in place making contributes to the multidisciplinary work on Brazilian immigrants. Perhaps more importantly, it also uncovers the intentional and unintentional ways in which ethnic place making occurs and analyzes how this process can lead to tensions within the community. The goal of this thesis is to contribute to a broader discussion of ethnic geographies and how they constantly shape both the landscapes and local politics of towns across the United States.

CHAPTER ONE

BRAZILIANS ARRIVE IN FRAMINGHAM

Although other ethnic groups were present in downtown Framingham prior to the influx of Brazilian immigrants, none had altered the landscape of downtown after it had become predominantly vacant and neglected in the 1970s. In the 1980s and into the 1990s, downtown Framingham became an “incipient urban landscape of ethnic arrival” as Brazilians began to immigrate to the area. At this stage of ethnic place making, “the influx of a new ethnic group begins to alter an urban district’s demographic profile and cultural landscape, reflected visibly in the establishment of ethnically identified businesses, streetscapes, and social spaces” (Godfrey 2007, 333).

Initially, most Brazilian immigrants found work in existing American establishments and as house cleaners and landscapers. Although these jobs are still popular among the Brazilian population, by 1987 several immigrants had opened their own businesses downtown. These businesses clearly represented the Brazilian population; names like Expresso Valadares and Joa Brazil identified store owners with their places of origin in Brazil. As Brazilian entrepreneurs continued to open businesses downtown and fill the majority of vacant storefronts, the streetscape became an increasingly powerful symbol of the different Brazilian identities present in the area.

This chapter sets the scene for the thesis, describing what shaped downtown Framingham prior to the presence of the Brazilian community and explaining why

Brazilians migrated from their country of origin to the United States, and more specifically Framingham. After examining the factors influencing how and why downtown Framingham became a hub of Brazilian immigration, this chapter seeks to address the demographic and cultural landscape changes that Framingham experienced as an incipient urban landscape of ethnic arrival.

Setting the Scene: A Brief History of Downtown Framingham

Originally, Framingham Center in the central part of town was the hub of activity because of its role as a stagecoach stop on the Worcester Turnpike, which connected both Worcester and Framingham to Boston (Evans-Daly and Gordon 1997, 23). When the railroad station was built in South Framingham in the 1830s, however, this section of town quickly became the center of activity. The train connected the downtown area directly east to Boston and west to Worcester (Figure 1), and an additional four lines connected Framingham to surrounding towns. Downtown became an area where businesses flourished and people enjoyed theatres, nice restaurants, and nightlife activity. This prosperity continued into the first half of the 20th century, and downtown remained a cultural center with a movie theatre, a bowling alley, hotels, and retail outlets. Stores of all varieties, including the large retailers Sears, J.C. Penney and F.W. Woolworth Co. (Figure 2), made Framingham's downtown the primary commercial district. However, just as Framingham Center was marginalized by the advent of the railroad, downtown Framingham eventually

Figure 1: Location of Middlesex County and Framingham, Massachusetts, relative to Worcester and Boston.

suffered when the era of the shopping mall ushered in development along Route 9, which was once the Worcester Turnpike.

By the 1960s, downtown Framingham was becoming marginalized as Route 9, which brought shoppers towards the neighboring town of Natick, began to develop into a commercial hub. Shopper's World, one of the first shopping malls in the country, opened along Route 9 in 1951 with around 40 stores (Leit 2006, 23). In later years, the Framingham Mall and the Natick Mall attracted the majority of shoppers in Framingham, and stores like Kmart and Caldor met the needs of consumers who once traveled to downtown Framingham to shop at Sears, J.C. Penney or Woolworth's.

Figure 2: Downtown Framingham in 1953. Photo taken from the Memorial Building (see Figure 5 for location). Source: Framingham Historical Society.

Although some local businesses persisted into the 1970s (Figure 3), eventually the commercial developments along Route 9 took a toll on smaller businesses located in South Framingham. Between 1982 and 1992, downtown Framingham lost more than 100 businesses (LaBanca 1993); few businesses in downtown were able to survive during this time period, and vacancy rates in what the town has defined as the “Central Business District” soared (Figures 4 & 5).

In addition to the small businesses that disappeared from downtown, Framingham lost two major manufacturing plants that had been located in the area for years. The Dennison plant closed in the late 1980s, and the General Motors plants closed in 1989 (LaBanca 1993), adding to the increased vacancy downtown. As fewer

Figure 3: Downtown Framingham, late 1970s. Source: Framingham Historical Society.

Figure 4: The location of the Central Business District in relation to South Framingham, Framingham Center and the commercial activity along Route 9.

Figure 5: Detail map of the Central Business District. Numbers mark the location of Figures that were identifiable on the map.

people frequented the streets of South Framingham, drugs, homelessness, and prostitution became problems, and the safety of the area came into question. During this period immigrants from Puerto Rico began moving to downtown Framingham because of low rents. This population did not open many businesses downtown, however, and the commercial strip through the Central Business District remained relatively empty except for a few family owned businesses, like Panza Shoes and Fitts Insurance, which have been staples of downtown into the present. Over the next few decades, migration from Puerto Rico largely stabilized in Framingham as Brazilian immigration to the town soared.

In the early 1980s, about the same time that Brazilians began to arrive in Framingham, there was a movement to revitalize downtown Framingham and reclaim some of its previous success. Several individuals invested money in projects meant to attract new clientele to the area, including one project that involved renovating a historic building on Concord Street in an effort to turn it into a mini “Quincy Market”—a historical shopping plaza in Boston frequented by tourists. Although the renovations went through, the project was not successful in drawing business to downtown, and the individual who backed the project lost a great deal of money in his effort to reestablish downtown Framingham as a destination for consumers. Other ventures that took place in the 1980s, such as a new upscale restaurant and development near the train station, failed to bring in new business and eventually disappeared. Efforts to revitalize the downtown area and draw in customers from around Framingham, especially those outside of the downtown area with expendable

cash, have existed ever since downtown took a nosedive in the 1970s. Ironically, plans for “revitalization” continue to this day, despite the fact that the influx of Brazilian immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s led to a proliferation of new businesses downtown and ultimately a de facto revitalization (Figure 6). In 1997 Joel Millman reported that “all along Hollis Street, in fact, broken glass, vomit, and trash have given way to a thriving scene of new beauty parlors, lingerie stores, and magazine shops, almost all of them established by immigrants from Brazil” (1997b, 16).

Figure 6: Four of the Brazilian businesses on Concord Street that have contributed to the economic revitalization of downtown Framingham. (b) A Brazilian clothier fills the storefront which once housed J.C Penney.

Maria, a Brazilian immigrant who is currently opening up a new food-related shop in downtown Framingham, is following in the footsteps of her mother. When Maria's mother opened the first Brazilian restaurant in downtown Framingham in the mid-1980s, it was one of the only businesses downtown. Maria recalls one other Brazilian business downtown, a travel agency and convenience store that exists to this day. Other than that, Maria states that "downtown was empty at that time, with just that big store on Concord Street [Woolworth's] and a Spanish [*sic*] pizza place." It was so empty, in fact, that it had become a very dangerous place; high crime rates related to drugs and prostitution meant that Maria's brother had to escort patrons of the restaurant to their cars after dark. The best way Maria's family found to keep themselves safe was to befriend the drug dealers; this way, they were not targeted and the drug dealers actually offered them protection from other criminals. Over time, Maria saw downtown begin to change. Brazilians began to open more convenience stores selling items from Brazil, and then hair salons became a popular business venture. Eventually Brazilian entrepreneurs began to open other types of services, like travel agencies and real estate businesses. Now Maria says that downtown Framingham is "ninety percent changed" from when her mother first opened up her business in the area: "it looks better, it's cleaner, and people are more friendly."

In order to more fully understand the role that Brazilian immigrants, especially Brazilian business owners, have had on downtown Framingham, it is important to explore why they originally left Brazil to come to the United States and how they chose Framingham as their destination within the country.

Patterns of Brazilian Immigration

One of the most interesting aspects of Brazilian immigration to the United States, or anywhere else, is that historically Brazil has not been a sending country. In fact, the largest country in South America is more typically known as a destination for immigrants:

Whereas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Brazil received large numbers of immigrants from Europe and shortly thereafter benefited from Japanese emigration, in the post-war period the dynamics of its development were confined entirely within its own borders in terms of worker mobility for the expanding labor market.... Indeed, Brazil experienced a process that differed markedly from that of other Latin American countries such as Mexico, which exported increasing numbers of workers to the United States (Sales 2003, 20).

Before the 1980s, most Brazilians who left their locations of origin moved to other cities or states within the country, and the transition from in-migration to emigration is particularly interesting because migrating abroad is an “entirely new phenomenon and one that is out of character with Brazilian history and with Brazilian ethos” (Margolis 1994, 3). Although immigration to United States is “a phenomenon that [has] long been commonplace for Mexico and several Central American countries,” it is “unprecedented for Brazil” (Sales 2003, 13). While emigration may be motivated by a variety of reasons, heightened Brazilian immigration to the United States in the 1980s coincided with an economic crisis in Brazil.

Twentieth century Brazil experienced major economic turmoil, which seems to be closely linked to a heightened emigration from Brazil. For the majority of the century, Brazil experienced major growth in its industrial sector. Unfortunately, this

period of growth and prosperity came to an end in the 1970s because of the oil crises of 1973 and 1979 and the External Debt Crisis of the 1980s (Luna and Klein 2006, 37). These events halted Brazil's "long trend of growth, which had been 5.7 percent per annum by the last years of the 1970s" but "dropped to 2.1 percent in the last twenty years of the century. The post-1970s crisis was also accompanied in Brazil by a seemingly uncontrollable inflation and an ever increasing public debt" (Luna and Klein 2006, 37). The inflation rate was so high in the late 1980s that by 1989 it had reached five digits (Sales 2003, 27). It is clear now that the hyperinflation and economic problems Brazil faced in this period contributed directly to increased immigration of Brazilians to the United States (Margolis 1994; Sales 2003, 13).

Although the inflation rates of the 1980s and the economic turmoil that they represent may have been a catalyst for Brazilian immigration to the United States, the difference in wages was, and continues to be, a motivating factor for immigrants from Brazil. The difference between Brazil and the United States' minimum wage is dramatic; the minimum wage of 350 reais a month, the equivalent of \$163, is much less than the \$1,080 a month a worker can make in Massachusetts earning only minimum wage (Mineo 2006a). Some Brazilian immigrants plan to stay in the United States while they make their money, and then return to Brazil when they have enough to begin a business or own property in Brazil to collect rent on; in this way, Brazilians differ from many other immigrant populations in the United States in that a percentage of them "achieve their dreams and take them back home" (Mineo 2006a).

Although the economic situation in Brazil has improved dramatically since the late 1980s, Brazilian immigration to the United States did not taper off over the past few decades. In fact, the promise of higher wages encouraged a steadily increasing number of Brazilians to emigrate. In 2003-2004, 97,523 applications for visas to the United States were submitted by Brazilian residents; by 2005-2006, that number had almost doubled to 185,941 (Mineo 2006b). Although Brazilians are emigrating in large numbers to several different countries including Paraguay and Japan, the majority (42 percent) choose to come to the United States (City of Boston 2006). It is unclear how the current economic recession in the United States will affect Brazilian immigration to and emigration from the country. There is evidence to suggest that some immigrants may be returning to Brazil thanks to a weakened U.S. dollar and heightened presence of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the area; these issues are addressed later in this thesis.

Brazilian Immigration to Framingham

Brazilian immigration to the United States, and to Framingham, Massachusetts, reached a “significant level” (Sales 2003, 18) in the late 1980s (Margolis 1994). Although those writing in the early 1990s noted a decrease in the early part of that decade (Millman 1997a, Sales 2003), more recent data suggests that there was, in fact, a tremendous surge in Brazilian immigration to the United States between 1990 and 2000 (Table 1). This increase in Brazilian immigration over the three decades is reflective of broader immigration trends in the United States

Year	Number	Percentage
Before 1980	1,855	5.0%
1980-1989	6,665	18.2%
1990-2000	28,150	76.8%
Total	36,670	100.0%

Table 1: Number of Foreign-born Brazilians Resident in Massachusetts by Year of Entry.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau- Census 2000. Special tabulations for Brazilians residing in Massachusetts.

(Hirschman and Massey 2008, 1). Harder to determine than when they arrived, however, is exactly how many Brazilian immigrants there are in the United States, or in any particular state or town. This is partly because such a large percentage of Brazilian immigrants are in the country illegally and choose to avoid interaction with the U.S. government, including participating in the Census. Additionally, because Brazilians speak Portuguese, they “do not consider themselves Hispanic and would not identify themselves as such on a census form” (Price 2007, 191). These complications with documenting Brazilian immigrants via the census make it clear to researchers that “the United States Census underestimates the Brazilian population resident in America” (Sales 2003, 17). Maxine Margolis claims that “the official numbers—given the magnitude of immigration to the United States in those years [the 1980s] and the size of the Brazilian population as a whole—are, quite literally, a drop in the bucket” (1994, 13). The 2000 U.S. Census reports that 212,430 Brazilian-born individuals are residents of the United States, but the Brazilian Consulate in

Boston claimed there were 200,032 Brazilians living in the Boston area alone in 2002 (Acontece 2002).

According to 2000 U.S. Census data, New York, Massachusetts, and Florida are home to the majority of Brazilian-born immigrants in the United States. Although Florida has the highest number of foreign-born Brazilians among its residents (44,536), Massachusetts has the highest percentage of Brazilian immigrants (.58 percent of the state's total population). Of the towns and cities in Massachusetts with the largest Brazilian populations, Framingham's population has the highest percentage of Brazilian immigrants (Table 2). Although Framingham and Somerville, a city located just 3 miles north of Boston, have similar percentages of Brazilian residents, the Brazilian population in Somerville is much more dispersed than that of Framingham; the extremely high concentration of Brazilian immigrants in the downtown area is unparalleled in any other Massachusetts community (see Chapter 2, Figure 8). The 2000 Census numbers are much higher than those of the 1990 Census; "according to the 1990 U.S. Census, the number of Brazilians residing in Framingham was a mere 830, or 1.3 percent of the total population (65,000) and 11 percent of all foreigners (7,600)" (Sales 2003, 49). Estimates by the Boston Archdiocese released in 1993, however, claimed that there were 6,000 Brazilians in Framingham (Sales 2003, 49). Although the 2000 census reported that there are 3,500 Brazilians living in Framingham, other estimates claim that there are as many as 15,000 Brazilians currently living in the town (Torrens 2004).

Massachusetts Town/City	Brazilians as a percentage of total population	Number of Brazilians
Framingham	5.2%	3500
Somerville	5.0%	3870
Marlborough	3.8%	1388
Everett	3.4%	1278
Barnstable	1.9%	930
Revere	1.8%	846
Lowell	1.7%	1820
Medford	0.9%	520
Boston	0.6%	3594
Worcester	0.6%	1099

Table 2: The Ten Cities in MA with the Largest Brazilian Populations. Some census tracts in the town of Framingham have much higher percentages of Brazilian residents than that of the town as a whole (see Chapter 2, Figure 8). *Source: U.S. Census Bureau- Census 2000. Special tabulations for Brazilians residing in Massachusetts.*

The majority of Brazilians in Framingham come from the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, and approximately 40 percent of those from Minas are from the city of Governador Valadares (Mineo 2006c). Although Minas is a relatively prosperous state, 40 percent of the 270,000 residents of Governador Valadares live in poverty (Mineo 2006c). The city of Governador Valadares has sent so many of its people to the United States that a very large proportion of its economy is dependent on money sent back by those who have emigrated, and between 11 and 15 percent of Governador Valadares' population lives abroad (Mineo 2006d). The names of many Brazilian owned businesses in downtown Framingham reflect these significant ties to both Governador Valadares and Minas Gerais (Figure 7).

Figure 7: This storefront reflects the connection between downtown Framingham and Governador Valadares, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

The economy of Minas Gerais has seen such a boost from sending workers to Framingham that being the first Brazilian in Framingham has become a position of honor; it is also a role that has been claimed by more than one. In his 1997 book, Joel Millman reported that a man named Claudio Parreira was the first Brazilian to arrive in Framingham in 1971, but almost a decade later a newspaper article by Liz Mineo focuses on Oliveira Ramos, who also claims to have been the first Brazilian in Framingham in 1971 (2006d). Although it is not clear who the first Brazilian in Framingham was, 1971 marks the year when Brazilian immigration to Framingham began. It was not until the mid-1980s, however, that Brazilian immigration to Framingham truly picked up steam.

Why Massachusetts? Why Framingham?

Portuguese Language. Large numbers of emigrating Brazilians ended up in Massachusetts for several reasons. The most important of which was, arguably, the existing presence of a large Portuguese speaking population. Portuguese migrants had flocked to New England in earlier decades to work on whaling ships and in textile mills and shoe factories, and eventually Massachusetts became home to 800,000 Portuguese speakers (Millman 1997a, 219). In other words, Massachusetts became “the most Portuguese-speaking state in the United States” (Herring 2000, 360). The presence of so many Portuguese speakers resulted in organizations geared towards assisting that population, such as the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS). MAPS currently has offices in six Massachusetts communities, including Framingham. According to Joel Millman, a former Framingham resident and author of *The Other Americans: How Immigrants Renew Our Country, Our Economy, and Our Values*, other appealing characteristics of Massachusetts included “a booming service economy, a liberal electorate, and the tiny presence of the Immigration and Naturalization Service” (1997a, 219).

Housing and Job Availability. In regard to Framingham specifically, available housing and jobs attracted Brazilian immigrants. Although the town suffered economically when the manufacturing plants of Dennison and General Motors closed in South Framingham, these closures benefited newcomers to the town looking for inexpensive housing; “even if the factory work that fed a century of immigration is gone, the two-family homes, the triple deckers, and the bungalows that

rose within walking distance of Dennison's and GM are still there" (Millman 1997a, 230). Housing in South Framingham had historically been occupied by working class residents who were employed at the manufacturing plants, and this less expensive area of town eventually attracted Puerto Rican and Asian immigrants; "thus the south side soon had a population that was relatively poor, young and non-American" (Sales 2003, 51). The availability of inexpensive housing in South Framingham, especially compared to surrounding towns, appealed to the incoming Brazilian population. The fact that Framingham is close to more affluent communities may have also held some appeal, as many Brazilian laborers have found work in these nearby places.

The Brazilians in Framingham are employed mostly in the service sector, frequently earning wages as landscapers, babysitters, and house cleaners (Millman 1997a, 232). "Brazilians, by concentrating on self-employment, found the home-cleaning business recession-proof" (Millman 1997a, 232). Many of the Brazilian house cleaners who live in Framingham have extended their services into some of the more affluent suburbs of Boston, such as Wellesley, Natick, and Sudbury (Millman 1997a). These locations, which do not have the same immigrant population that Framingham does, are in need of reliable workers just the same. The commute from Framingham to these towns ranges between 10 and 23 minutes, and this makes the house cleaning business that much more appealing to those looking to make as much money per day as possible.

It is interesting to note that in addition to available jobs, housing, and language assistance, Brazilian immigration to America may also have been

influenced by an early connection between the United States and Governador Valadares. According to reporter Liz Mineo, “‘Fazer a America,’ or ‘To do America’ is an idea firmly rooted in the imagination of the inhabitants of Valadares since the 1940s, when American engineers came to Valadares to extract mica, a mineral used in electronic insulators. Their arrival, said several sociologists and immigration experts, was the starting point of the culture of migration in Valadares” (2006a). No matter what brought Brazilian immigrants to Framingham initially, it is important to note that an increasing Brazilian population itself perpetuated immigration to the town.

Chain Migration and Networking. Geographers acknowledge that “the flow of information from an ethnic enclave in the destination country functions as ‘feedback’ and increases the probability of continued migration in a chain or ‘cumulative causation’ fashion” (Airriess and Miyares 2007, 19). Immigration from Governador Valadares, and Minas Gerais in general, is a classic example of chain migration. This type of networking is perhaps the most important reason that so many Brazilians have settled in Framingham since the first immigrant from Brazil took up residence in the town in 1971; this influx of a new population is possible because “immigrant entrepreneurs and middlemen quickly recruit friends, family, and co-ethnics to new destination areas. Each pioneer immigrant community creates the potential for additional immigration through network-driven processes of cumulative causation” (Hirschman and Massey 2008, 10). In many cases the connections established by chain migration are more valuable to immigrant groups than job

opportunities because these networks “reduce the risks and costs of movement” for the newcomer (Airriess and Miyares 2007, 19).

Witnessing the success that those who live and work in Framingham are able to achieve in the form of new homes, cars and businesses in Governador Valadares, many Brazilians have been encouraged to seek their own fortunes in the United States (Millman 1997a; Mineo 2006a). The networks established in Framingham by waves of immigrants from Minas Gerais have made it easier for newcomers to the area; recent immigrants from Brazil know that there is a solid foundation of employment and available housing they have access to through those who have already made the journey from Governador Valadares to Framingham. Immigrants often stay with friends or relatives who have already established themselves in the new location and this security can be the deciding factor for those choosing a destination. One female interviewee stated that the reason she chose to come to Framingham over other towns was that she had an uncle and cousin she could stay with temporarily; she thinks that “most of us, we come where we have someone to accommodate us until we can go on our own.”

In addition to available jobs and places to stay, however, the networks provide a body of support for those who are newly separated from family and trying to adjust to life in a foreign place. The ability to attend church services in one’s native language or purchase foods from one’s country of origin in the local market are examples of opportunities that exist for those immigrating to a place with strong immigrant networks already in place. Many immigrant groups have benefited from

chain migration, and this process is one of the primary reasons that there are such high spatial concentrations of Puerto Ricans in the United States (Boswell and Jones 2007, 126), West Indians in Brooklyn (Vickerman 2007, 158), Salvadorans in Long Island (Miyares 2007, 183), and Vietnamese in New Orleans (Airriess 2002, 234).

Brazilians Enter the Local Economy

One of the greatest disparities between Framingham's Brazilian and non-Brazilian populations is in their respective levels of educational attainment. Of the ten Massachusetts towns and cities with the largest Brazilian populations, Framingham has the highest percentage (42.3) of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher. The Brazilian population of Framingham, however, is less likely than most of the other top ten locations to have the same level of educational attainment (8.8) and among them has the second lowest percentage of Brazilians with a high school degree or higher (60.9). This contrasts significantly with the education levels of the Brazilians in New York City; Maxine Margolis found that of that population "46 percent have attended university, and of these, 31 percent are university graduates. By way of comparison, only 24 percent of Americans have college degrees" (Margolis 1994, 88). This goes to show that immigrant populations, even those sharing a country of origin, often possess very different socioeconomic backgrounds.

In addition to the discrepancy between levels of educational attainment of the Brazilian and general populations of Framingham, there is also a large gap between the per capita incomes of the two groups. Like many other immigrants to the United

States, Brazilians in Framingham may “end up in relatively unskilled jobs compared with their occupations back home” (Sales 2003, 28). These unskilled jobs in the United States often pay more than what the immigrant was earning in Brazil. For many, the increased income is welcomed despite a drop in occupational status because it is accompanied by the possibility of “upward mobility seen as unattainable in Brazil” (Sales 2003, 27). For newcomers from Brazil, being a housecleaner, nanny, or landscaper is often a first step because they simply cannot seek out the jobs they are better qualified for. Marie Price found that “many educated South Americans who settle in the United States do not have their professional credentials fully recognized and are thus forced to obtain employment for which they are overqualified” (Price 2007, 198). This was the case for one interviewee, who was a certified educator in Brazil. When she immigrated to Framingham in the early 1980s, she cleaned houses in order to earn a living since she was not qualified to teach in the United States and did not know how to speak English. After living in the area and cleaning houses for several years, she decided to go back to school in order to become certified in the United States. She now teaches in the Massachusetts school system, but acknowledges that she was actually making more money as a housecleaner.

Although Brazilian newcomers often begin their experiences in Framingham as unskilled laborers, many go on to better their situation by going back to school or opening their own businesses. There are several housecleaning, landscaping, and stonework businesses owned by Brazilians who often employ other Brazilians as laborers. Many Brazilian businesses have opened up along the streets of downtown

Framingham; Brazilian immigrants have entered into the service economy with real estate and mortgage businesses as well as many retail operations that sell everything from Guaraná Antarctica (a Brazilian soda made from the guaraná plant) to clothing imported from Brazil. Several restaurants have also been opened downtown by Brazilians, including a very popular bakery that serves Brazilian specialties like pão de queijo (cheese bread) and has become a meeting place for the Brazilian population. It is, in fact, the presence of these businesses downtown that most visibly denotes downtown Framingham as a landscape of Brazilian ethnicity.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BRAZILIAN ETHNIC ENCLAVE

Over the course of the 1990s, downtown Framingham transitioned from an incipient urban landscape of ethnic arrival into a “consolidated urban landscape of an ethnic enclave,” the second type of urban ethnic landscape discussed by Godfrey (2007, 333). This stage occurs when an ethnic group has come to dominate an area demographically; for Brazilians in downtown Framingham, this transition was complete at the dawn of the twenty-first century. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of one South Framingham census tract was 57.4 percent Brazilian born (Figure 8); this is more than ten percent higher than any other area in the state. As impressive as this high percentage is, it is likely underestimated because of the illegal status of many Brazilians living in the area.

Once a place is dominated by an ethnic group, according to Godfrey’s archetypes, “the urban cultural landscape comes to include new and enduring community institutions, landmarks, and monuments to foster a coherent sense of place” that reflects the ethnic group (2007, 333). The fact that Brazilians are the demographic majority in South Framingham is evidenced in the streetscape by the profusion of Brazilian owned businesses, the storefronts of which are rife with practical and symbolic reflections of Brazil. In addition to the Brazilian businesses, many other measures of ethnic place making are present: non-profit organizations

Brazilians in Middlesex County, MA 2000

Figure 8: Brazilian percentage of population of census tracts in Middlesex County. South Framingham has the highest percentage of Brazilians (57.4 percent).

meant to assist the Brazilian community and Brazilian business owners, such as BRAMAS (The Brazilian American Association), are located downtown, as are many churches that offer services in Portuguese. Although these institutions are important indicators of a large Brazilian population downtown and the development of the area as an ethnic enclave, the “full-fledged cultural imprint” (Godfrey 2007, 336) of Brazilian ethnicity downtown is found in the commercial streetscape of downtown Framingham.

The demonstration of Brazilian identities is primarily among the businesses located on either side of Concord Street as it travels through the center of downtown as well as on Hollis and Irving Streets as they converge into Concord Street from the south. For several blocks, the streetscape is alive with images of Brazil: Brazilian flags hang prominently in windows and outside of buildings, signs in Portuguese far outnumber those in English, and pictures of Brazil, maps of the country, and fliers for Brazilian cultural events can be found in many storefront windows (Figure 9). The Brazilian presence in downtown Framingham quickly becomes obvious to anyone passing through, whether by car or on foot. Of course, those on foot are likely to experience additional manifestations of Brazilian ethnicity; conversations on the street are more likely to occur in Portuguese than English and advertisements for events targeting the Brazilian population make one aware that the community extends beyond the businesses one is passing by.

Landscape Signatures of Ethnicity

Geographers analyze ethnic landscapes with the understanding that “collective patterns of identity can be imprinted on landscapes and places over time, transforming the landscape. Subsequent landscapes bear the imprint of the strength of the ethnic group to re-create the landscape with material and non-material symbols and forms of social interaction” (Berry and Henderson 2002, 7). For the Vietnamese community of “Versailles,” located near New Orleans, material symbols include churches, vegetable gardens, and retail spaces as signatures of Vietnamese ethnicity (Airriess 2002); in Framingham, churches and retail spaces are the major markers of ethnicity. In addition to material landscape elements such as these, however, there are also non-material symbols of ethnicity to be found in ethnic landscapes. Language is one such non-material element, although it often manifests in signage and therefore becomes a physical marker as well. The expression of language is important because “in a sense, speaking a language of an origin region in a destination country can be a substitute for that ‘lost’ place” (Miyares and Airriess 2007, 8). Although there are many different landscape signatures of ethnicity, they all represent a connection to a place of origin shared by those in the community, which in turn becomes an element of the landscape in the place of settlement. Because the “cultural landscape is a visual manifestation of the culture that created it and can be interpreted or read as a cultural autobiography” (Airriess 2002, 228), landscape signatures of an ethnic group are valuable objects of analysis when studying a specific community.

Figure 9: A common sight: the signs posted on the door of this downtown store are all in Portuguese and exhibit a strong presence of the colors of the Brazilian flag.

The Retail Streetscape

In many studies of ethnic landscapes by geographers, commercial streetscapes are the primary landscapes of ethnic representation (Wood 1997; Airriess 2002; Oberle 2004; Miyares 2004, 2007; Arreola 2007). Ethnic commercial centers serve the needs of the immigrant population, and once an ethnic group is well established in a place its “businesses typically cater to a diverse array of ethnic needs that include not only grocery stores, restaurants, and basic services, but also such higher-order businesses as doctors, insurance, and legal services” (Godfrey 2007, 336). In addition to serving the material needs of the ethnic community, commercial streetscapes also assist immigrants adapt to their new surroundings and foster ties to the homeland by contributing a sense of familiarity to their daily lives. For the Vietnamese refugee community located on the outskirts of New Orleans, Louisiana, “the community’s commercial strip is central to the adaptive process of the entire community” even though business owners make up a “small fraction of the refugee population” (Airriess 2002, 230). By providing the Vietnamese community with familiar “food, music, dress, and other services, these commercial establishments allow for the reproduction of Vietnamese culture and thus a more familiar sense of place” (Airriess 2002, 230). An immigrant community that has reached the ethnic enclave stage and transformed a place to reflect their roots has successfully created an “enclave streetscape” where “a single national group dominates the landscape. Although goods and services may be advertised to all groups in the immediate neighborhood, there is no question about the dominant group” (Miyares 2004, 157). Once an enclave

streetscape has been established, it is impossible to deny the broader demographic, political, and economic changes taking place in an immigrant community.

Downtown Framingham had already undergone many changes by the time Brazilians began immigrating to the area; commerce downtown had suffered tremendously when a much larger shopping district was established on Route 9 (as discussed in Chapter 1). These changes, in turn, made the transformation of downtown Framingham into an ethnic enclave possible as Brazilian immigrants took advantage of the low rents and high availability of commercial buildings and rapidly embedded themselves in the economy of downtown. This phenomenon is not unique to Brazilians in Framingham: Mexican-Latin shopping streets are common in places where there are a large number of Mexican immigrants and “typically, [these areas have] been abandoned by Anglo or non-Hispanic merchants who relocate to suburban shopping centers” (Arreola 2007, 108). Just as the “business-scapes of Reno [Nevada] represent” the economic and political changes that occurred when Latinos moved into the area (Berry 2004, 225), the enclave streetscape of downtown Framingham represents the changes that have occurred in the area since the arrival of the Brazilian community.

Once Brazilians began coming to Framingham en masse around 1980, it was not long before Brazilian businesses began opening up. By 1987, there were a few businesses on Concord Street owned by Brazilian entrepreneurs, including a travel agency that is still in business and the first Brazilian restaurant in Framingham. Vacancy of storefronts in downtown Framingham was very high at this point in the

1980s, and continued into the 1990s. In the early 1990s, 50 percent of buildings in downtown Framingham were empty; by 1996, however, there were hardly any vacancies downtown (Sales 55, 2003). Today, there continue to be very few vacancies, and although not all businesses downtown are Brazilian-owned, the majority certainly are. Brazilian businesses located downtown now include restaurants, jewelry stores, remittance senders, clothing retailers, beauty parlors, furniture stores, moving companies, travel agencies, and a real estate agency and mortgage lender. The prevalence of Brazilian businesses in Framingham's Central Business District results in an area with an abundance of landscape signatures of Brazilian ethnicity and confirms the role of downtown Framingham as an enclave streetscape.

The most prominent signature of Brazilian place making in downtown Framingham is the omnipresence of the Brazilian flag. Like many symbols of ethnicity, flags "simultaneously function as reminders of past place as well as adaptive features of present place" (Airriess 2002, 248). Most commonly flags are prolific within the nation of their origin; when found in foreign places, however, flags can become a powerful symbol of a homeland left behind. According to Wilbur Zelinsky, flags are a type of emblem; an emblem, he states, "combines the functions of sign and symbol: it is a label for specific objects, but it can also contain emotive values" (Zelinsky 1984, 277). This is certainly true of the role that the Brazilian flag plays in downtown Framingham; it at once indicates that a business is owned by a Brazilian or welcoming to the Brazilian population, but also evokes a sense of

familiarity for Brazilian patrons that may connect them to a deeper cultural undercurrent. Foreign flags are frequently found in ethnic enclaves; Zelinsky notes that the colors of the Italian flag have “been used with increasing frequency recently to denote things Italian in signs and advertisements within the United States” (1984, 279). It is no surprise, then, that the Brazilian national flag is the most common landscape signature of Brazilian identity found downtown (Figure 10).

Figure 10: A Brazilian flag flies proudly along with the U.S. flag in downtown Framingham.

Almost without exception, Brazilian business owners in downtown Framingham display the flag of their native country in the window or on the sign of their operation. According to interviews, the presence of the flag indicates a number of different things. It certainly represents the sentiment that members of the Brazilian community are welcome within the establishment. It also indicates that Portuguese is spoken within the business. It does not, however, necessarily mean that the business is Brazilian owned and operated. A local dentist's office displays a Brazilian flag, faded from years of hanging in the window, to indicate that there is a Portuguese speaker inside (Figure 11a), and non-Brazilian business owners may fly the Brazilian flag in order to "attract the attention of prospects in the Brazilian immigrant community" (Sales 2003, 54). According to research conducted by Teresa Sales in downtown Framingham, the Brazilian flag also represents the success of the Brazilian business owner (2003, 54). Although the Brazilian flag is prevalent (Figure 11), not all storefronts display this marker of Brazilian nationality. Several of the businesses that lack Brazilian flags are owned by immigrants from other places.

One Brazilian business owner, however, does not display the Brazilian flag anywhere in his business because he believes that Brazilian businesses that do display the flag may be inadvertently preventing non-Brazilians from patronizing their businesses. This sentiment was echoed by a non-Brazilian who works in a downtown business; David, an insurance agent, claims that some people interpret the abundance of Brazilian flags and lack of English signage in storefronts as a refusal of Brazilian business owners to assimilate to American culture. Although the Brazilian flag is

Figure 11: Brazilian flags abound downtown. (a) Dentist's office; (b) and (c) storefronts; (d) a delivery truck spotted on Concord Street.

often displayed along with the American flag, some residents of Framingham take offence to this as well. In 2007, the town instituted a \$300 fine for flying a foreign flag at the same height as or above the American flag (Hager 2007). Regardless of how some may interpret the use of the Brazilian flag, the fact of the matter is that the Brazilian population provides the majority of business to downtown operations and is the target of most downtown advertising; that non-Brazilian businesses display Brazilian flags is a testament to this.

The Social Landscape

While the Brazilian flags found in storefronts in downtown Framingham are the most noticeable proof that the area is a Brazilian enclave streetscape, evidence of a large Brazilian population is also found in the social landscape. The presence of conversations and signage in Portuguese language, community institutions that cater to the Brazilian population, and public monuments that acknowledge the presence of Brazilians and Framingham are all indicative of what a large role the Brazilians in Framingham have come to play in the downtown area.

Language. Many Framingham residents who do not live in South Framingham only venture through downtown by car while commuting to other locations, and although it may be hard for drivers to experience the nuances of the cultural landscape, they most certainly are able to observe the flags that decorate the area. For those who walk through downtown, however, there are other cues that indicate a significant Brazilian presence downtown. First, many of the conversations one overhears walking down Concord Street take place in Portuguese, the national language of Brazil. Inside any of the Brazilian owned businesses, Portuguese is predominantly spoken. According to census data, most Brazilians in Framingham speak Portuguese at home. By the time an immigrant community has created an ethnic enclave “local institutions of church and state may offer bilingual services and ceremonies in native languages” (Godfrey 2007, 336). Almost all downtown churches offer services in Portuguese, and Portuguese speakers are hired in order to make non-

Brazilian businesses more accessible to the community of downtown Framingham. Recently, the first Portuguese speaking police dispatcher was hired.

Language, “often cited as that single marker critical to maintaining ethnic identity” (Miyares and Airriess 2007, 8), also manifests in the visual landscape. All Brazilian businesses advertise themselves in the Portuguese language, and signs and posters are almost exclusively Portuguese along the stretch of Concord Street that travels through the Central Business district. Even non-Brazilian businesses and services include Portuguese translations on their storefronts in order to better serve the Brazilian community (Figure 12). This is a key marker of ethnic place making, as “signage in a foreign language or dialect illustrates this more comprehensive and complex ethnic transition” towards a consolidated landscape of an ethnic enclave (Godfrey 2007, 336).

Figure 12: This downtown health center welcomes people in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Community Institutions. In addition to vibrant commercial streetscapes, ethnic enclaves often incorporate “enduring community institutions, landmarks, and monuments to foster a coherent sense of place” (Godfrey 2007, 333). In Framingham, the most prominent Brazilian community institutions are the various Brazilian churches downtown. Churches frequently play a central role in immigrant communities: for Vietnamese immigrants in New Orleans (Airriess 2002, 237), Samoans in Los Angeles (Koletty 2002, 141), Puerto Ricans in Cleveland (Benedict and Kent 2004, 199), and countless other ethnic groups, churches are a vital way of adapting to a new place and maintaining traditions from the homeland. At the same time that they began opening businesses and transforming the material landscape, Brazilians in Framingham sought religious fulfillment and community connections in church congregations.

Since the advent of Brazilian immigration to Framingham, over twenty Brazilian churches have been established in Framingham (Adair 2005). Some congregations meet in storefronts downtown (Figure 13) and a few have been able to purchase existing churches. Many parishes experienced changes in their populations as Brazilian immigration took hold, and “in 1992 the Catholic missionary order of Scalabrinians sent Father Roque Pattusi, a Brazilian of Italian ancestry, to minister to the new and growing Brazilian segment of the traditionally Italian St. Tarcisius congregation” (Herring 2000, 360). This parish is now one of the most popular Brazilian churches in Framingham. In another case, a Brazilian congregation transformed an existing congregation much as Brazilian business owners revitalized

downtown storefronts. When the Grace Congregational Church, located downtown close to the Town Hall, could no longer pay the bills after years of losing members, it was bought by the Comunidade Presbiteriana Nova Vida (New Life Presbyterian Church) in 2005. Having been founded in 1873 by seceding members of the Plymouth Church (Adair 2005), Grace Congregational Church was in many ways a vestige of Framingham's early history; the Comunidade Presbiteriana Nova Vida, founded by Manoel Oliveira and made up of over 300 members (Adair 2005), is representative of the new face of downtown Framingham (Figure 14).

Figure 13: This church on Hollis Street is one of the many Brazilian storefront churches in downtown Framingham.

Figure 14: A Brazilian congregation bought this Union Avenue church in 2005.

The Framingham Public Library, located downtown, has become a major resource for the Brazilian population and was adapted to fit the needs of the community. A section of the library is dedicated to Portuguese language books (Figure 15) and the library occasionally displays presentations of material relevant to Brazilian history. In addition, the library is a place for immigrants to learn English, find materials on services available to them (Figure 16), see movies in their native language, and attend workshops on such topics as workplace safety.

Figure 15: The Portuguese language section of the Framingham Public Library.

Figure 16: Informational handouts provided by the Framingham Public Library. (a) “The library of all,” an explanation of materials available to library card holders; (b) “U.S. Citizenship,” a list of library resources pertaining to becoming a U.S. citizen.

Monuments. Although downtown Framingham lacks large scale cultural monuments, such as the “Dragon Gate” that marks the entrance to Chinatown in San Francisco (Godfrey 2007, 340), the town has made some effort to represent the immigrant population of downtown in small monuments placed in the town common (Figure 17) or in front of the Town Hall. These tributes to the cultural makeup of downtown rarely identify Brazilians specifically, and do not reflect the major role that the Brazilians entrepreneurs have played in bringing the downtown business district

Figure 17: This granite “bench” is one of a series located in the downtown Common intended to honor Framingham’s history. This bench focuses on Framingham’s role as a receiver of immigrants and states “The name Framingham means ‘place of strangers.’ Framingham has been welcoming strangers from all over the world for centuries.”

back to life. The fact that there are few public monuments honoring Brazilian nationality may be explained by the fact that there is minimal political organization on the part of the Brazilian community. San Francisco’s Chinese population has been well established in Chinatown since the 1800s, and after the earthquake in 1906, the “ethnic Chinese largely financed, directed, and marketed the reconstruction of Chinatown” (Godfrey 2007, 338). This level of financial independence is not experienced in downtown Framingham. Although individual business owners have been very successful, there have been no successful cooperative efforts within the Brazilian community to erect any special architectural monuments to honor their nation of origin.

Some ethnic communities utilize art to express cultural identities; for Dominicans in Washington Heights, Manhattan, “public art, such as murals, reflects pride in community and culture, and the themes evidenced in murals target the next

generation, calling for pride and strength in the transnational character of Washington Heights” (Miyares 2004, 160). Even this sort of public art is lacking in downtown Framingham. Perhaps because Brazilian business owners rarely own the properties they occupy, or perhaps for other reasons, murals, sculptures, and other public art forms are generally absent from the area. For this reason, the streetscape and shop windows remain the most prominent expression of Brazilian identities in downtown Framingham.

The Residential Landscape

For many immigrant communities, residential landscapes, in addition to commercial streetscapes and community spaces, contain landscape signatures of ethnicity. Mexican American barrios in Texas, Arizona, and California are often characterized simultaneously by “brightly colored houses, fences enclosing house properties, colorful murals in residential and commercial areas, and ethnic shopping streets” (2007, 107), for example. In Cleveland, Ohio, religious shrines, flags, political signs, house colors, and specific types of fencing are ethnic markers in Puerto Rican residential areas (Benedict and Kent 2004, 2002). Samoan homes in Southern California may be identified by the types of plants found in their gardens; “the assemblage of exotic plants found around the home exterior... reflects a culture literally transplanted” (Koletty 2002, 136).

Some ethnic enclaves, however, lack any major landscape signatures of ethnicity in their residential areas. Although Vietnamese communities exist in

Northern Virginia, the residential areas of these enclaves are not visibly identifiable as Vietnamese (Wood 1997, 62) and “in a city like New York, where residents have little control over residential façade hue, the use of color and other public symbols such as religious iconography are incorporated into the economic streetscape rather than into the house” (Miyares 2004, 147). In communities where most inhabitants are renters, “it is often difficult to discern the presence of an ethnic group by looking at residential housescapes” (Miyares 2004, 157). There are many residential areas of downtown Framingham, and although residents of the area are more than fifty percent Brazilian, these areas are practically devoid of any landscape markers of Brazilian ethnicity.

Although the Brazilian flag is omnipresent along the business streetscape in downtown Framingham, it is conspicuously absent from the residential areas that surround the Central Business District and house the majority of Brazilian immigrants in Framingham. When asked about the lack of Brazilian flags in predominantly Brazilian neighborhoods, interviewees gave several possible reasons why the immigrant community may be hesitant to display the flag. According to one account, Brazilians are merely not accustomed to displaying the flag prominently like Americans are, although the Brazilian flag is now often found on clothing and featured prominently in popular culture. This claim is supported by Wilbur Zelinsky’s observation that “I am told that the private display of the national flag in Brazil is exceedingly uncommon” (1984, 279). This explanation does not account for the abundance of Brazilian flags among the businesses, however, and does not justify

why business owners would be so much more comfortable displaying the Brazilian flag than residents.

A more plausible explanation, offered by a female business owner, suggests that Brazilian residents do not wish to attract attention to themselves or their immigrant status. Brazilians who are not in the county legally do not want to advertise themselves, and those who are here legally may decide not to display flags publicly because of anti-immigrant sentiments that exist to some degree in Framingham and reflect the national attention being given to immigration right now. The female business owner stated that not long ago, Brazilian flags were commonly displayed on cars and houses, but friends have expressed that fears of being targeted now prevent them from these public displays of Brazilian identity. Business owners, who are more likely to have obtained legal status than other immigrants, may not be affected by the same fears as residents in the area, and this is most likely the reason that ethnic place making is found almost exclusively in the business streetscape.

Although permanent markers of Brazilian ethnicity may be absent from the residential landscape of downtown Framingham, there is occasional evidence of the demographic dominance of the Brazilian population. This includes such things as courier trucks with Brazilian flag logos parked in the streets, “For Sale” signs that indicate the advertising realtor speaks Portuguese, and business names on vehicles that reflect Brazilian origin (Figure 18). These subtle clues in the residential landscape contrast with the overt display of Brazilian ethnicity in commercial zones.

(a)

(b)

Figure 18: Among the few markers of Brazilian identity in residential areas of downtown Framingham are (a) a “For Sale” sign that indicates the realtor speaks Portuguese and (b) a truck that sports business information for a company named “Minas Marble and Granite.”

As South Framingham developed from an incipient urban landscape of ethnic arrival into a consolidated urban landscape of an ethnic enclave, the landscape of downtown came to reflect the Brazilian population in a way that no immigrant community had ever been reflected there before. The primary streets of the Central Business District were transformed into an enclave streetscape, and it has become virtually impossible to deny that Brazilians are the majority population of downtown Framingham. Brazilian flags, Portuguese signage, and the proliferation of references to a foreign homeland are evidence of this change, and as discussed in the next chapter, not everyone is comfortable with the ways in which the Brazilian community has altered downtown Framingham. As one local reporter put it, “every wave of immigration to this country over the last three centuries has had significant, long-term impacts. The Brazilian migration to Massachusetts has made—and continues to make—changes in our region, some good, some bad” (Lodge 2006).

CHAPTER THREE

DOWNTOWN FRAMINGHAM: A LANDSCAPE OF ETHNIC CONTENTION

The presence of Brazilian businesses in downtown Framingham has renewed the economy of the area and brought new vitality to the community. Great changes have taken place in South Framingham over the course of the past three decades, and although many people appreciate the ways in which the Brazilian population has transformed this place, the changes have also caused apprehension for some residents of the town. It is common that changes to place create anxiety (Cresswell 2004, 49), and this is certainly true in places that have been transformed by immigrants from foreign countries. The anxiety and frustrations felt by both the immigrant and native populations often become evident in the landscape itself, and in turn place becomes the arena in which these tensions are played out. This chapter analyzes several key issues that have caused frustrations for the Brazilian residents of Framingham and discusses how some non-Brazilian residents of the town have reacted to the dramatic changes to the landscape of downtown Framingham that have occurred as a result of Brazilian place making.

Godfrey's third type of ethnic landscape is the "defensive urban landscape of ethnic contention," where "in districts undergoing urban revitalization and gentrification, established ethnic groups often resist displacement by means of diverse political strategies and defensive cultural landscape elements" (2007, 333). Godfrey

notes that this stage of contention is often experienced in areas of “invasion and succession,” where one or more ethnic groups begin to settle in an area previously dominated by a different ethnic population. The arrival of a new ethnic group to an area that has previously been home to another minority group can often cause conflict; the appearance of Korean and Hispanic populations in areas of Los Angeles, California, that had previously been occupied mostly by African-Americans played a significant role in the 1992 riots that occurred in that city (Johnson Jr., Farrell Jr., and Guinn 1997). Although it is less common for ethnic tensions to manifest in areas that have experienced “abandonment and replacement” (Godfrey 2007, 345), that is indeed what is happening in downtown Framingham. At a time when town residents had practically abandoned downtown Framingham, Brazilian immigrants began to fill the empty business fronts and housing units in the area. Despite the fact that Brazilian business owners and patrons have revitalized the downtown economy, the political institution in Framingham fails to acknowledge the progress Brazilian business owners have made in transforming the downtown and presses on with attempts to attract a new population to the area (Leit 2006) as though downtown were still in its abandoned stage.

Brazilians in downtown Framingham are not being displaced by active urban revitalization, but they are resisting plans for revitalizing downtown that are already affecting them. Although a few very active business owners have tried to encourage the town to include Brazilians in the planning process, there is certainly no evidence of “diverse political strategies” (Godfrey 2007, 333), nor is there any visible evidence

of defensiveness marked on the landscape as of yet. Often times, the contention between the ethnic group and the dominant culture manifests in graffiti (Cresswell 1996), but graffiti remains relatively absent from the landscape of downtown Framingham. This is somewhat surprising considering the number of stresses that Brazilians immigrants are now facing; businesses are struggling and fear is on the rise as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has taken a more active role in the area. However, the lack of graffiti and other markers of contention on the landscape may be absent for the same reason that Brazilian flags are not found in the residential landscape; fear of arrest and deportation may prevent Brazilian immigrants, many of who are of illegal status, from making public, and illegal, statements about their predicament. If tensions between the town government and Brazilian business owners continue to grow, and if the Brazilian population continues to shrink, it is unclear how the existing conflicts may manifest in the landscape. For now, though, there are more subtle ways that the political issues facing the Brazilian population are evident in the landscape of downtown Framingham.

Revitalization Efforts Downtown

Different plans for revitalization of downtown Framingham have been proposed since the era of decline in the 1970s and early 1980s. The problem with current plans for renewal is that they basically ignore the impromptu revitalization that has taken place over the past thirty years as Brazilian businesses have restored economic vitality to the downtown area. Over the past few years, plans for

revitalizing downtown have actually displaced a large number of business owners, the majority of whom are Brazilian. Additionally, if the plans to revamp the historic Arcade building (Figures 19 & 20) downtown become a reality, more may be displaced. The Arcade Project “is a \$60 million mixed-use new construction and rehabilitation project scheduled to begin in spring 2006 that will rehabilitate the four historic downtown buildings on Concord Street and construct a new residential structure and six-story parking garage” (Leit 2006, 32). In the process of preparing for this project, which was proposed in 2004 and has yet to begin due to funding issues (McDonald 2008), over 40 businesses, mostly Brazilian, were displaced from the second floor of the Arcade building. The fact that little warning or assistance was provided for these displaced businesses hints at the disregard that the project developers and the town in general have shown the Brazilian population throughout the planning process.

The revitalization project raises several questions about the identity of downtown Framingham and who has control over how that identity is formed. Although the downtown area has been transformed into an ethnic landscape by the presence of Brazilian businesses and landscape markers of Brazilian ethnicity, plans for revitalization do not recognize the significant impact that Brazilians have had downtown. One newspaper article states that “sharing the sentiment of town officials, developers hope the Arcade project, which was approved three years ago by the Planning Board, will change the face of downtown” (Mineo 2007a). As hopeful and

Figure 19: The Arcade Building, 1979. Source: Framingham Public Library.

Figure 20: The Arcade building (2007) is the target of proposed revitalization. A few businesses remain on the first floor, but the second story, which once housed many small Brazilian businesses, is now mostly empty in preparation for proposed renovation.

innocent as this stance may sound to anyone who is not familiar with downtown Framingham, it is a slap in the face to the Brazilian business owners who have invested time and money in turning downtown Framingham around. This position speaks volumes about the town's approach to economic revitalization, however, and "it follows that the Arcade Project, and the revitalization process in general, is not simply about bringing in more successful businesses. Rather, it is about bringing in the *right* kinds of business to serve different demographics. Coupled with the new residential population, this is the mechanism through which downtown's identity change will be accomplished" (Leit 2006, 70-71, emphasis in original).

Demographic change, such as the influx of an immigrant population, often causes distress for those who have a fixed and specific notion of what a place should look like, and conflict often results "when established groups and leaders resist change and take a hard-line approach to traditional community standards" (Bach 1993, 160). In some cases a hard-line approach means allowing English-only signs in businesses, like in Monterey Park, California (Bach 1993, 160), but in Framingham it means favoring development that provides the non-immigrant population with incentives to invest in and reclaim a part of downtown Framingham while simultaneously ignoring the Brazilian business owners who brought new life to the area. This was not the only viable option for bolstering the economy of downtown Framingham, however. In his research on the town's approach to urban revitalization, Jonathan Leit, a master's student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, found that a revitalization plan that included, and in fact worked with, the existing ethnic

economy of downtown was just as viable as a large-scale gentrification project. He claims that:

While some observers might overlook the economic potential of the immigrant business community in Framingham, planners and economic practitioners know that ethnic businesses go through stages of development, and such a nascent economy as that of the Brazilians in Framingham certainly requires time and financial and technical support to develop and eventually serve non-ethnics. The community's social, human, and cultural capital that exist in their ethnic economy are unmistakable assets upon which a larger economy can grow. In addition, because downtown Framingham possesses such a sizeable immigrant business population with an established and growing customer base, a revitalization model that builds upon what already exists represents a relatively low-risk approach (2006, 53).

The fact that the town did not pursue this option leaves the Brazilian business owners wondering "why loyal merchants who toughed it out in the 'unwanted downtown' during the economic downturn are now being 'ignored' at a time when revitalization is being promoted" (MacCormack 2004).

To be fair, there is little evidence that the town's planning board is participating in explicit discrimination of Brazilian business owners. It is possible that in the process of preparing for the Arcade Project, assisting displaced Brazilian business owners was simply overlooked. Part of the problem may be that there are very few Brazilian business owners who think as broadly as the town planning board. When the Framingham Downtown Renaissance group, which includes the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce and the Danforth Museum of Art, was formed, several people questioned why there were so few representatives of Brazilian businesses. Ilma

Paixao, then president of the Brazilian American Association (BRAMAS), told a local news reporter that:

most of the Brazilians who own downtown businesses keep to themselves and tend to go to work and come home, not thinking about the effect their involvement in a downtown improvement effort could have on the town as a whole or the region. She said she thinks they would be happy to get more involved and be more a part of the initiative, if only someone told them more about it and what to do (MacCormack 2006).

The fact of the matter is, though, that the political institution of Framingham is working to bring significant change to downtown, and since many of the Brazilian businesses currently operating in the area have been there for several decades, it would have been appropriate for town officials to actively include these establishments in the “revitalization” process.

Increased Immigration and Customs Enforcement Presence

Aside from vacancies in the Arcade building, there may not be any explicit evidence on the streets of downtown Framingham that there are tensions brewing between Brazilian and non-Brazilian residents, but certain events have made these tensions very clear. Although it took ICE a while to identify downtown Framingham as a hotbed of illegal immigration, it seems as if the area is now a target for crackdowns on illegal immigrants. In addition to the national attention the issue of illegal immigration has received in the past few years, Brazilians in Framingham are attempting to cope with mounting local attention to the issue. This attention has

become increasingly negative in the past few years; according to one scholar, “although anti-immigrant sentiments may have been visible before 2001, after the events of September 11 they have become more public and strident” (Massey 2008, 350). This is not lost on Brazilians in downtown Framingham. In fact, Wallace, whose business was one of the first Brazilian owned operations to open in downtown Framingham in 1987, states that “things changed everywhere after 9/11.” He believes that the attitude towards immigrants has shifted in the past decade, and that this has contributed to some return migration on the part of Brazilians in Framingham.

No matter what factors have put Framingham in the spotlight, there is no doubt that immigrants are more afraid now than in the past regarding their immigrant status. A recent ICE sting, which was based out of Framingham and lasted for more than a year, culminated in the arrest of 27 illegal immigrants when they attempted to pick up documents that they purchased from an undercover ICE agent in Chelsea, Massachusetts (Mineo 2007b). Arrests of those caught driving without a license have increased over the past two years in Framingham (Mineo 2007b), and code enforcements, which target overcrowded housing, also generate concern within the immigrant community in Framingham.

The Framingham Police Department has made efforts to reach out to the Brazilian community in order to protect it more efficiently, but these efforts are somewhat overshadowed by the fact that two Framingham Police officers were recently trained by the ICE to enforce immigration laws (Mineo 2007c). The Framingham Police Department held a series of meetings beginning in the summer of

2007 that were intended to reach out to the Brazilian community. Because fears of deportation may prevent illegal immigrants from contacting the police in case of emergency or reporting a crime, these meetings were an attempt to “help bridge the gap between the Brazilian community and police” (Mineo 2007d). After the last of the sessions between police and the Brazilian community, several Brazilian participants were feeling positive about the situation, and an article by journalist Liz Mineo quotes an American husband of a Brazilian woman saying that “it’s a good step. Police are trying to show the Brazilian community they’re not there to get them” (2007e). This man’s opinion may in part be a result of an assurance by Lt. Paul Shastany of the Framingham Police Department that “we’re not empowered to enforce immigration laws” (Mineo 2007d). This statement may have been true when it was made, but less than three weeks later two Framingham Police officers completed their ICE training in the enforcement of immigration laws.

Angelina, a Brazilian immigrant and long-time business owner in downtown Framingham, has been extremely active in the community. She is often cited in newspaper articles about the Brazilian community, and was one of the Brazilian community leaders invited to take part in the meetings hosted by the police department. Angelina is frustrated by the financial stress brought on by a decrease in business over the past year, and she is particularly upset with the town government and the police department. She feels that by participating in the meetings with the police department she was actually assisting the town in a public relations scheme that was meant to distract people from the fact that the police were being trained for

the ICE. Although ICE presence in Framingham may have been inevitable, it certainly marks a new era in Brazilian immigration to the area. It has become apparent to the federal government, and to most Framingham residents, that Brazilians are the dominant population in South Framingham. The demographic and landscape changes in Framingham may be welcome by some, but for various people these changes have caused anxiety and, in some cases, extreme reactions towards the “new” population.

Reactions to Changes in Population and Place

Over the past few decades, a larger number of immigrants have been settling in places that have not historically been considered “gateway” locations (Hirschman and Massey 2008). These places include rural locations in the Midwest and suburbs of the cities that were once the primary destination for new arrivals. Framingham is an example of this second kind of alternative destination. Originally, Brazilians were drawn to Boston because of the Portuguese speaking community already existing there; as more and more Brazilians decided to come to Massachusetts, many of them branched out and began settling in surrounding towns. The fact that immigration is a fairly new phenomenon in many smaller communities means that people who have lived in these towns their whole lives are coming into contact with new ethnic populations. It also means that the issue of immigration has become more pressing to these communities than it had been in the past:

During the first few decades after the post-1965 wave of immigration began, most native-born Americans had relatively little personal contact with immigrants.... There was, of course, an intense national debate in the 1970s and 1980s over immigration policy, immigrant adjustment, and a widespread perception that America's borders were 'broken,' but during this period these conditions were generally distant from the day-to-day lives of most Americans. Although immigration may have been viewed as a 'crisis,' for many citizens it was a crisis in the abstract... the situation in the early twenty-first century is quite different (Hirschman and Massey 2008, 11).

Although as a nation we may have become more tolerant of immigration since the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hirschman and Massey 2008, 15), some individuals are now confronted with large scale immigration for the first time in their lives. As people witness the landscape of their towns change— as many residents of Framingham have— it can cause some anxiety about how the identity of “their” place has changed from what they were used to. Geographers acknowledge that places do not possess “natural and obvious” meanings, but that they are in fact imbued with meaning “by some people with more power than others to define what is and is not appropriate” (Cresswell 2004, 27). When downtown Framingham was mostly vacant and abandoned in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there were attempts by some local private investors to restore the area to the vitality it had known in the 1950s. Although these attempts did not succeed, and it was indeed the Brazilian population who brought economic and cultural vitality back to the area, many Framingham residents continue to feel nostalgia for the old downtown Framingham. This nostalgia for what a place once was often becomes associated with distaste for what it has become, and in the case of locations that have experienced major demographic changes, these

issues are often conflated. In one small town in Minnesota that experienced an influx of immigrants, “a question about how [the town] had changed over the years immediately elicited nostalgic comments from the [working class] group members who described an idealized past and the ways that demographic change had altered it” (Fennelly 2008, 168). This is also an issue in Framingham, where changes to the landscape have made some nostalgic for the past at the expense of recognizing the benefits the Brazilians have brought to town. John Stefanini, then chairman of the Framingham Board of Selectmen and state representative, told one reporter that “the town of Framingham and the community and the government have been very slow to recognize the gem that exists with the cultural diversity in our downtown.... Instead there has been a lot of focus on why it isn’t what it was 50 years ago” (Pappano 1993).

Many agree that the Brazilian population in Framingham has rejuvenated downtown and breathed new life into its economy; the President of the Metrowest Chamber of Commerce certainly attributes low vacancy rates and increased commercial activity to the Brazilian community. Despite decreased vacancy and increased economic activity downtown, however, there are several factors that may veil the overwhelming success of Brazilian business owners in the eyes of the general public. The existence of social service agencies in downtown Framingham concentrates activity associated with lower income populations, and this affects perceptions of downtown. For instance, the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC), an organization that provides social services and is located downtown,

represents the fact that Framingham has a higher number of social services per capita than surrounding towns. This has recently inspired a backlash towards the organization from some of the town's residents (Figure 21); "although by its own accounting SMOC has pumped millions of dollars into downtown by renovating neglected property, some townspeople complain that it negates those benefits by turning the same buildings into permanent outposts of society's most troubled elements" (Millman 1997b, 16). MCI Framingham, the local women's prison, is also close to the downtown area. The downtown homeless shelters close during the day and leave their patrons out on the streets during business hours. All of these factors influence how people perceive the Central Business District, and for some Framingham residents these issues cast a pall over downtown. Although Brazilians have dramatically improved downtown Framingham's situation by revitalizing its economy and breathing life back into its shop fronts and sidewalks, this success may be overshadowed in public opinion by other social concerns that affect downtown.

Figure 21: This sign is found on front yards around town as a protest by some of the presence of the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) organization. *Source:* <http://www.smocingham.org>.

David, who is not Brazilian, has worked downtown for sixteen years in a family business that has been located in the Central Business District for seventy-five years. He believes that many people, including friends of his, often conflate issues unrelated to the Brazilian population, such as the abundance of social services and even the existence of a methadone clinic, with the presence of the immigrant group. Although a SMOC representative stated that hardly any Brazilians take part in the social services offered by the organization, David says that many people he hears from think that the Brazilian community is heavily involved with these social service institutions. People who may be frustrated by the presumably high number of illegal immigrants in Framingham tend to lump this frustration together with other frustrations regarding the downtown area; David claims that some “look at Framingham as one big mess,” and may improperly blame one group, specifically the Brazilians. This outlook may prevent some residents from acknowledging that “if the Brazilians weren’t in downtown, this place would be a ghost town,” as David put it.

Rather than thinking of downtown Framingham as economically and culturally active, many residents of the town perceive downtown as dangerous and frightening. This is not uncommon in areas that are adjusting to landscape and demographic change; in a rural Minnesota town, for example, “fear of the unknown and nostalgia for a more homogenous town population combined to foster negative attitudes toward immigrants” among some town residents (Fennelly 2008, 161-162). Like Framingham, the immigrants to this town settled primarily in the downtown area, and as a result “several individuals described their fears of going downtown

because of the presence of immigrants. After several comments, one member disagreed, said, ‘I think it’s your perception,’ and went on to argue that immigrants congregated on the sidewalks downtown because they didn’t have suburban yards” (Fennelly 2008, 157). Although crime rates in the town had actually been decreasing, some residents felt an increased threat partially because “innuendo and selective recall of crime and traffic accident reports mentioning immigrants contribute to the perception of increased crime” (Fennelly 2008, 162). Although the local newspaper in Framingham often reports on the positive influence the Brazilian population has had downtown, the stories that linger in people’s minds are those about an arrested Brazilian prostitute, or a Brazilian doctor who performed illegal liposuction procedures in his basement that led to the death of a Brazilian woman.

Negative perceptions of downtown Framingham have led to public inquiries regarding safety downtown and police efforts to alleviate potential problems. After an altercation downtown, local selectmen asked the Police Department to “publicly explain their strategy for cracking down on crime, saying residents are growing more worried about their safety and deserve to hear what’s being done to protect them. Selectmen... want to see a public presentation by Police Chief Steven Carl about crimefighting plans, especially for downtown” (McLaughlin 2005). This worry is not shared equally throughout the community; while Framingham residents asked for an increased security presence downtown, “business owners say they are pleased with the job police are doing” (Homan 2005). This sentiment is echoed by David, who stated that “crime isn’t as bad as people make it out to be.” This difference in

perspective may be explained by the fact that downtown business owners are more acutely aware of what is happening on downtown streets, whereas many Framingham residents do not even go downtown on a regular basis.

The reaction of alarm to changes in downtown Framingham is a typical response to heightened immigration. As Tim Cresswell points out, “struggles for place identity... appeal to the parochial and exclusive forces of bigotry and nationalism. The identification of place usually involves an us/them distinction in which the other is devalued” (Cresswell 2004, 27) and, in many cases, demonized. Stephen Herring, who once served as the Framingham town historian, told a reporter in 1994 that “there is some backlash from longtime residents who feel some resentment” (Moroney) toward the Brazilian immigrants. This opinion has persisted over the past decade as the Brazilian population increased and the downtown landscape changed even more dramatically to reflect the ethnic character of its residents. Some feel, as one interviewee put it, that “the real American flavor is gone” from downtown.

In addition to changes in the local landscape, the national media reinforces fear and resentment of the “other,” particularly in the case of immigration. Public figures such as Pat Buchanan and Lou Dobbs speak openly about their negative opinion of immigrants, and recent research suggests that “undocumented migrants have moved into the perceptual space of American social cognition usually reserved for despised out-groups such as drug dealers and the homeless” (Massey 2008, 350-351). This would explain why, for some, the perception of downtown Framingham

has not changed in the past 35 years; some people still think of downtown as “blighted” because they lump the Brazilian immigrants into the same group as the drug dealers and homeless people who were drawn to a vacant downtown in the early 1980s. Tim Cresswell touches on how those who challenge our sense of place may become targets of our resentment when he states that sometimes:

seeing the world through the lens of place leads to reactionary and exclusionary xenophobia, racism and bigotry. ‘Our place’ is threatened and others have to be excluded. Here ‘place’ is not so much a quality of things in the world but an aspect of the way we choose to think about it—what we decide to emphasize and what we decide to designate as unimportant (Cresswell 2004, 11).

Although racism and bigotry are by no means the norm in Framingham, and many people are excited about the vitality that the Brazilians have brought to downtown, a fringe group has made their resentment towards the Brazilian population a public campaign.

While this group, named Concerned Citizens and Friends of Illegal Immigration Law Enforcement (CCFIILE), is small, they are extremely vocal and forceful about getting their messages across. The group was founded by the Rizoli brothers, both longtime residents of Framingham. While they claim that their problem lies only with undocumented immigrants, they almost never acknowledge that many Brazilian immigrants have come to Framingham legally and are now, in fact, American citizens. In interviews he conducted in Framingham, Jonathan Leit “heard many people say that their only problem with the Brazilian immigrants is that so many are undocumented, but several interviewees suggested that this covers up a

feeling that there are simply too many Brazilians in Framingham” (Leit 2006, 65).

The Rizolis, who are for all intents and purposes the face of CCFIILE, represent this fraction of the community who feel that the Brazilians are outsiders in Framingham who are taking over their town, even when many Brazilians have been living in Framingham for three decades.

The Rizolis propagate their opinions on their weekly public-access cable television show “Illegal Immigration Chat,” where they target Brazilian community leaders and any other public leaders who are sympathetic to the immigrant population, and on their website, where they post inflammatory editorials and cartoons (Figure 22). They have also been involved with town politics. Jim Rizoli “is one of 183 elected town meeting members, the New England equivalent of a city alderman” (Sanchez 2008, 26) and unsuccessfully ran for State Representative in 2006. For a period of time his brother, Joe, was in charge of filming Town Hall meetings for public broadcast (Sanchez 2008, 26). While filming, Joe Rizoli would fix the camera on anyone he deemed to look Brazilian and then use the footage later on “Illegal Immigration Chat” with the added text “find the illegal aliens” (Sanchez 2008). The pair has also taken their opinion to the street by demonstrating at sites where day laborers congregate and at the library during a workshop for safe house cleaning, which was targeted at Brazilian house cleaners. Although many people decidedly choose ignore the Rizolis and their organization CCFIILE, and the Police Chief stated that the brothers are “an embarrassment to this town” (Sanchez 2008,

Figure 22: Cartoon posted on the CCFIILE website. The figure of 3 million illegal aliens per year is not accurate; the U.S. Government Accountability Office estimates about a half a million illegal immigrants enter the U.S. per year. Source: www.ccfiile.org.

27), they do give voice to a stance that is not uncommon in areas of heightened immigration

Public-access television is not the only public venue in which anti-immigrant opinions are displayed; the local newspaper received so much negative feedback after printing a series on Brazilian immigration to Framingham entitled “The Brazil Connection” in 2006 that the editor had to issue a statement. In it, he said that “some readers saw the word ‘Brazilian’ on the front page two days in a row and, instead of taking time to read the stories to learn what all this was about, they picked up the

phone or sent an email to complain” (Lodge 2006). Additionally, news and personal websites are rife with comments on the immigrant population in Massachusetts. In the age of the internet, it is easier for people to voice their opinions publicly than ever before. Although the internet is a wonderful resource for many people, including for recent immigrants to the United States who can find businesses and services online, it also serves those who wish to express their anti-immigration opinions. Although many organizations, like CCFIILE, claim to oppose illegal immigration, many comments made on websites and discussion groups are more broadly anti-immigrant. Not only do people, like the Rizoli brothers, post materials on their own websites; it is extremely common now for the debate on immigration to be taken up on news sites where stories about immigrants are often followed by public posts regarding the stories. Like anyone, the Rizolis and other outspoken proponents of illegal immigration reform are entitled to their opinions and are free to speak their minds. It is unfortunate, however, that the Rizoli brothers are the most sensational discussants of Brazilian immigration in town because they detract in many ways from efforts that are being made to bridge the Brazilian and non-Brazilian populations in Framingham.

Efforts to Reach Out to the Immigrant Population

Although it is important to acknowledge and study the contention that is present in places with large immigrant populations in order to begin to resolve some of these issues, it is also important to acknowledge and learn from the measures of cooperation that have taken place in these locations. While some individuals and

groups are focused on divisions between the “newcomers” and the “natives,” many recognize that integration and cooperation between ethnic groups is a way to strengthen the community; in fact, “active, conscious decisions to organize around common issues—not just for the sake of integration but when diverse people perceive similar interests—exist throughout U.S. cities” (Bach 1993, 164). This is the case in southwestern Minnesota, where community leaders:

have adopted a proactive stance toward immigrants. City and county officials, including school system personnel, have worked hard to make them feel a part of the community and to assure that their children remain. Some immigrant leadership has emerged to join public employees in these efforts. Many community leaders and members view the immigrants as a source of future vitality (Griffith 2008, 185).

Although similar efforts in Framingham are slow in coming and have really only just begun, there is evidence that the town is working towards cooperation and community building; a time capsule buried in front of the Memorial Building downtown was created to symbolize an effort to end discrimination in the town (Figure 23), and more importantly the town has made progress by initiating discussions between town officials and the Brazilian population.

On June 18, 2007 town officials held a “Brazilian American Community-Wide Town Dialogue” in order to “increase communication between the Framingham Brazilian American community and the Town of Framingham” (Town of Framingham 2007). Among those in attendance at the meeting were: representatives of the U.S. Department of Justice, the Framingham Police Department, the

Figure 23: This 1994 time capsule marker, located directly outside of the Memorial Building, states that the capsule contents symbolize “efforts to eliminate racism, stereotyping and discrimination in Framingham.”

Framingham Human Relations Commission, the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, the Framingham Public Library, the Framingham Fire Department, the Framingham Board of Selectmen, Framingham High School, the Governor’s Office, the Middlesex District Attorney’s Office, the Anti Defamation League, the Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Association, Brazilian members of the clergy, and numerous Brazilian business owners. As the meeting was “an opportunity for community members to voice their concerns and make recommendations regarding their experiences living in Framingham,” those present were “asked to observe and listen” (Town of Framingham 2007). The top issues raised by the 47 participants at

the meeting included the need for valid identification for immigrants, the length of the legalization process, the need for more Brazilian involvement in town government and better access to higher education, housing problems including exploitation by landlords, and the need for access to health care.

The creation of this comprehensive list of concerns by the community, including Brazilian and non-Brazilian representatives, was a major step forward in acknowledging the work that needs to be done to address matters that directly affect those living in downtown Framingham. Those attending the meeting also decided upon several “next steps,” including the meetings held by the Police Department in 2007 and ongoing educational programming. Although the ultimate success of this “community-wide” dialogue has yet to be determined, it was a necessary step towards including the Brazilian population in town politics. While fringe groups like CCFIILE often receive the majority of attention from the media, it is efforts such as the community-wide dialogue that are ultimately going to make an impact on the relationship between the Brazilian and non-Brazilian populations of Framingham.

Cooperation between the town of Framingham and the Brazilian population downtown is essential if South Framingham is to remain economically vital. The future of downtown Framingham, especially in the current economic climate, hinges on keeping businesses open and fostering the establishment of new commercial ventures. In order for this to happen, those who have a history of investing in the area—the Brazilian population—must feel valued as both residents and entrepreneurs by the town. Because “place can be viewed as differentially constructed over time

with diverse meanings for its inhabitants” (Silvey and Lawson 1999, 129), it must be acknowledged that places, including downtown Framingham, reflect many identities. These “multiple identities can either be a source of richness or a source of conflict, or both” (Massey 1994, 153), and for downtown Framingham to continue to thrive economically its multiple identities must be embraced by the town as an asset to the community. This may require changes in the way that the town conceptualizes of revitalization; indeed, “community renewal in those areas in which immigrants have settled requires a fundamental shift in perspective among the popular media, policymakers, and researchers” (Bach 1993, 170). Without support and assistance from the town, many Brazilian entrepreneurs may find themselves unable to weather the current economic recession. For this reason, the future landscape of downtown Framingham may depend on cooperation between the town of Framingham and Brazilian business owners.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRANSNATIONALISM IN DOWNTOWN FRAMINGHAM

Godfrey's archetypal landscapes of ethnicity allow us to explore how places are changed by immigrant populations. In addition to analyzing the ways in which an immigrant group transforms their place of destination, it is valuable to examine the ways that immigrant populations tie together their places of origin and destination. The United States is historically a nation of immigrants, and to this day an astounding number of people bring influences from other countries; "by 2000, there were over 30 million foreign-born persons in the United States, almost one third of whom arrived in the prior decade. Adding together these immigrants and their children (the second generation), more than 60 million people—or one in five Americans—have recent roots in other countries" (Hirschman and Massey 2008, 2). This means that innumerable towns and cities have been changed by these populations, and that the landscapes of these places reflect the foreign countries represented by these immigrants much as downtown Framingham is a landscape of Brazilian ethnicity. In addition to shaping the landscape, however, these deep ties to a home country can play a very significant role in the social, political, and economic lives of immigrants. Over the past few decades, the theory of "transnationalism" has helped scholars conceptualize the importance of these connections between origin and destination countries for the immigrant; this framework sheds light on how connections to Minas

Gerais, Brazil, affect the lives of Brazilians in downtown Framingham and informs speculations on what the future looks like for the downtown area.

Transnationalism in Migration Research

Although the term “transnational” was used as early as the 1920s, transnationalism has evolved over the past few decades into a concept that challenges some previous social science theories. Transnationalism is intricately linked with globalization; both transnationalism and globalization are fundamentally tied to advances in technology that allow for methods of global communication and trade as well as availability and ease of travel for many people, although notably not to everyone equally.

Beginning in the late 1960s, a “new age of migration” began that possessed “fundamentally different circumstances and dimensions when compared to earlier periods” (Airriess and Miyares 2007, 2). One of the differences marking the new age of migration is the increased “ability of immigrants to exhibit identities that span the cultural, social, economic, and political worlds of both origin and destination countries” (Airriess and Miyares 2007, 2) because of advances in technology. This bridging of origin and destination is at the root of transnational theory as it pertains to immigrants. Although transnationalism as a theoretical framework may be a recent development, in practice transnational activity is not necessarily new; “old world” immigrants often sent letters and money home, purchased land in their countries of origin, and built nationalist movements from the U.S. (Glick Schiller, Basch and

Szanton Blanc 1995, 51). However, “these ties were discounted and obscured by the narratives of nation that were prevalent until the current period of globalization” (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995, 51). Transnationalism is not only concerned with how migrants maintain ties between their origin and destination countries, it is also concerned with how these transnational ties affect their life experiences and help form complex identities of self and place.

Those who participate in transnational migration are those “immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state” (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995, 48). Because transnationalism is not a new phenomenon, it is important to note that “the tendency of today’s transmigrants to maintain, build, and reinforce multiple linkages with their countries of origin seems to be *facilitated* rather than *produced by* the possibility of technologically abridging time and space” (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995, 52, emphasis added). Although immigrants have historically maintained ties to their homelands, present day migrants are able to maintain connections between their origin and destination countries at rates that are unparalleled in history.

Early writings on transnationalism defined it as a replacement of older theories of migration, but Alejandro Portes suggests that while transnationalism is an additional form of migrant experience, it is not the only one. He claims that “it is more useful to conceptualize transnationalism as *one* form of economic, political, and cultural adaptation that co-exists with other, more traditional forms” (Portes 2001,

183). Rather than applying the term to all businesses and relations that span national borders, such as multinational corporate activity, Portes suggests we define transnational activities as “those initiated and sustained by non-institutional actors, be they organized groups or networks of individuals across national borders” (2001, 186). This concentration on “members of civil society” focuses the breadth of transnationalism more narrowly on individuals who undertake activities “on their own behalf, rather than on behalf of the state or other corporate bodies” (2001, 186). For those studying immigrants and their individual experiences in a global context, this definition of transnationalism is appropriate.

One of the reasons transnationalism has been so hotly debated among academics is that it challenges the applicability of well accepted theories of migration, like acculturation, to today’s immigrant populations. Just as transnationalism may not be a catch-all regarding immigrant experience, neither are the older and better established theories of migration appropriate to all immigrants in a globalized world. Acculturation may still seem like a relevant topic in the U.S., where “the hegemonic political ethic of the U.S. continues to demand that citizens, both native born and naturalized, swear allegiance only to the U.S. and define their political identity within its borders” (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995, 50-51), but other countries, especially those who have a large number of citizens living abroad, have begun to imagine “their states to exist wherever their emigrants have been incorporated” (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995, 50-51).

Many sending countries now consider their diasporas part of themselves, which extends their political, economic, and cultural influences throughout the world.

Although transnationalism is a topic of interest shared by many different disciplines, geographers especially have a lot to gain by exploring transnational theory “because of its implicit demand that we rethink the notion of space in all its intertwining facets” (Airriess and Miyares 2007, 13). Rather than discussing the origin and destination countries as two distinct and isolated places, transnationalism allows us to conceptualize these two countries as dynamically connected and, in some ways, extensions of one another. Christopher Airriess and Ines Miyares expand upon this idea by noting that “whether transnational identities are based on social, economic, or political connections to a specific homeland, they can be conceived as a ‘deterritorialization’ or ‘respatialization’ of relationships that were once confined to localized regions in the origin country” (2007, 14). Although immigrants of past generations may have maintained ties to their homelands, technological advances have allowed many, but not all, modern day immigrants to form identities that are rooted in more than one location. These identities often appear in and shape the places where immigrants locate, as is certainly the case in downtown Framingham.

Elements of Transnationalism in Downtown Framingham

Transnational dynamics influence many realms of immigrant life; cultural events and “mediascapes” help immigrants participate in the popular culture of their home countries (Airriess and Miyares 2007, 14), and political organizations and

religious institutions maintain connections for immigrants in both their origin and destination countries (Airriess and Miyares 2007; Portes 2001). The demonstration of these transnational elements is a significant part of the development of downtown Framingham into a Brazilian enclave and a vibrant center of Brazilian cultural activity.

Several stores in downtown Framingham sell DVDs of Brazilian television shows, such as popular telenovelas, and CDs of Brazilian musicians imported from Brazil. Additionally, at least one Brazilian owned café in downtown broadcasts a Brazilian satellite television network that keeps immigrants informed of events in Brazil and up to date with sports and television shows from their native country. These cultural connections “comprise the *mediascapes* that provide opportunities for diasporic populations to maintain contact with the popular culture, although a somewhat selective sample of that culture, of the origin country” (Airriess and Miyares 2007, 14, emphasis in original). Brazilian popular culture is also exhibited in festivals and celebrations of national holidays, soccer leagues, and beauty pageants held in Massachusetts and nearby states that honor and celebrate Brazilian traditions and pastimes. Many of these events are covered by local Brazilian publications, one of which is published in both Portuguese and English (Figure 24). Some of the local Brazilian newspapers are distributed in both Massachusetts towns as well as in Brazil; in addition to reporting on events in both places, these newspapers often advertise property and items for sale in both countries.

Figure 24: *Bate Papo* (“Chat”) magazine reports on events affecting the Brazilian communities of Massachusetts.

Many transnational connections happen in the political realm, and “intertwined with the emergence of transnational cultural identities is the engagement of immigrants with the political process of their origin country” (Airriess and Miyares 2007, 15). More common than the individual involvement in political transnationalism, however, is the involvement of political organizations or leaders in establishing relationships with their foreign counterpart. In some cases this results in the creation of a Sister City relationship, and in many cases it promotes economic relationships between the two places. Brazilian politicians have visited the Boston area; in December 2008 a conference at the State House was attended by Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick and other local political figures as well city council presidents from Belo Horizonte and Ouro Branco, Brazil, and other Brazilian politicians.

Although politicians from Brazil have visited Framingham, no direct political connections have been made between the town and cities in Brazil. Some Framingham residents, however, have taken it upon themselves to travel to Brazil in an attempt to foster ties between Framingham, Massachusetts and Governador Valadares, Minas Gerais by creating a Sister City partnership; in 2004 a group of Brazilian and non-Brazilian Framingham residents, including the President of the Chamber of Commerce, traveled to Governador Valadares in order meet with political and professional figures interested in participating in the program (Framingham Selectmen's Meeting Notes 5 August 2004). Although the town selectmen voted to establish the Sister City relationship, the efforts ultimately failed. Nonetheless, this effort is evidence that there is interest among some town business and political figures to foster the transnational relationship between Framingham and Governador Valadares. These efforts are mirrored in other communities with large immigrant populations, like in Marshalltown, Iowa, where "leaders and agency personnel have visited the Michoacán community [in Mexico] to improve their appreciation of the immigrant population in Iowa" (Griffith 2008, 187).

Religious communities, perhaps even more than political entities, have a vested interest in fostering connections between their congregations in different countries. By participating in religious activity, "transnational migrants expand already-global religious institutions and assert their dual memberships in spiritual arenas" (Levitt 2004, 2). Brazilian congregations such as The New Life Presbyterian Church (discussed in Chapter 2) reflect a connection to Brazil with Portuguese

language services and a Brazilian pastor, but some churches are actively expanding their communities by missionary work targeting immigrants in the United States. This is true of the International Church of the Four Square Gospel (ICFSG), which was founded in the United States and sent missionaries to Brazil but now has reversed missionary efforts back to the United States in order to reach Brazilians who have immigrated to the country (Levitt 2004). According to Peggy Levitt, these “Brazil-to-U.S. and U.S.-to-Brazil oriented missionary efforts reinforce... transnational connections. In 2001, the new U.S. President [of the ICFSG] initiated a series of activities designed to increase coordination between national churches and to heighten national actors’ sense of belonging to an international church” (2004, 9). Other churches also deeply value their international connections, and Levitt found that among the many Protestant churches in Minas Gerais, “even some of the most fledgling groups had plaques outside their doors indicating they had chapters in Massachusetts” (2004, 8)

Transnational Economic Activity and Adaptation

Although cultural, political, and religious transnational connections play a significant role in the lives of many immigrants and shape the landscapes of the places they live, transnational economic ties tend to be the most common, and most commonly studied, form of transnationalism. Many writings on transnationalism focus on the economic relationship between origin and destination countries, and the most discussed aspect of the subject is how dramatically remittance economies have

changed and developed sending countries. Money sent from immigrants to their home countries in the form of remittances have become a major economic force for those places of origin (Arreola 2007; Airriess and Miyares 2007; Price 2007). Additionally, there is evidence that transnational economic activity, especially that of immigrant entrepreneurs, may actually facilitate an immigrant's adaptation to the destination community (Portes 2001; Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002).

Downtown Framingham certainly has its share of places where one can transfer money. Although some of these operations are based solely on the remittance business (Figure 25a), others incorporate the sending of remittances into their travel or retail operations (Figure 25b). The reason that these businesses are so interesting to scholars and researchers is that they represent much more than a mere transfer of money; this "reciprocal or transnational flow of resources" is "not a one-sided affair but involves financial capital as well as human capital in a slow dance that helps sustain both immigrant in the new home and family back home" (Arreola 2007, 112). Money sent from workers in Framingham to their family in Governador Valadares has built entire developments in that city and constitutes a large portion of that city's economy (Mineo 2006d). While remittances benefit the country of origin and those still living there, for immigrants themselves the most important economic element is the transnational businesses they establish in their destination country.

While the presence of remittance businesses is important to note, it is perhaps more important to acknowledge that the vast majority of these businesses, and most businesses in downtown Framingham, are Brazilian owned. Frequently, "the most

Figure 25: Two of the many businesses downtown that offer remittance services.

successful migrant businesses arise in the very interstices created by transnationalism— for example, shipping and air cargo companies, import-export firms, labor contractors, and money transfer houses” (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995, 55). This is definitely true in Framingham; while some Brazilian businesses, like barber shops, are not transnational per se, the majority of Brazilian operations downtown participate in the import of goods from Brazil or the export of money or belongings to Brazil. One of the reasons that these businesses are so successful is that “the connections that immigrants have in two (or more) countries open business opportunities for entrepreneurial immigrants allowing them a degree of social mobility that they could not attain by doing business in either the country of origin or the country of reception” (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002, 771). It is, in fact,

the transnational nature of these businesses that makes them so successful, albeit primarily among the immigrant population.

In the past, it was presumed that transnational activity kept immigrants from integrating into the social and economic realms of their new locations by isolating them from non-immigrant culture. While it is true that transnational ties help to reinforce attachment to the origin country and may help immigrants maintain their ethnic identities, this does not necessarily prevent them from adapting to their new environment. In fact, owning a transnational business is one of the ways an immigrant can best adapt to and become rooted in their destination (Portes 2001). According to Portes, the Latin American immigrants in the United States who were most likely to be “transnational entrepreneurs” were those with the highest educational attainment and those who had become U.S. citizens. He states that “the finding that immigrant transnationalism is associated with a more secure economic and legal status in the host country contradicts the view that these activities are marginal and conducted mainly by less acculturated and more recent arrivals” (2001, 189). Although transnational entrepreneurs may represent the minority of immigrants, they have played the largest role in making downtown Framingham a landscape of Brazilian ethnicity. The future of the downtown economy and the status of downtown Framingham as a Brazilian ethnic enclave depend primarily on the success of these transnational businesses.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The arrival and establishment of the Brazilian population in Framingham has changed the town in many ways. The downtown landscape was transformed from one of blight to one of economic stability—and vibrant ethnic representation—and with demographic shifts came social and political changes. While the analysis provided in this thesis is pertinent to understanding what is going on in Framingham, it is even more valuable as an example of how we understand the changes that are happening everywhere—from rural Kansas to New York City. Immigrants play a significant role in shaping American landscapes and politics. Although these changes occur at different scales and in different places, they are re-making our country on a continual basis. Joseph Wood writes that “suburban Northern Virginia is... experiencing vibrant ethnic place making. Here immigrants write fresh chapters in the biography of the American suburb” (1997, 58). On a larger scale, immigrants are writing “fresh chapters” in the biography of the United States while changing community dynamics and place identity in the process.

Analysis of the identity of a town or city is one way to “begin to understand human association with place and how localities become defined by varied interests” (Arreola 1995, 518). These varied interests are often either at odds with one another; in Framingham, for example, the town government’s desire for a major revitalization project has conflicted with the desires of Brazilian business owners to be respected for the roles they have played in economic revival downtown. Frequently, the

different interests being advocated in a place are coupled with conflicting opinions about what that place means. While researching in Galveston, Texas, Susan Hardwick found that “interviews in the field ultimately made it clear that, much as in other places at other times, there are multiple viewpoints about what constitutes today’s ‘real’ Galveston” (2001, 340). While individuals, and organizations, have differing interpretations of the landscape, it is actually these differences that contribute to the overall dynamic of a place. In Framingham, the fact that the town government is situated in the center of downtown means that government officials are surrounded by the Brazilian businesses that literally sandwich the Memorial Building, where their offices are located. This proximity, however, does not necessarily bridge the gap between the Brazilian population and the town government.

Despite the fact that Brazilians have been present in downtown Framingham for thirty years, their representation in town government has made little progress. The town is run by town meetings, and only a couple of the 187 filled Town Meeting Member positions are held by Brazilian residents of the town. Of the 216 Town Meeting Member positions, 29 are vacant—18 of which are vacancies in the 36 positions allocated to represent the three precincts that are located in South Framingham. This is clearly why the need for more Brazilian involvement in town government was one of the primary concerns of Brazilian attendees of the “Brazilian American Community-Wide Town Dialogue” in 2007, and progress in this area is extremely slow. While it is unclear exactly why Brazilian representation in town government is lacking, it is clearly problematic that the majority population in South

Framingham is virtually unrepresented at town meetings. The geographical distance between the town government and the Brazilian population is literally nil, but the distance between the interests of the two groups is, to date, insurmountable. This is the primary reason why downtown Framingham is a contested landscape and why there are so many interpretations of South Framingham as a place.

Differences between Landscape and Place

The terms landscape and place are highly interconnected (Cresswell 2004, 12). They are also very different; landscapes are the visual components of place. As Tim Cresswell puts it, “we do not live in landscapes—we look at them” (2004, 11), whereas “places are very much things to be inside of” (Cresswell 2004, 10). While landscapes may manifest the dynamics of place visually, “place is... a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world. When we look at the world as a world of places we see different things. We see attachments and connections between people and place. We see worlds of meaning and experience” (Cresswell 2004, 11). Just as “census figures alone don’t come close to telling a story” (Hardwick 2001, 337), landscape description is only one aspect of place. While it is true that Brazilians have transformed the landscape of downtown Framingham, they have also had a much broader and more complex role in shaping South Framingham as a place. The shifts in the economic, social, and political spheres of the town reflect these changes in place. One of the reasons that it is important to analyze place—in addition to landscape—is the “lurking, ever-present potential for cunning camouflage and

landscape duplicity—that what we *can't* see, what is *not* in view, may be more important than what... [is] visually obvious” (Groth and Wilson 2003, 21, emphasis in original). It is evident that the commercial landscape of downtown Framingham is one of Brazilian ethnicity; it is less obvious that South Framingham is a place of contention. The landscape of downtown Framingham provides visual evidence that Brazilians are playing an important role in shaping—and re-creating—downtown Framingham as a place.

Projections for the Future Landscape of Downtown Framingham

With every passing year, more and more Brazilian immigrants are becoming firmly rooted in Framingham. There is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that a number of Brazilians have returned to Brazil in the past year because of a weakened economy in the United States and heightened action on the part of the ICE; the 2010 census will help clarify the magnitude of this return migration. The landscape of downtown Framingham has remained relatively unchanged in the past year, and it appears as though very few Brazilian businesses have had to close. This may reflect the settledness of the transnational entrepreneurs in Framingham, and may suggest that while some immigrants may return to Brazil, many of those who have made Framingham a home will remain and perpetuate the status of downtown as a Brazilian ethnic enclave. This is in part because “people with longer time in the United States are more likely to participate in transnational activities. This result indicates that the process of incorporation and the creation of sociocultural transnational linkages are

intertwined in complex ways, and the latter does not diminish with the progress of the former” (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002, 784). So while many Brazilian immigrants become more entrenched in their lives in Framingham, they may also become more apt to engage in activities that reinforce their identities as Brazilians. While in the short term this will help maintain the landscape of an ethnic enclave, it is unclear what will happen as the economic crises continues to unfold and as time progresses and the children of the most settled Brazilian immigrants, or second generation Brazilians, get older and begin to assert their own identities.

While many of the business downtown have held steady throughout the economic downturn over the past few years, there have been some closures. A year after interviewing her, Angelina’s fears came true and her downtown jewelry business closed its doors. Angelina had seen this coming; while many people avoid spending money on pricey items, such as jewelry, during a recession, immigrants are especially hesitant to make such costly purchases. Angelina attempted to get a license from the town to sell lower priced items, like chocolates, but claims that the town made it so difficult for her that she felt targeted as a Brazilian business owner. As Brazilian business owners face large scale efforts for revitalization that largely overlook them and increasing financial woes, what the future holds for their downtown businesses is somewhat unclear. Although many Brazilian businesses downtown appear to be holding strong despite the economic crises, many of the businesses sell less costly items than Angelina’s shop did. Additionally, the newest businesses downtown are those that ship belongings back to Brazil—a sign that return migration may, in fact,

be occurring. Even though Brazilian business owners may be settled in Framingham, there is a chance that the economic situation and lack of assistance from the town could force more businesses to close. The closure of more Brazilian businesses downtown could have a major impact on the streetscape, which is the primary landscape of Brazilian ethnic identity. If immigration from Brazil to Framingham lessens, this too will have an effect on the status of downtown as a Brazilian ethnic enclave. One major factor to consider in the future of downtown Framingham is what role second generation Brazilians will play, if any, in the shaping of the landscape.

Of the Brazilian residents of Framingham counted in the 2000 census, 13.3 percent were born in the United States. Many of the Brazilian immigrants who have been in Framingham since the 1980s now have children in high school; these children may play an important role in the future of the town in the coming decades. The transnational practices that keep immigrants firmly rooted in both their origin and destination countries may not be as important or as strong in children of immigrants who have grown up in the United States, and “there is still much debate about the extent to which these [practices] will persist among the children of immigrants” (Levitt 2004, 16). It is likely that for these second generation Brazilians, “linkages with and obligations toward people and places in the country of origin will slowly weaken” (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002, 773). Although the majority of Brazilian households in Framingham speak Portuguese at home, many second generation Brazilians speak English among their friends, even when those friends also come from Brazilian households. One interviewee stated that while her children are

bilingual, “the boys speak Portuguese like Americans. Very strong accent and it doesn’t have the swing in the language, but my daughter is truly bilingual... she has really good Portuguese.”

Although it is impossible to know what downtown Framingham will look like in the coming decades, it is possible to make some projections. If successful Brazilian business owners are able to keep their establishments open despite the unfavorable economy, it is likely that the landscape of downtown Framingham will remain much the same for the time being. If Brazilian immigration to the area truly does let up, however, and efforts to gentrify downtown take hold, the presence of Brazilian businesses downtown may dwindle as a result of the changes. Additionally, as the children of immigrants incorporate more wholly into American society and transnational connections begin to weaken, it will become harder for transnational businesses to maintain their current levels of success. Brazilians may remain a part of the cultural fabric of downtown Framingham, but perhaps with decreased visibility in the landscape. If immigration to the United States is generally slowed because of a fragile global economy, it is unlikely that a decreased Brazilian population would be immediately replaced by another immigrant group, as often happens in ethnic enclaves. Barring the unlikely success of large scale efforts towards gentrification downtown, Framingham’s Central Business District could once again become the virtual ghost town that it was before the arrival of Brazilian entrepreneurs in the 1980s.

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