Making a postmodern turn: re-creating community cultural capital during economic restructurings

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Making a postmodern turn: re-creating community cultural capital during economic restructurings

by

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A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

After Whirlpool Corporation officials acquired Maytag Corporation in 2006, Maytag operations in Newton, Iowa, the birthplace of Maytag and former home to Maytag headquarters office and a long-standing manufacturing plant, were subsequently closed. With the closings, Newton residents encounter a double victimization. In addition to losing the community’s primary employer and tax base contributor, residents lost a primary source of community culture for over 100 years. This study examines residents’ practices in re-creating community cultural capital – Newton’s collective identities, senses of place, and general cultural ways – following local Maytag closings. Along with focusing on the interplay between structure and agency during the re-creation of community culture, I examine Newton’s post-Maytag transition as a community that is making a ‘postmodern turn’ due to residents’ reliance on new methods of sustainability that reflects an emergence of a new stage of capitalism in Newton. In particular, I will explore the cultural consequences of Newton’s postmodern turn and the implications of these cultural changes for rebuilding community sustainability as a whole.
PART I

“AS MAYTAG GREW OVER THE YEARS, NEWTON GREW WITH IT. TODAY, THERE ISN’T ANYONE ALIVE WHO REMEMBERS NEWTON BEFORE THE MAYTAG COMPANY EXISTED HERE. BUT IN NEWTON’S SESQUICENTENNIAL YEAR 2007, AS THE COMMUNITY CELEBRATES A PAST THAT INCLUDES SUCH A STRONG TIE TO THE ICONIC COMPANY, WE ARE FORCED TO LOOK AHEAD TO A FUTURE WITHOUT MAYTAG.”
- ANDY KARR, NEWTON DAILY NEWS, AUGUST 3, 2007

Located thirty-miles east of Des Moines along Interstate 80 in Jasper County, Newton, Iowa has a population of approximately of 15,200 residents. Commonly recognized as the ‘Maytag town’ and ‘Washing Machine Capital of the World,’ residents celebrated Newton’s 150th birthday during the summer of 2007. A year prior to the celebration, the community lost its largest employer and its primary source of collective cultural capital, which dates back over 110 years. Following Whirlpool Corporation’s purchase of Maytag Corporation in April 2006, Whirlpool officials announced the closings of Newton’s Maytag headquarters office and long-standing Maytag manufacturing plant.

Newton residents are encountering a “double victimization” (Cowie and Heathrott 2003: 11) as a result of the closings. That is, along with heavy job loss and a shrinking tax base, they are experiencing a cultural turn from a familiar past as a company town into an unfamiliar future as full participants in a globalized, consumer economy. Because the game of local community sustainability has changed, the question for residents becomes – “How can we reinvent Newton?”

The reinvention of Newton involves a number of dimensions, including rebuilding financial lifelines, developing employment opportunities, and presenting Newton as an attractive location for retaining current residents and bringing new people into the
community. The re-creation of Newton’s cultural capital, its collective identities, senses of place, and general cultural ways (Flora and Flora 2008), is another important component of the reinvention process. The significance of re-creating community cultural capital during periods of social change is threefold. First, re-creating cultural capital helps people recognize that they are on the ‘same team’ and they all have a stake in the community’s changes (Emery and Flora 2006; Fitchen 1991; Stewart, Liebert, and Larkin 2004). Second, re-creating cultural capital provides community members with a shared, pro-change vision for navigating their transition (Emery and Flora 2006; Emery, Flora, and Fey 2007; Teghe and McAllister 2005). Third, as Zukin (1995: 2-3) explains, “culture is more and more the business” of communities that are adjusting to contemporary patterns of social change.

Consequently, a community’s collective identities, senses of place, and general cultural ways should not be perceived as by-products of social structures but rather as integral aspects of a symbolic economy that are increasingly relied upon by rural and urban community members throughout North America (Dandaneau 1996; Gotham 2007; Harvey 1994; Krannich and Petrzelka 2003; Zukin 1995).

In the following, I examine the re-creation of community cultural capital in Newton during residents’ transition away from methods of sustainability and social conditions secured in an established manufacturing economy to methods of sustainability and social conditions structured by an emphasis on local entrepreneurship, renewable energy production, and tourist-based entertainment. Understanding the re-creation of cultural capital as a social practice of meaning making that takes effort and time (Calhoun and Sennett 2007), I conceptualize a ‘community’ as a defined place or location where groups of people interact for mutual support (Flora and Flora 2008).
In the remainder of this section, I discuss the cultural history between Newton and the Maytag name. Acknowledging Newton’s cultural history is important for interpreting residents’ re-creation of cultural capital and for revealing the influence of Newton’s past on its future. I outline my theoretical framework and research methods in Chapter 2, including how the theory shapes the methods and vice-versa. In Chapter 3, I analyze the creation of new cultural capital forms in Newton. Specifically, I look at residents’ practices that combine to re-create Newton’s cultural capital and the relationship between the practices and developing new methods of community sustainability. In Chapter 4, I focus on the resistance of potential cultural capital by examining residents’ collective agency against a proposal to build a casino within city limits. I conclude by discussing the cultural consequences and the importance of cultural capital with respect to community sustainability that accompany Newton’s turn into a reality without Maytag’s presence.

Overall, my intention behind this case study of Newton’s transition to post-Maytag life is to develop a theoretical framework for understanding cultural dimensions of contemporary community change. Specifically, I am interested in revealing the interplay of structural forces and agency that guide community members’ practices of re-creating cultural capital during periods of social change. Furthermore, I am interested in examining the transition into post-Maytag life as a community that is making a ‘postmodern turn’ due to residents’ reliance on new methods of sustainability that reflects an emergence of a new stage of capitalism in Newton. In particular, I will explore the cultural consequences of Newton’s postmodern turn and the implications of these cultural changes for rebuilding community sustainability as a whole.
CHAPTER ONE

‘HONORING OUR HERITAGE, SHAPING OUR FUTURE.’
- NEWTON’S SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION THEME, SUMMER 2007

In 1893, F.L. (Fred) Maytag and George Parsons, with help from Maytag’s two brothers in-law, formed Parsons Band Cutter and Self-Feeder Company to produce threshing machine feeders in the, at the time, small farming town of Newton. Due to the business’s seasonality, workers started building clothing washers during the winter months. In 1909, after producing a pair of successful washer models, F.L. acquired full ownership of the company and gave it his last name.

The Maytag Company grew, and the Maytag family began leaving their mark on Newton. In addition to being a primary employer in the community, F.L. was chiefly responsible for installing Newton’s first street light and power plant during the late 1890s. In 1918, E.H. Maytag, F.L.’s brother, opened Maytag Dairy Farms in Newton – home of the famous ‘Maytag blue cheese.’ A year later, F.L. became Newton’s mayor after serving two terms on the city council. As mayor, F.L. oversaw the building of more than 18 miles of road within the community while continuing to grow the Maytag Company into one of America’s most successful businesses. By 1924, the Maytag Company dropped its farm equipment division in favor of solely concentrating on washing machines. At the time, the company was producing one of every five clothing washers in America (Hurto 1992).

Over $3 million was spent on home construction in Newton from 1925-1929, primarily due to the influx of Maytag manufacturing workers who were needed to keep up with consumer demand. During this period, Newton’s population increased from 7,500 to
11,500 residents. Following F.L.’s passing in 1937 (Figure 1), Fred L. Maytag II, F.L.’s nephew, took over the company as it emerged from the Depression without a financial loss (Hurto 1992).

![Figure 1. F.L. Maytag’s grave in Newton Union Cemetery. F.L. was born in 1857, the same year Newton was incorporated as a city.](image)

F.L.’s philanthropic efforts and fund raising near the end of his life solidified a lasting legacy in Newton. F.L. helped finance the construction of Hotel Maytag (now Midtown Apartments) on the town square, purchased land for and financed the construction of F.L. Maytag Park, and backed the construction of the Fred Maytag Pool and the Fred Maytag Bowl Amphitheatre within park limits. While the Maytag name was not branded on the physical structures, F.L. was also involved in the construction of a local hospital and Newton’s YMCA.

In 1949, high demand for washing machines resulted in the construction of a second manufacturing plant in Newton, known locally as ‘Plant 2,’ in which workers produced
automatic washers and automatic clothes dryers. The Maytag Company operated as a family-owned business until 1962. By then, the Maytag headquarters office was part of Newton’s downtown landscape. The company’s success continued as it began to diversify products and to acquire rival appliance companies. Maytag officials also enjoyed increased brand recognition for making quality and dependable products, a recognition successfully marketed in Maytag’s ‘Ol’ Lonely repairman’ advertising campaigns. In 1986, the Maytag Company officially became the Maytag Corporation.

Maytag’s financial importance in Newton cannot be minimized. Maytag employed approximately ten times as many people than Newton’s next largest employer. Maytag’s employment numbers range from an estimated 2,400 plant workers and 1,400 headquarters workers in 2002 to an estimated 1,400 plant workers and 1,500 headquarters workers in 2005. Maytag’s manufacturing unionized wages (the highest manufacturing wages in the state) accounted for nearly $137 million in gross wages countywide. Furthermore, Maytag was Newton’s largest taxpayer, paying close to $1.7 million in property taxes alone in 2005 (Hussmann 2005a). Combined, Maytag’s paychecks and tax base contributions represented Newton’s financial lifelines.

Maytag’s cultural presence in Newton was equally as apparent. The Maytag name was more than a label on locally produced goods in the eyes of most residents. ‘Good wages for a quality product’ represented a common sentiment during the business’s tenure in Newton – acknowledging the plant workers’ above average pay, yet taking pride in the perceived quality of Maytag washers and dryers. The emphasis on ‘quality’ related to Maytag’s reputation of making dependable products as marketed in the Ol’ Lonely advertisements, but it also related to workers’ reputation of being dependable and
exemplifying a strong work ethic. Both Maytag workers and non-workers embraced this symbolism to the extent that it became inscribed in the community’s cultural fabric. A former Newton resident explains, “I grew up in Newton, Iowa. If you don't already know what that implies, let's just say I have ‘dependability’ in my blood” (Chism 2006).

In addition to the badges of pride that Maytag provided Newton residents, Maytag’s cultural moorings were evident in many local traditions. Maytag employees’ trips to cafes, restaurants, and bars around Newton’s downtown area made ‘Maytagers’ familiar faces in the business scene. Newton parades always had at least one Maytag float. A number of Newton High School seniors were annually awarded college scholarships from the Maytag Scholarship program. The Maytag picnic was perhaps Newton’s most essential Maytag tradition in which people celebrated the company’s heritage and crowned the ‘Maytag queen.’ Responding to the news of the Maytag closings, a former resident reflects upon the picnic in a letter to the editor:

> My sadness at the recent fate of Maytag prompted me to remember happier days in Newton. Growing up in Newton in the ‘50s and ‘60s, one of my favorite days was the annual Maytag picnic. On one Sunday each August, the city’s Maytag Park became a free amusement park run by and for Maytagers, their families and anyone else who care to join in the fun. On that morning, my dad, an electrical engineer, would be at the park early making a last-minute inspection of electrical hook-ups for all the activities. My mom, a former nurse, would dust off her uniform and head for her post in the first-aid tent. I was on my own with a friend. There was a midway area with ‘big’ rides, like an octopus and a ferris wheel. There were arcade games like spin art on a Maytag-motor-driven wheel, throwing Maytag ‘washers’ into bowls, and tossing hoops over Maytag washer agitators. Everyone was a winner! There were checkers, chess, tennis and horseshoe tournaments for all ages. There was free swimming all day in the park’s pool. There was popcorn and cotton candy, and Kool-Aid churned in Maytag wringer washers. In the afternoon there was a teen dance and even a beautiful baby contest. In the evening, families gathered on blankets and lawn chairs at the Maytag Bowl amphitheater for the crowning of the Maytag queen – a Maytag employee or the daughter of one – and a variety show with professional entertainment. The day ended with a drawing for prizes by the Maytag queen out of – what else – a Maytag dryer drum (Ver Heul 2006).

Along with the badges of pride and traditions, the Maytag name directly and indirectly shaped the consciousness of residents through a variety of means. Representing
the largest physical structures in town, Maytag’s headquarters building and manufacturing plant projected a form of visual literary upon the community. Newton’s Jasper County Museum educated visitors about connection between the community and the Maytag name through its Maytag memorabilia collection, ranging from early washers to Maytag go-karts. F.L. Maytag Park (Figure 2) served as a social space for family outings, high school graduations and reunions, and concerts and weddings at the Fred Maytag Bowl (Figure 3). Like other public pools across America, Fred Maytag Pool (Figure 4) marked an unofficial beginning and end to summer for many residents. Taken together, is difficult for a person to have spent a decent amount of time in Newton without learning a fact or two about the town’s Maytag history.

![Figure 2. Main Entrance of F.L. Maytag Park](image)
Figure 3. A gathering of community members at the Maytag Bowl Amphitheater during Newton’s sesquicentennial celebration.

Figure 4. Fred Maytag Pool, which lies at the center of F.L Maytag Park.
Finally, Maytag’s culture was embodied in the generations of workers who ‘bleed Maytag blue.’ Newton’s Maytag manufacturing plants represented a legacy machine for many families, similar to other long-standing manufacturing plants in company towns (see Dudley 1994; Linkon and Russo 2002; Pappas 1989; Zippay 1991), helping people gain an understanding of society and their role in it. For some workers, the legacy traces back over a century. A former plant worker describes her Maytag roots, “My great-grandfather, my grandmother, my dad, all of my cousins and uncles, me, and my sons. So, we had five generations there” (Interview LT). Even if people were first generation workers, they still inherited a legacy that made them a proud member of the ‘Maytag family.’

Overall, Maytag’s cultural reach throughout the community fostered a recognition of Newton as the ‘Maytag town,’ and this recognition revealed itself quickly to those who relocated to Newton. A local non-profit director describes her experience:

Maytag did have a large presence and did kind of permeate the community. Even when we moved here [nearly a decade] ago, if I had a dollar for every time somebody asked if we moved here because of Maytag, I mean, we would have been able to retire right away [laughs]. So, there was this whole expectation that anyone who would move into the community must have been taking a Maytag job. So, it had a very large presence within the community, and because of its success and its own sense of corporate citizenship our community has benefited immensely over the years. For the size of the community we are, we were a pretty wealthy community. And, one that was wealthy from financial assets, but also from individuals and people. That is something that struck me right away. There was this human capital that existed of individuals who, you know, were a part of the community because they were here working for Maytag but then also committed a certain part of their life to doing things within the community. Whether it was sitting on boards or whether it was, you know, starting other projects, or helping with fund raising projects – all of those things...Those kinds of things always permeated through the town as well (Interview JE).

While it is impossible to downplay Maytag’s deep financial and cultural connections to Newton, it is misleading to portray Maytag’s presence as completely harmonious. Past labor struggles between Maytag management and plant workers, resulting in six strikes since the plant’s organization in 1937, left a bad taste in the mouths of some residents who
perceived the union as troublemakers. Also, an ‘us versus them’ mentality based upon socio-economic divisions, perhaps not surprisingly, surfaced between some headquarters employees and plant workers. This mentality, however, was often minimized when both groups rallied around common interests surrounding the company’s continued presence in Newton.

From a community development standpoint, some residents, including local pro-growth advocates, viewed Maytag’s presence as too paternalistic, especially regarding suspected efforts by company officials to block new businesses from coming to the Newton. People not only worried about the prevention of employment opportunities and increased tax revenue, but they also were concerned with Newton having all of its ‘eggs in one basket’ and the potential effects if local Maytag operations would ever leave the community.

A less contentious example of disharmony took place in 1928 when Newton High School faculty members and students voted to change their mascot from ‘Lil washers’ to ‘Cardinals.’ This act was not out of a lack of respect for the Maytag name, but an attempt to give opposing teams’ fans less verbal ammunition at athletic events, including the saying “you’re all washed up Newton!” (Hurto 1992).

Outside the few exceptions, Maytag’s history in Newton produced a culture that was embraced by residents and recognized by people outside the community. The badges of pride, traditions, memories, and legacies created by Maytag’s presence provided people with collective identities, senses of place, and general cultural ways. In other words, the badges of pride, traditions, memories, and legacies provided people with community cultural capital that was used to answer such questions as ‘What is our place in society?’ ‘Who are we?’ and ‘What do we symbolize?’ and to distinguish Newton from other surrounding communities.
However, the more that is given, the more that can be taken away. As the saying now goes, ‘Maytag was Newton, and Newton was Maytag.’

“They made all of their money in Newton and now they tell us Newton is the problem.” - Retired Maytag plant worker, Des Moines Register, May 11, 2006

After a few years of ‘rebalancing’ and ‘restructuring’ in efforts to turn Maytag into “a much leaner organization, capable of better serving customers and more rapid decision making” (Hussmann 2005b), Board of Directors put the Maytag Corporation up for sale in May 2005. After separate bids from New York investment firm Ripplewood Holdings and China’s Haier America, Whirlpool Corporation directors made an offer for Maytag two months later. Already the largest appliance manufacturer in the United States, Whirlpool directors had an opportunity to capture Maytag’s share of the market (Maytag was the third largest appliance manufacturing in the U.S.) and believed that the merger would benefit both Maytag and Whirlpool. On March 29, 2006, Justice Department members approved the $2.7 billion purchase with an understanding that “This transaction is not likely to harm consumer welfare” (Sherman 2006). A month later, Whirlpool officials announced the closing of all Maytag operations in Newton by October 2007, eliminating a total of 1,800 jobs.

Although the news sent shockwaves throughout the community, residents were not totally blindsided by the announcement. Layoffs at the headquarters office and Plant 2 were a regular occurrence during the four years prior to Whirlpool’s acquisition of Maytag. Employment levels at the headquarters office decreased to an estimated 800 workers and, for the first time in decades, employment fell below 1,000 workers at the manufacturing plant. Frequent reports of Maytag’s financial troubles worried many people because it was well known that Newton’s manufacturing plant was Maytag’s most expensive facility due to the
combination of high labor costs and outdated technology, a fact that Maytag officials frequently referenced as a reason for making Newton’s plant ineligible for new product platforms. Another red flag surfaced in October 2005 when Maytag’s CEO Ralph Hake, who previously served as a Whirlpool executive, put his Newton home on the market.

The writing was on the wall, but hope did exist. A number of community officials and local politicians were optimistic that the local history would figure in to any decisions on Maytag’s future in Newton. Congressperson Leonard Boswell suggested, “Maytag’s roots are here, their history is here, and their success has been here. I believe that given a chance and the opportunity, they will keep it here” (Hussman 2005c). People also pointed to the dependability of local workers, hoping their recognized work ethic would help keep Newton’s plant in operation – no matter who was in charge. The local UAW president argued, "We've got the workforce, we've got the commitment, we've got the education and we've certainly got the know-how to build products" (Karr 2006a).

Yet, hope, plus a state incentive package worth close to $100 million, could not triumph over cited issues of ‘costs’ and ‘global competition.’ Speaking of the Newton closings, Whirlpool’s CEO Jeff Fettig explains, “We are taking these actions to rapidly restore the competitiveness of the Maytag brands. This is an important step in our integration process that will allow us to drive continuing performance improvements and will better align our brands, products and operations with the markets we serve domestically and globally” (Hussman 2006b). Some workers agreed. Many products once made in Newton had been outsourced to cheaper labor locations both in America and abroad. Other workers saw corporate executives using the latest financial strategies to monopolize a larger piece of
the free market, no matter the social consequences of the actions. In a letter to the editor, a former plant worker expresses a widely held point of view among local Maytag workers:

Just sharing some thoughts about Maytag. As a 30-year employee I’ve seen lots of changes. At one time, the factory in Newton was it. Fred Maytag’s philosophy about quality was: make it yourself and control the quality of as many of the parts as you can. It proved true then, and perhaps even more so in today’s world. At that time, Maytag had their own foundry and made its own rubber for the hoses and rubber components. We even made our own nuts and bolts. Their dependability was legendary. An American icon was forged in Newton. The machines lasted for years! I think it was in the late ’70s that we had one machine running in the test lab 24/7 and the last I knew, it was still running (maybe 100 years’ worth of lifetime use). In those days we were proud to be a Maytager.

Then gradually, things changed. Ironically, afraid of being bought up by competitors, the solution was to get bigger. Thus Jenn-Air and Hoover and a host of other companies were brought into the fold. Decisions like plane tickets for vacuum cleaners and outsourcing of the parts we used to make ourselves were made. New philosophies, like our products are “over engineered” and shouldn’t last that long. Ten years max would be better for the replacement market. Then the Neptune came along, and even with its $1,000 price tag, sold better than anyone would have dreamed. Despite all the defects, the girls in the design evaluation laboratory had pointed out, it was rushed into production. Then that mildew smell, and soon after, the lawsuits. Maytagers lost their swagger. They took away the quality control inspectors and now there isn’t even a quality control department. We’ve lost almost all of our people driving the quality and today just struggle to make production. Just a few years ago the Newton facility alone cranked out 10,000 units a day! Today we make around 2,000.

Before the last contract expired the company began to show us chart after chart about how much we cost them and how overpaid we are in Newton and how much cheaper other facilities operate. So union members voted to pay more for benefits. “Wasn’t enough,” Ralph said, even though the company accepted the contract. Even before that he had decided to quit advertising the products we make in Newton.

When was the last time you saw one of our products in an advertisement or Ol’ Lonely for that matter? The “Neptunes” you see advertised come from Korea with Maytag’s name on them, as do the blenders, mixers, irons and some microwaves. Why? As a fellow in the marketing department told me recently, “they advertise what makes them the most money.” So how much of that $1,000 washing machine from Korea is profit? We all knew this day was coming.

Out of desperation, the stockholders voted for the sellout, me included. Management’s decisions left us with no alternative. Our union president has requested the attorney general to look into any improprieties in this deal. The fact that the board hires Whirlpool’s ex-CFO as our new CEO and almost immediately stock price begins to drop, eventually to a low of $9.50 a share. The company is sold to Whirlpool and he gets rewarded with $19 million for a job well done? (Cunningham 2006).
The decision to end Newton’s Maytag operations drastically altered the community’s social structures. In addition to the financial shift that accompanies the loss of a primary employer and tax base contributor, residents encountered a loosening of cultural moorings that disrupted the efficacy of established community cultural capital. The closings of the Maytag plant and Maytag headquarters left the community without its two principal *cultural niches* – the social spaces in which the community’s cultural capital is produced. A local church leader describes the experience following the news of Maytag’s departure, “There was such sadness in the community Wednesday. It’s like the absence of the Twin Towers in New York City. With Maytag closing, there’s a hole in Newton and the sense of identity for even those who didn’t work there” (Ragsdale 2006). The closings also influenced additional cultural niches. For example, the Maytag picnic and Maytag Queen pageant are traditions of the past, and Maytagers are now less familiar faces around downtown. A Midtown Café employee touches on the latter, “We used to get all the Maytag office people in here, and now there’s no Maytag office” (CBS News 10/21/2007). And, given the company’s history, a Maytag float was notably absent from Newton’s sesquicentennial parade.

While some of Newton’s cultural niches disappeared, other niches underwent a symbolic transformation by which the ‘fit’ of established cultural capital decreases in the wake of the Maytag’s departure. Compared to the past, such spaces as the Maytag Dairy Farms (Figure 5) and Maytag Park/Pool/Bowl lose their ‘sacred’ qualities and overall compatibility within the community’s existing social structures. Likewise, rather than marking dependability of Maytag products and of Maytag workers, the Ol’ Lonely Repair
Man is now just another corporate mascot in the eyes of residents. The totality of these transformations is a loss of what Walter Benjamin (1968) described as the ‘aura’ of cultural forms. The disruption of meaningful connections between Newton’s cultural heritage and its emerging social reality results in a loss of meaningful psychological connections between residents and previously established cultural capital forms.

Figure 5. *Maytag Dairy Farms entrance sign. The Dairy Farms is still owned by Maytag family members, although it is no longer associated with the Maytag Corporation*

Because the community changes result in a mismatch between established cultural capital and Newton’s new social reality, and people are not able to re-create cultural niches fast enough to keep up with the changes, residents experience a de-culturation (Bourdieu 1977; Goffman 1961) of community cultural capital. A local artist describes the experience,
“Maytag was our identity here. Now that it’s gone, it’s like Newton is going from a blue collar town to a no collar town” (Fieldnotes 8/21/2007).

While the deep connection between the Maytag name and Newton’s culture makes this case somewhat unique, Newton is certainly not the first company town to lose its company. Many excellent studies document the plight of laid-off workers following plant closings and similar mass layoff occurrences in communities (e.g. Beneria and Santiago 2001; Bensman and Lynch 1987; Cottle 2001; Zippay 1991). Other valuable studies document the impact of plant closings and mass layoffs on local economies (e.g. Anderson 2000; Hossfeld, Legerton, Dumas, and Keuster 2003; Mellon 2002; Moore 1996) and local cultures (e.g. Cowie and Heathcott 2003; Dudley 1994; High and Lewis 2007; Linkon and Russo 2002; Newman 1988; Pappas 1989). Taking the advice of Cowie and Heathcott (2003), I now move “beyond the ruins” to examine the management of contemporary economic restructurings by focusing on how Newton residents re-create cultural capital and how the re-creation process shapes overall community sustainability within Newton’s post-Maytag reality.
CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

The following chapter is divided into two sections. First, I outline my theoretical framework for the study. I describe the conceptual tools used to examine how Newton residents re-create community cultural capital as well as the general theoretical lens through which Newton’s cultural changes are interpreted. In the second section, I outline my research methods. I explain the techniques used to collect data and the procedures used to analyze the data.

Theory

Community Capitals Framework

Flora and Flora’s (2008) Community Capitals Framework (CFF) offers a way to analyze community change and community development efforts. CFF conceptualizes a community (i.e., a defined place or location where groups of people interact for mutual support) as possessing various resources: cultural, natural, human, social, financial, political, and built. These resources become capital when they help maintain community relations and develop new community resources. The following is a brief description of each community capital, highlighting ways the capital relates to cultural capital:

1. Cultural capital includes meanings, values, and beliefs that community members use to achieve collective identities, senses of place, and general cultural ways such as local traditions, dress, and language. Cultural capital has both noneconomic and economic implications. For example, a community’s collective identity usually does not have direct economic implications; however, collective identity does bestow feelings of belonging upon
community members. On the other hand, people commonly use cultural capital forms, such as a community’s history (e.g. ‘See Jessie James’s Hideout’ – Stanton, Missouri) or an assortment of cultural attractions (e.g. ‘City of Museums’ – Washington D.C.), to help lure consumers into a location.

2. **Natural capital** includes resources that abide in a particular location, such as weather, geographic isolation, landscape, and natural amenities. Natural capital often shapes cultural capital connected to a community by providing possibilities for and limits to cultural formations. For example, community members often need available land to build tourist attractions or aesthetically desirable landscapes if they want to become a ‘destination town.’

3. **Human capital** is the skills, abilities, and health of people within a community. Human capital is converted into cultural capital when people recognize a community’s work ethic, distinctive products, or aging population.

4. **Social capital** includes mutual trust, reciprocity, and formal/informal networks that exist among and within local groups. Social capital relies heavily on cultural capital (e.g. shared identities among individuals helps foster group trust) just as cultural capital relies heavily on social capital (e.g. cohesive social networks serve as foundations for creating senses of place).

5. **Financial capital** refers to the financial resources – real money, stocks, bonds, possessions, etc. – available for investment. Community members can use the financial capital of state, market, private enterprises, and civil society to underwrite infrastructure/business development, to support entrepreneurship, and to accumulate wealth for future development. Community members can use financial capital to set up homes and businesses, to build local infrastructures, and to invest in their futures. Financial capital
relates to cultural capital in multiple ways. For example, how community members make a living helps shape collective identities (e.g. college town, white or blue collar community, destination town). Collective identities also shape peoples’ use of financial capital, including investment and spending practices.

6. Political capital refers to individuals’ ability to engage in actions that influence community affairs via organizations, social connections, and overall voices of groups. Local groups who possess high political capital have greater influence on what cultural capital forms are created and sustained than people with less political capital. In addition, a community’s cultural capital affects how political capital is invested by shaping what is possible or desirable for a community.

7. Built capital includes the infrastructure that supports the above community capitals. It can be reserved for special interests or be available to all community members. Built capital often serves as the social spaces where cultural capital is created. Honoring a building’s history and naming a road in recognition of a locally significant person are ways built capital is converted cultural capital.

CCF’s focus on various community capitals presents conceptual tools to examine the interaction of different community resources in creating and maintaining cultural capital. This focus acknowledges that cultural capital does not appear out of thin air; instead, it is an achievement of various community capitals in concert with each other. Newton’s Maytag culture, for example, was achieved through various interactions of community capitals: natural (land for Maytag park/pool/bowl and manufacturing and headquarters facilities), human (manufacturing skills), social (formal/informal ties and trust embodied in Maytag centered relationships), financial (Maytag money earned, invested and spent in Newton),
political (maintaining Maytag’s presence/influence in Newton) and built (Maytag work facilities, park/pool/bowl). When residents embrace recognitions such as the Maytag town or a dependable, hard-working community, the meanings secured within the Maytag culture become cultural capital.

There are multiple social spaces within a community where residents achieve cultural capital. Products of both formal and informal arrangements, these cultural niches help structure, but not fully determine, meanings that residents use to create their distinct cultural ways (Figure 6). As long as a community’s social rhythm continues without any major interruptions, cultural niches will remain functional and residents will continue to make cultural capital.

![Figure 6 – Production of Cultural Capital](image)

The salience of a community’s cultural capital relates to the number of cultural niches that structure particular meanings and to a cultural niche’s reach throughout the community. For instance, Newton’s recognition as the Maytag town was created and maintained by what
can be understood as primary and secondary cultural niches. Maytag’s headquarters office and manufacturing facilities were primary niches that had significant cultural reach. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the headquarters office and manufacturing facilities provided the main social spaces in which people shaped the badges of pride, rituals, and Maytag legacies. Maytag Park/Pool/Bowl and the variety of activities within each space served as secondary niches that reinforced the collective identity of Newton as the Maytag town.

Community Hysteresis and Re-Creating Cultural Capital

While a community’s social rhythm depends upon some degree of regularity, community members are constantly adjusting to minor changes in political, social, and financial forces. During these occasions, arrangements of community capitals do not dramatically transform because people adapt to the changes without missing a step. At other times, a community’s social rhythm undergoes a major change that significantly alters community capital arrangements. Wars, terrorism acts, mass layoffs, and natural disasters all represent such situations during which the efficacy of community capitals may decrease or disappear completely.

Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical framework primarily concentrated on social reproduction, but he employed the concept of ‘hysteresis’ (sometimes referred to as the Don Quixote effect) to describe major social changes that cause the efficacy of previously effective cultural capital forms to disappear (1977: 83, 1984: 142-157, 1990a: 59-62). Although he made relatively little use of the idea (Grenfell 2006), Bourdieu specifically conceptualized hysteresis as a phase during which people experience a mismatch between once reliable cultural capital and a new social reality that results from a major structural shift within an institution or any organized social space. In his analysis of colonial Algeria, for
example, Bourdieu examined the incompatibilities between traditional agrarian cultural capital and the realities of an emerging money economy (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). More recently, Bourdieu and co-authors highlight similar situations evident throughout contemporary Western Europe and North America (Bourdieu et al. 1999). Encountering new and unfamiliar ways of life, a labor activist illustrates how transitions in the political economy foster mismatches between previously reliable cultural capital and contemporary neoliberal conditions:

I’m a little bit lost in all this. I don’t know about the others...[long pause]. I’ve changed perhaps, or the world has changed around me, or else I didn’t see things changing, I don’t know, but in any case, I’m a bit lost...Because, as far as I’m concerned, I was one of those people who believed that the ideas I was fighting for, the ideas that I identified myself with, were ideas that would stand the test of time...(Bourdieu 1999b: 319).

While people feel ‘out of place and time’ due to this mismatch, they eventually ‘catch up’ with the social change, re-creating their cultural capital along the way.

Keeping a focus on the relationship between cultural capital and shifts within social space, the concept of hysteresis is applicable to a community level analysis. When a major structural shift significantly affects a community’s stability, the shift simultaneously transforms the productivity of once functional cultural niches and the compatibility of established cultural capital forms within the community’s emerging social reality (for examples of such shifts, see Dudley 1994; High and Lewis 2007; Linkon and Russo 2002; Newman 1988). For Newton residents, the local Maytag closings represent the shift within the community that results in hysteresis. As I outline in Chapter 1, the shift not only disrupted Newton’s financial structures, but it also resulted a mismatch between previously reliable cultural capital forms and the community’s post-Maytag reality.
A cultural mismatch is only one side of community hysteresis. Re-creating cultural capital to catch up with a new reality is the second aspect. Re-creating cultural capital operates via two main strategies. First, people attempt to maintain previous cultural capital by transforming it in ways that match the new reality. This often occurs through various beautification projects in hopes of revitalizing existing social spaces (Bennett 2006; Zukin 1995) and/or the construction of new social spaces that commemorate previous cultural forms (Dandaneu 1996; Harvey 1989; Savage 2003). Second, people create cultural capital forms that fit the reality by using new meanings for establishing collective identities, senses of place, and general cultural ways (O’Hara 2003; Petrzelka 2004; Zukin 1995). It is this re-creation of new cultural capital that helps community members successfully pass through the hysteresis phase.

It is important to acknowledge that community members’ re-creation of cultural capital is limited with respect to the emergence of new social structural boundaries (Flora and Flora 2008). In other words, people must play the cards they are dealt within their new reality when re-creating cultural capital. Residents’ access to various capital forms at once limit and provide possibilities for what meanings and representations can be created during a community’s transition. For example, if people want to create a sense of place as a ‘community of the arts,’ they need the appropriate capital forms (in particular, social, human, and built capital forms) for such a recognition to surface. Furthermore, the re-creation process is also limited by the desirability of specific meanings (Dudley 1994; Zukin 1995). That is, even if the appropriate structures exist to develop a certain collective identity, people may select not to embrace the recognition. Thus, the re-creation of cultural capital can be
understood as a strategic practice by which community members consciously embrace or reject potential cultural capital forms.

**Making a Post-Modern Turn**

When turning away from a familiar past into a new social reality, community members not only strategically play the cards they are dealt, but they also re-create cultural capital according to the new rules of the game as a whole (Curtis 2003; Dudley 1994; Harvey 1989, 1994; Linkon and Russo 2002; O’Hara 2003). Because the rules of game are often centered in sustainability methods that differ from those of the past, people must utilize new financial, political, and cultural strategies in efforts to adapt to their new realities (Anderson 2000; Gotham 2007; Harvey 1989, 1994; Sumner 2005).

In describing such fundamental changes, researchers employ a variety of concepts. Researchers, depending on their analytical standpoint, use concepts such as postmodern, postindustrial, deindustrial, and flexible capitalism as heuristic devices to highlight cultural, political, technological, and financial transformations throughout society. Each concept emphasizes a turn away from a past into a new historical period. Because the present analysis is interested in cultural dimensions of community change, I employ the idea of a *postmodern turn* to theoretically frame the overall cultural consequences of Newton’s transition and to theorize the implications of the cultural changes on rebuilding community sustainability.

Many researchers argue that the usefulness of “postmodern culture” as a theoretical framework relates to how the framework is applied to the social world, and researchers apply the framework in a number of ways (for reviews see Alvesson 2002: 18-62; Best and Kellner 1997). As a theoretical framework, researchers use the idea of postmodern culture to describe
changes in social philosophies, art and literature, politics, architecture and design, and general structures of feeling in everyday life. Just as researchers use postmodern culture to describe a variety of cultural changes, they also explain the phenomenon in a variety of ways, including the rise of multinational capitalism, technological inventions, new stages of cultural globalization, increased media penetration in everyday life, and contemporary advancements in capitalist modes of productions.

I follow Fredric Jameson (1991), David Harvey (1989, 1994) and Perry Anderson (1998) by conceptualizing postmodern culture as cultural expressions that reflect trends of contemporary capitalism. Although the theorists do not apply their frameworks directly to community life, instead focusing on social philosophies, art and literature, and architecture and design, they share a common thread of connecting postmodern culture to social conditions of late capitalism by highlighting the relationship between cultural change and economic strategies evident in the latest stage of consumer-driven, globally interconnected capitalism. Focusing on the relationship between cultural change and economic strategies of contemporary capitalism, I believe that the emergence of a postmodern culture in Newton reflects a turn into a new historical period for residents in which methods of community sustainability secured in cultural production and local entrepreneurial-based economies replace earlier methods of sustainability secured in an industrial centered, manufacturing-based local economy.

In addition to agreeing that postmodern culture is a product of contemporary capitalism, Jameson, Harvey, and Anderson contend that the expressions of postmodern culture embody a number of characteristics (Alvesson 2002: 21-27; Anderson 1998; Garner 2007: 595-597; Griswold 1994: 147-150; Harvey 1989, 1994; Jameson 1991):
1. A promotion of cultural consumption, primarily through a production of spectacles (e.g. festivals and sporting events) and a commodification of cultural production to capture consumer dollars.

2. Meanings are flattened as surface intensities become emphasized over deeper meanings and personal connections with cultural forms.

3. A waning of affect takes place insofar people are less likely to make personal connections with cultural forms.

4. Nostalgia replaces past collective and individual identities that are no longer viable within new social conditions.

5. Fragmentation of meanings occurs and is embraced by people who are adjusting to less stable, more discontinuous social conditions.

6. A depoliticization of social life in favor of more playful and increasingly distant relationships to social affairs.

If a postmodern turn is a valid phenomenon, many of these characteristics are likely to surface during the re-creation of cultural capital in Newton. Along with adjusting to methods of community sustainability that are common fixtures of contemporary capitalism, residents must re-create cultural capital within these sustainability methods. In turn, community members’ re-creation of collective identities, senses of place, and other cultural ways not only reflect their post-Maytag life, but the re-creation process also reflects Newton’s economic shift that is secured in contemporary capitalism as a whole.

**Research Methods**

I use a modified ethnography to examine Newton’s cultural changes. The concept of ‘modified’ ethnography differs from traditional ideas of ethnographic research because it
acknowledges the constraints of less than total immersion and a limited time period in a particular social setting. A modified ethnography also relies more limited sampling procedures of the people, places, and events that are under examination (Burton 2004).

The ethnographic design consists of an across triangulation research strategy, including participant and non-participant observation, content analysis of communication materials, and semi-structured interviews. As Denzin (1970: 308) explains, “The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies.” The variety of qualitative research techniques provide the most suitable approach to my research because of its ability to capture the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the meaning making process with respect to community members re-creation of cultural capital.

**Collecting Data**

I collected data from May 2006 to April 2009. After my decision to examine Newton’s cultural changes, I prepared for my field work by researching the community’s past, present, and potential future social contexts. This pre-research phase (Stoecker 2005) included becoming familiar with Newton’s history with the Maytag Company/Corporation, tracking media coverage of the announcement of Maytag’s impending departure from Newton, reading an online version of Newton’s daily newspaper (newtondailynews.com), and learning demographic information about Newton. In addition, I talked to former Newton residents who were living in Ames, Iowa, where I attended graduate school, about community life, and through these conversations I established contacts with current Newton residents.
I visited the community on five different occasions before moving to Newton in July 2007. During my first two visits with Iowa State University colleagues, we visited the Maytag headquarters and manufacturing facilities (Figure 7), Maytag park, pool, and bowl, local businesses, and the construction site of the, at the time, soon to be opened Iowa Speedway racetrack (Figure 8). I concentrated on the community’s physical layout (e.g. street arrangements, school locations, etc.) and searched for an apartment on my third visit, and then rented an apartment (a single bedroom in a former church, one block south of the town square) on my fourth visit. On my final visit, I toured the Newton’s branch of Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), where I taught an Introductory to Sociology course during the Fall semester of 2007.

**Figure 7.** Newton’s Maytag manufacturing facility, locally known as ‘Plant 2’
As a Newton resident, I conducted participant and non-participant observation from July 2007 to October 2008. I distinguish participant observation from non-participant observation according to my actual and/or self-perceived direct participation within a social context. For instance, I categorize my observations at local festivals, community forums, and day-to-day activities (e.g. neighborhood walks, going to grocery stores, restaurants, and bars) in which I was directly involved, to various degrees, in the production and ultimate outcome of a particular social situation as participant observation. On the other hand, I categorize my observations of situations, such as city council meetings, community forums, and organized community rallies, in which my participation was minimal and likely did not affect the production and outcome of the situation as non-participant observation. I conducted both forms of observation in public and open settings, understood as a places where anyone has a right to be as outlined by law and tradition (Lofland and Lofland 1995: 32-33).
My participant and non-participant observations are further distinguished by individuals’ awareness of my presence as a researcher. Examples of such instances during which my research interests were not known include observations at racing competitions at the Iowa Speedway, restaurants, farmers’ markets, music concerts, and other social settings where my presence did not present any form of risk or harm to those involved. In other public and open settings, especially smaller social contexts (less than ten people), I made my research interests known. In these situations, including art receptions and events for experienced and would-be entrepreneurs, I introduced myself and explained my research questions to attendees. At other times, such as monthly gatherings of local community transition groups, my presence as a researcher was already known, but I still introduced myself and I explained my research to those in attendance who I had not previously discussed my research. Furthermore, I revealed my research interests to people in all situations when asked about my presence in Newton. As such, I did not conduct any research in closed or private settings, and I did not attempt to conceal my research from any individuals during my residency in Newton.

Denzin’s (1970: 189-194) discussion of Gold’s (1958) typology of “complete participant” (i.e. researchers do not make their presence as investigators known) and “participant as observer” (i.e. researchers make their presence as investigators known) describes the main advantages and drawbacks of informing people of research interests when conducting field work. For the most part, each strategy’s upside represents the other strategy’s downside. When researchers do not make their investigations known, their field work is not obtrusive. While potentially affecting the setting of observation, particularly smaller contexts, researchers who make their investigations known can probe deeper into a
situation by asking people questions that cannot be answered through observations alone. When an occasion arose during which meanings needed clarification, I took note of my questions and asked community members for an explanation at a later date.

Although my field work was conducted in a variety of settings, I centered my observations on sites where community cultural capital production does or potentially could occur. Much of my initial field work, outside general day-to-day activities, city council meetings, and racing events at the Iowa Speedway, occurred in settings in which people concentrated on Newton’s transition into post-Maytag life. For instance, members of non-profit groups, such as Newton Transformation Council (NTC) and Newton Development Corporation (NDC), sponsored a number of community transition forums. At these forums, Newton residents, including local business people, city officials, and former Maytag workers, talked over and considered the community’s financial future, possible job opportunities in Newton, and overall ideas of what Newton is going to represent without Maytag’s presence.

My initial field work also involved attending gatherings for Newton’s sesquicentennial celebration. The celebration consisted of a day-long festival around the town square, a community-wide church service and picnic at Maytag Park, and other activities that provided spaces for community members to commemorate Newton’s birthday. In line with the celebration’s motto – ‘Honoring our Heritage, Shaping our Future’ – the gatherings allowed people to reflect upon Newton’s past as well as speculate about the community’s future.

While Newton’s previous cultural capital forms were of interest, I focused primarily on community members’ constructions of new cultural ways throughout my early observations. At transition forums and sesquicentennial celebration, for example, Newton
residents often commented that they must be respectfully mindful of their relationship with the Maytag name; at the same time, they remarked that the community must move beyond the identification by re-creating recognitions of Newton as something besides the Maytag town within their post-Maytag era. At other events, such as rallies against a proposed casino in Newton, I focused not only on residents' constructions of new community culture, but also on their constructions of what they did not want Newton to represent. Furthermore, understanding meaning-making as a social practice, I concentrated on the vocabulary of desired cultural capital and on the actions that would convert the desires into actual cultural capital.

My data logging, or careful information recording (Lofland and Lofland 1995), of field work was carried out in multiple ways. I documented most of my observations through taking field notes. These notes started as, in Lofland and Lofland’s (1995: 89-92) words, ‘mental notes’ and ‘jotted notes’ before becoming ‘full field notes.’ In other words, I starting data logging in the field by consciously orienting myself to remember the who, how many, physical features of settings, who said what to whom, and other event characteristics. Along with taking mental notes, I documented observations and related thoughts in a small notepad. I was careful to document observations and thoughts in a timely manner so I could maintain the highest degree of accuracy as possible. Following periods of field work, I quickly organized mental and jotted notes into full field notes of the events under examination.

Typical field notes described physical settings of events, participants and their interactions, things heard and seen (verbatim accounts were distinguished from those that were paraphrased or based on general recall), and the date, time, and locations of observations. Along with written field notes, I documented field work by photographing
settings, especially larger social contexts, and by ‘talking into tape,’ (Lofland and Lofland 1995: 92) or making oral jottings into a tape recorder, and later transcribing the audio recordings into full field notes.

I used content analysis of communication materials throughout the study as a second source of my data triangulation. This data included local, regional, and national media coverage, community-based literature of non-profit groups, archival information, and other written sources of related interest. I personally gathered most of the written materials, and I was introduced to some articles and community-based literature by colleagues, Newton residents, and friends. Along with written materials, I analyzed built materials such as billboards, murals, banners, flags, and sculptures. When meanings of built materials were unclear, I discussed proper interpretations with the responsible parties involved in materials’ construction or with other individuals who possessed knowledge of the meanings.

Similar to my observations, I used content analysis of communication materials to uncover information concerning Newton’s past, present, and future cultural capital forms. Materials on Newton’s history and corresponding growth with the Maytag Company helped provide contextual insight about the research questions under examination. Recent written and built materials supplied information about present understandings and possible future directions of shared community meanings. The written materials supplied valuable information regarding Whirlpool’s acquisition of Maytag and local residents’ reflections upon Maytag’s departure from Newton.

Along with gaining contextual insight, I used content analysis to collect information about the re-creation of cultural capital as a social practice. For example, Newton Daily News articles provided insight about the responsible parties, locations, and overall efforts
involved in creating new collective identities and senses of place. Likewise, media coverage of Newton’s transition provided information about residents’ resistance of potential cultural capital forms.

I also gathered data by conducting 19 qualitative interviews with a variety of Newton residents, including former Maytag workers, city employees, entrepreneurs, artists, and community transition group members. While my sample consists of individuals from different backgrounds, I concentrated on interviewing people who were directly or indirectly involved in re-creating cultural capital. Interviewees were obtained through purposive and snowball samplings. I have not used interviewees’ actual names and have not included information that could possibly identify them to ensure their confidentiality. All interviews were conducted at a location that was chosen by the interviewees and each interview lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour. Interviews were guided by a semi-structure design (Denzin 1970; Lofland and Lofland 1995) that allowed a set of standard questions to be asked to everyone, but were flexible so they could speak in their own terms and freely add information not directly addressed by my questions.

During interviews, I asked residents about Newton’s cultural changes and the perceived causes and desirability of the cultural changes. I focused my questions on the actions that were occurring or were planned to create certain community cultural forms, and I focused on the relationship between creating new cultural ways and establishing new methods of community sustainability. I also used interviews to ask questions about specific interpretations, both personal and those of others, about cultural changes and to gain clarity about matters that developed during field work or content analysis. For example, I noticed in summer of 2008 that a set of community banners around the town square was replaced by
new set of racing inspired flags, which signified the beginning of the racing season at the Iowa Speedway. Not knowing if the banners were used in 2007, interviews with city employees helped clarify when the flags were first used.

As Bourdieu argued, investigations of research questions are best performed when theory and method inform each other rather than being kept separate (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). With this in mind, I constantly revised my theoretical framework during my collection and analysis of data, and these revisions influenced where I conducted my observations, the communication materials I analyzed, and the people I interviewed throughout my research.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was an ongoing process rather than a distinct stage. Following periods of data collection, I organized field notes and analyses of communication materials and interviews. Next, I coded both manifest and latent themes concerning Newton’s cultural changes that inductively emerged from the data. These classifications were then sorted into analytic categories that linked data to conceptual and theoretical considerations (Lofland and Lofland 1995: 186-193; Miles and Huberman 1994: 56-62). For example, recurrent associations between Newton and auto-racing identifications were coded as ‘Newton as a racing community’ and sorted into a category of ‘potential cultural capital’ as opposed to a ‘past cultural capital’ category.

After initial coding of data, my coding became more selective as some themes re-emerged and others were less frequent. This second round of coding allowed for a continued focusing of analytic categories while other categories were collapsed, further separated, or
dropped from analysis (Lofland and Lofland 1995: 192-193). I utilized the more focused categories in my ensuing data collection to validate and/or revise analytic categories.

Next, I used memoing to compare and contrast themes within and across categories and to elaborate on themes with respect to my theoretical framework (Lofland and Lofland 1995: 193-197). This served two purposes: 1) it allowed overall conceptual and theoretical themes to become more focused; 2) it allowed additional theory building based on the focused themes. For example, comparing and contrasting data regarding emphases on the advertisement of the arts and the advertisement of community festivals/celebratory events revealed similar patterns of promoting new types of cultural consumption to non-Newton residents in Newton’s post-Maytag era. Acknowledging these patterns, I developed theoretical considerations of the re-creation of cultural capital of the arts and festivals as representing new cultural ways in Newton, but also as a part of the community’s new methods of sustainability as a destination town.

I also used memos to document the interaction of community capitals in the re-creation of cultural capital. In particular, by integrating related memos I analyzed and elaborated on how Newton residents used various community capitals to ‘bridge the gap’ between desired cultural capital and actual cultural capital. When examining the desired cultural capital of ‘Newton as arts community,’ for instance, I noticed concentrated efforts to develop both social and human capitals among residents. In turn, these endeavors increased community members’ participation in artistic events and increased the visibility of the arts culture across the community.

Throughout my data analysis, diagramming was employed to visually outline orderings of theoretical themes and relationships between concepts (Lofland and Lofland
1995: 197-201; Miles and Huberman 1994). During the beginning stages of analysis, I arranged single-case displays to visualize early data patterns. These displays were useful in detecting commonalities among written memos. During later stage of analysis, I organized two-by-two displays to note cultural capital forms and their role in Newton’s new methods of community sustainability, along with the various cultural niches that structure the respective meanings and the community capitals that residents use in the meaning production. Taken together, diagramming was an important procedure in organizing conceptual themes, summarizing theoretical conclusions, and preparing for the write-up of analysis.

As mentioned above, data analysis was ongoing rather than a distinct stage. In addition to constantly coding and re-coding data, writing and refining memos, and organizing data displays, I continuously verified my findings and conclusions with Newton residents (Stoecker 2005). For example, I discussed classifications of ‘potential cultural capital’ during formal interviews, but also during informal conversations to help confirm and disconfirm the emergence of new community cultural capital forms in Newton. This verification process not only helped gather multiple points of view on the re-creation of cultural capital, but it also served to enhance the validity of my conclusions.
PART II

“JUST ADD A SECOND ‘W’ TO NEWTON, YOU GET A ‘NEW-TOWN’”
- LOCAL PASTOR, SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION, AUGUST 5, 2007

While Maytag directors were ‘rebalancing’ and ‘restructuring’ organizational operations in 2005, community leaders, acknowledging Maytag’s uncertain future, were outlining strategies to help ‘reinvent’ and ‘revitalize’ Newton. Almost two years before Whirlpool’s acquisition of Maytag, city officials and state politicians began focusing on a possible post-Maytag life. Consequently, a moving forward discourse surfaced throughout the community. This discourse emphasizes embracing change, staying optimistic, being pro-active, and developing a community ‘rebirth.’ Iowa State Senator Dennis Black displays these ideas in a Newton Daily News column directed at Newton residents:

The only sure thing is that there will be change. At this point, no one should assume these changes will be disadvantageous to the community, and conversely, no one should assume them to be positive. The truth is, frankly, no one knows. Whatever will be, will be! Then, we make the best of it, because Newton is evolving. If Maytag ‘stays,’ Newton and its citizens will rise to the occasion, and our community will improve and become more productive and prosper. Should there be adverse changes, the leadership and citizens of the community will respond with their ingenuity and resolve to protect the economy and quality in a way different from the past. This is normal. Think about it! What in your life is static? Everything is dynamic – change is natural, inevitable and healthy. With globalization, we have to expect change, and likewise, direct that change to a positive result (Black 2005).

The period prior to Whirlpool’s acquisition of Maytag was difficult for many people. Maytag workers and their families became more uncertain about their futures as Maytag’s future in Newton became more in doubt. Some people remained optimistic, while others grew more pessimistic. In a letter the editor, a resident expresses the latter point of view, “Maybe I’m wrong, but I feel the general consensus in Newton is Maytag is leaving Newton, it’s just a question of when” (Richardson 2005). Local business people also worried about life without Maytag in Newton. Understanding that Maytag was the source of more than a
quarter of the total paid wages in Jasper County, people were concerned about the financial ripples effects across the community.

In addition to both working to keep Maytag’s presence in the community and developing post-Maytag agendas, city officials had to manage ‘the Maytag story’ in the face of increasing media coverage. For example, Newton’s Mayor Charles (‘Chaz’) Allen denounced a Wall Street Journal reporter’s perceptions about Newton’s future, including speculation about Newton becoming a “ghost town” (Wall Street Journal Editorial 5/27/2005). Abiding to the guidelines of the moving forward discourse, Allen concludes his response letter to the Wall Street Journal by stating, “In closing, my purpose is to focus not only the people of Newton but also those hearing about Newton for the first time on our future, not our past. As Newton moves forward into a new era, check back with us – we saved a place for you.”

The moving forward discourse was much more than words. A variety of actions, both directly and indirectly related to Maytag’s uncertain future, occurred before Whirlpool’s acquisition of Maytag, and the actions all provide a glimpse into the re-creation of community cultural capital following the Maytag closings. The most significant act was the construction of the Iowa Speedway – a 7/8 mile, auto-racing track with a capacity for over 40,000 spectators. Since 2000, the racetrack had been considered either by the Jasper County Board of Supervisors or the Newton City Council. After Jasper County board members gave up on the project, City Council members resurrected the idea and eventually obtained financial assistance from the state of Iowa to help complete the track’s construction. At the ‘festival-like’ groundbreaking ceremony in June 2005, former racecar drive Rusty Wallace (the track’s primary designer, part owner, and official spokesperson) stated that the speedway
would be an “economic shot in the arm” for a community uncertain about its future (Special to Newton Daily News 2005).

While the Iowa Speedway was becoming a reality for Newton residents, Renew Newton, a volunteer-led, privately funded group, started focusing on changing other community aspects. Renew Newton members – whose motto is ‘Reveal, Refresh. Revitalize.’ – began leading various efforts to improve the “physical appearance and spirit of the community” (Karr 2005). In addition to sponsoring a number of community murals and sculptures, group members organized the Iowa Sculpture Festival, a now annual event at Maytag Park. Working with the Newton Board of Realtors, Renew Newton members also sponsored a Red Pride campaign, encouraging people to decorate their homes with the color red and to plant red flowers as signs of community solidarity. As part of the campaign, city officials approved the painting of Newton High School’s mascot – a cardinal – on a water tower directly outside Newton’s town square (Figure 9). According to group members, the various beautification techniques and displays of solidarity were important for the community, but the efforts were also important for impressing visitors and tourists and for luring potential businesses into Newton. With the Iowa Speedway’s construction and the anticipated loss of Maytag operations, first impressions of the community were more important than ever.
Figure 9. As part of Renew Newton’s Red Pride campaign, Newton High School’s logo was painted on the north side of water tower, making it visible from the town square.

Understanding the importance of Newton residents putting to their best foot forward, the Greater Newton Area Chamber of Commerce contracted the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) to perform a ‘Downtown Assessment Visit’ in August 2005. The two-day assessment of the downtown area included a review of informational materials about Newton, driving and walking tours of the downtown, and interviews with various community stakeholders (IDED 2005). In their report, IDED officials stressed the need to view Newton’s downtown as a visual testimony of the community, a testimony that reflects Newton’s sense of place, history, and economic health. Like Renew Newton members, IDED officials encouraged residents to improve Newton’s aesthetic appeal not only for themselves, but also for people outside of the community:

Most of our memories are directly associated with a place. We ‘go back’ to places we feel good about. We ‘go back’ to places where we’ve had positive shopping experiences. We ‘go back’ to places where ‘we think’ we have had fun. We ‘go back’ to places we think are important. We are also attracted to places where ‘we think’ we will have a positive
experience. We must strive to make Newton a ‘go to’ kind of destination, not a ‘pass through to get somewhere else’ (IDED 2005).

In October 2005, shortly after Whirlpool directors’ bid for Maytag, Newton Daily News directors sponsored an event for approximately one hundred community leaders from various political, educational, and business circles. The daylong forum – ‘Forging Ahead: A Community Dialogue’ – focused on potential impacts of Maytag’s departure from the community. Many of the concerns at the forum surrounded financial issues such as keeping Maytag’s presence in Newton, expanding local jobs beyond an industrial base toward technological and service jobs, and promoting local entrepreneurship. Most participants agreed that in the future community members should be careful not to put “all our eggs in one basket” (Hussman 2005d).

Forum participants also discussed potential cultural issues, including the loss of community identity, the loss of community pride, a sense of loss in the quality of the community, believing there is no life after Maytag, and trying too hard to hold onto the past in a new future. To help neutralize some of these issues, participants discussed various strategies to revitalize Newton’s downtown area, to promote more inclusive community mentalities, and to build on existing community assets.

During the same month, Whirlpool officials organized the Newton Transformation Council (NTC) in anticipation of a merger with Maytag. At the time, the group consisted of people from the city government, local utility companies, the Newton Development Corporation (NDC), Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Department of Economic Development, and the Whirlpool Corporation. Although the NTC was not officially introduced to the community until after the announcement of the Maytag closings, group
members’ began to concentrate on assisting displaced Maytag workers, creating opportunities for would-be entrepreneurs, and focusing on the best reuse of the Maytag facilities. Overall, group members “knew they had to do something to transform the community from where it was now to where it could be in the future” (Interview DL).

When Whirlpool officials announced the closings of Newton’s Maytag manufacturing plant and headquarters office, residents reacted to the news by expressing a variety of emotions, including anger, disappointment, and relief. A Maytag retiree illustrates, “It’s a sad thing. But it gives us the finality of what we’ve all expected. I always hoped it wouldn’t [close] but in the back of our minds we all knew it would” (Lowe 2006). People, especially city officials and state politicians, stressed ongoing efforts to help rebuild Newton, both prior to and shortly following Whirlpool official’s announcement. In addition to highlighting the development of a local biodiesel plant and a new job center for former Maytag workers, some residents were optimistic about the construction of the Iowa Speedway. In the words of an area real estate agent, “Don’t forget about the racetrack. That’s going to bring in all kinds of business” (Harris 2006).

Not surprisingly, city leaders continued to reinforce the moving forward discourse across Newton. The discourse still emphasized embracing change, staying optimistic, being pro-active, and developing a community rebirth; however, city leaders added another dimension that emphasized collective agency. In a Newton Daily News column, NTC’s initial chairs underline residents’ ability to decide what will become of Newton:

Like anyone going through transition, it's easy to get bogged down in the details, failing to see the big picture. Post-Maytag, it's easy for us to focus on what we are losing. This is understandable given the long history of Maytag in our community and the wonderful benefits the community has realized because of its presence. But the big picture question for Newton is "What do we want to become and how do we want to define ourselves as a community?"

And the exciting thing is that we get to decide the answer to that question. We get to
decide!...What's Next? The first step is to determine a common community vision” (Allen and Price 2006).

In July 2006, NTC members organized a ‘Community in Transition Forum’ for nearly three hundred local business people and city officials. The forum served two main purposes. First, it was a ‘coming-out event’ where NTC members officially introduced the group to the community. During the forum, NTC members shared their plans to hold entrepreneurial fairs and to create a small-business development center. Second, the forum featured a rural development consultant who outlined strategies for helping Newton residents move forward into a new future. Along with discussing the need to create a new culture that is compatible with Newton’s social change, the consultant stressed community reinvention and the collective agency of Newton residents:

You have to start to think what you want to transform into. You have to get that type of thinking on the minds of the people of Newton. It can only come from what the people in Newton want. The future of the community is only in the hands of the hands of people in this town. You have the opportunity to invent yourself in the future. It’s an exciting opportunity (Hussmann 2006c).

Two months after NTC’s coming-out event, NTC members sponsored a ‘Community Visioning Forum’ before over three hundred community members to further examine how residents can transform Newton in the wake of Maytag’s departure. The forum moderator, the same consultant who directed NTC’s previous forum, continued emphasizing the importance of community reinvention and collective agency:

These are not ordinary times. The solutions for your future are solutions coming from the people of your community. It's like going from a tadpole to a frog. It's the same animal but different. The world you are going into is profoundly different than the world you're coming from (Hussmann 2006d).

To help residents move into their new world, forum participants discussed the context of their new reality and possible methods to help them navigate into post-Maytag life. Some of the methods included: the promotion of Newton as a recreation and tourism destination;
the expansion of cultural opportunities available by promoting the local arts community; using local expertise and facilities to foster research and development opportunities in agriculture, bio-fuel, and alternative energy products; promoting the quality work force to lure companies to Newton; and, promoting local entrepreneurial initiatives (Hussmann 2006d).

The totality of the forum was the development of a Community Vision Statement. While vision statements are largely symbolic, community organizers recognize the usefulness of such frameworks for underlining future community projects and priorities (Sanoff 2000; Walzer and Deller 1996). For forum participants, the statement was intended to “describe a future identity and the mission of how it will be achieved” (Jennings 2006). Newton’s community vision was revealed to the audience following a four-hour discussion of Newton’s future:

Newton aspires to become a center of excellence with world-class education, technology, research and development, and an innate culture of entrepreneurship. We seek to embrace and support diverse businesses and create enterprises that will put Newton on the map as a quality community of choice. We strive to create systems that fuel the world with renewable energy, and we desire to celebrate our gourmet foods that are premium, natural, and high in value. We wish to epitomize the quality community: smart, innovative, safe, fun, and cool. We aim to be the center for festivals and events that celebrate the arts and culture. Newton will exemplify the positive, small-town feel where rewarding opportunities enrich the lives of us all.

NTC members took advantage of the visioning forum’s momentum. Local business leaders, former Maytag-workers, school administrators, high school students, and other residents organized ‘action teams,’ including an entrepreneur team (responsible for proving information about starting small businesses), a youth/entertainment team (responsible for arranging community festivals and renovating the Maytag Bowl), and a marketing team (responsible for distributing copies of the vision statement to local organizations and media outlets). Headed by a designated project manager, the primary goal of the action teams was
to promote their respective dimensions of Newton’s vision statement and to promote the vision statement as a whole.

In addition to community transition groups, a number of local organizations, such as the Newton Convention and Visitors Bureau, Newton Board of Realtors, Newton Chamber of Commerce, and Newton Housing Development Corporation, came together near the end of 2006 to publicly advertise Newton as a desirable place to live, raise a family, and start businesses. Along with hopefully luring new residents and businesses into Newton, the two-week regional radio campaign was also an attempt to generate a positive impression of the community during the uncertain times.

All in all, by the end of 2006 there were many ongoing efforts regarding Newton’s turn into a post-Maytag life, and community members were proud of this fact. On the one hand, Newton residents were aware that they were under the microscope in terms of non-community members’ interest in Newton’s future directions. On the other hand, ideas of people hitting the pavement and seeking new opportunities opposed to sitting around and feeling sorry themselves matched the strong work ethic reputation of Newton residents. A NTC member touches on these points:

I mean it doesn’t matter where you go anymore. You say you are from Newton and people know what you are talking about. But I think a lot of that comes back to when Whirlpool first made the announcement that they were closing the factory here, Governor Vilsack was here and there was Emily DeRocco from Washington D.C., from the Department of Labor. There were just a lot of people here who wanted to help. So, not only has Newton been spreading word about themselves but those kind of people have stepped up. When other companies or towns face a similar situation they will say ‘why don’t you call Newton?’ The fact will did not allow ourselves to fall down was one of the things that impressed the government officials most. We did not sit around crying with our hands out. We got right on it and starting working on what are we going to do, how are we going to fix it (Interview EY).
CHAPTER THREE

“IT WOULD BE FITTING TO HAVE THE MILESTONE YEAR ALSO BE A TURNING POINT IN ESTABLISHING A NEW COMMUNITY IDENTITY.”
- BRYAN FRIEDMAN, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, NEWTON DAILY NEWS, JUNE 9, 2006

During 2007, the year of Newton’s 150th birthday, it was obvious that residents were turning away from a life as the Maytag town, but what type of life was the community turning into? During the transition, residents began asking the question “Who are we?” A Newton Daily News columnist ponders this question:

It is important to know who I am because if I don’t, I might confuse my readers. Much worse, I would soon lose my credibility with them. We like to know who people are so we know just what to expect from them. I believe the same is true of towns. If we don’t know the true identity of a place, how do we know if we want to live there? Last week I attended a two-day conference in Council Bluffs put on by the Main Street Iowa folks. My favorite speaker was a lady who assists towns in finding their identities, so that they may build a future based upon who they really are. It made me wonder, if she came here, just what would she say is Newton’s identity? (Grigsby 2007).

As mentioned above, the most common response to the “Who are we?” question was “We get to decide.” This attention on collective agency serves two related purposes (Bhattacharyya 1995; Checkoway 1995). First, it promotes social inclusion among community members. In turn, the feelings of inclusion increase the likelihood of residents’ participation in redevelopment efforts. Second, stressing collective agency instills a sense of empowerment among community members. Sharing a mindset of being in control of their destiny adds to the likelihood of residents’ participation in redevelopment efforts and, at the same time, it helps deflect attention away from unsettling issues that exist in the community.

Outside of encouraging social inclusion and instilling a sense of empowerment, the “We get to decide” line might be overstated. At closer look, the moving forward discourse
throughout the community outlines the new rules of the post-Maytag game in Newton.

Focusing on establishing specific methods of community sustainability as they moved into their new future, Newton residents, in effect, foreshadowed the establishment of new cultural capital forms.

This connection between the emergence of new methods of community sustainability and re-creating community cultural capital is not surprising when framing cultural change in terms of Bourdieu’s concept of hysteresis. Catching up with a new social reality, the re-creation of collective identities, senses of place, and other cultural ways accompanies a rebuilding financial lifelines. Creating cultural capital that reflects new methods of sustainability assists community members’ adjustment to contemporary social change by simultaneously making a culture that matches their reality and making a culture that supports their efforts in building new methods of sustainability. As Fitchen (1991: 265) argues, “Negotiating a firmer, current identity that is better matched with present-day economic, demographic, and social realities can help communities adjust to and benefit from, rather than be engulfed in and swallowed by, this era of change.” Thus, it is often the case that external socio-economic factors shape a community’s cultural changes, permitting the development of some cultural capital forms and limiting others.

For Newton residents, the re-creation of cultural capital both reflects and supports efforts to build new methods of community sustainability, and these efforts fall into two general categories. First, the re-creation process reflects and supports efforts to build employment opportunities for Newton residents. Under this category, cultural capital forms mirror the development of local entrepreneurial opportunities and of jobs connected to America’s growing renewable energy industry. Second, the re-creation process is part of
reshaping Newton from a company town into a destination town. Under this category, cultural capital forms highlight the development of a tourist-based economy that centers on the promotion of art and festivals and on the Iowa Speedways’ racing culture. Initiatives behind building entrepreneurial and ‘green’ employment opportunities and behind developing an infrastructure for tourism were evident early into the community’s transition and even before the Maytag closings were announced. For example, Newton’s Vision Statement captures an emphasis on entrepreneurship, renewable energy, and arts and festivals, and residents realized that the Iowa Speedway’s construction was going to become an important component of the community’s future social landscape.

However, even though the writing was on the wall with respect to Newton’s post-Maytag methods of sustainability, residents still need to catch up to the reality by creating cultural capital that matches the structures. In other words, cultural capital that matches Newton’s post-Maytag life will not surface by itself, but only as a result of residents’ practices to create the respective meanings. Furthermore, residents’ focus on new methods of sustainability does not translate into the disappearance of previous cultural capital forms. Instead, residents must make room for previous cultural ways within their post-Maytag life.

“We will always keep the story alive here.”
- Leland Smith, Jasper County Museum volunteer, Des Moines Register, Oct. 25, 2007

As many people who experience community transitions find, striking a balance between recognizing previous cultural capital forms and moving forward into a new future is an important dimension of the social change. People do not want to throw away a meaningful past, especially one that is still familiar (Bennett 2006; Dandaneau 1996; Linkon and Russo 2002; Savage 2003). Because cultural capital is secured in, and therefore functions in
relation to, both subjective structures (e.g. mental schemas, self-conceptions) and objective structures (e.g. built materials, traditions, rituals), community members have personal and collective stakes in maintaining meaningful ways of the past (Bourdieu 1990, 2008).

Preserving a particular cultural past in a qualitatively different future is challenging. Simple nostalgia usually does not suffice, and attributes that formerly anchored a community’s cultural ways may not be compatible with its social changes (Dudley 1994; High and Lewis 2007: 29-31; Fitchen 1991: 263). As such, re-creating cultural capital during community transitions includes maintaining cultural ways by transforming them in manners that fit the social changes.

Newton residents first turned to preserving meaningful social spaces to re-create deep-seated Maytag cultural capital within their post-Maytag reality. Historic preservation, or the revitalization and protection of existing spaces (Murtagh 2006), represents an increasingly popular community development strategy (Barthel 1996; Lindberg 2006; Tyler 2000; Zukin 1995). Although the practice of historic preservation has potential drawbacks, such as elitist selection, resident displacement, and gentrification (Brown-Saracino 2004; Zukin 1995), it can help people preserve senses of place and collective identities (Barthel 1996; Linkon and Russo 2002; Milligan 2007), improve physical conditions and appearance of communities (Bennett 2006; Zukin 1995), and foster economic development (Barthel-Bouchier 2001; Listokin, Listokin, and Lahr 1998; see Mason 2005 for a review).

NTC members started the initial preservation project in late 2006 with their sights on the Fred Maytag Bowl Amphitheatre. Acknowledging the deculturation that was occurring in Newton, NTC’s youth/entertainment action team members believed that renovating the Maytag Bowl, including a restoration of its deteriorating band shell, would aesthetically
improve the community and pay tribute to the Maytag name, allowing its legacy to continue well after local Maytag production ended. During NTC’s one-year anniversary banquet, a youth/entertainment action team member discusses the significance of the renovations, “The [Maytag] Bowl project is important for everyone in Newton. It remembers our great past, and will be part of an even better future” (Field notes 9/12/2007).

Finding social support for the Maytag Bowl project was not difficult; however, finding financial support for the estimated $2 million repairs was more problematic. Already working with Newton’s Parks and Recreation director, NTC members collaborated with volunteers and other local organizations, including city employees, Renew Newton, and the NDC. Together, people collected donations and applied for grants from regional and state outlets. Although NTC members were awarded a $10,000 USDA grant that was later combined with a $5,000 matching grant from Renew Newton members in June 2007, the project’s status is still ongoing, and in March 2009 group members restarted the campaign under the name “Restore the Pride.”

Preserving Newton’s downtown area was a second project that helped residents re-create previous cultural capital during the community’s transition. Preserving Newtown’s downtown began in August 2005 when the Greater Newton Area Chamber of Commerce contracted IDED to perform a downtown assessment, but the efforts did not gain momentum until NTC’s project manager made it goal in June 2007 to restore the downtown’s historical buildings and to designate the area as a cultural district. Reasoning behind the preservation, comparable to the Maytag Bowl renovations, is to enhance the community’s physical appearance while simultaneously maintaining aspects of a past that was strongly associated
with, yet not directly produced by, Maytag’s presence in Newton. Referring to this point, a
NTC participant explains:

It is about looking at ‘main street’ [Newton’s downtown] and seeing what that means in terms of not only money, but appreciating what we have had in the square. Looking at an opportunity to refurbish our building’s upstairs as well as downstairs. So I think that’s what it is all about. We are very serious about getting ourselves designated as a cultural historical district. There is a movement trying to do that, and that is a good thing. So that is that whole legacy piece [of maintaining Maytag’s culture], and, I think, in fact, that there is a whole lot of pieces around here (Interview EY).

Similar to the Maytag Bowl project, NTC members relied on collaborations with residents and local organizations to help achieve their goal. NTC members sponsored events during which residents, local business people, IDED directors, Main Street Iowa, and State Historical Society members came together to discuss historic preservation programs and to learn application procedures for cultural district designations. NTC members also utilized their connections with city employees in establishing Newton’s first Historic Preservation Commission to assist the downtown restoration efforts (Field notes 10/15/2007). Although the cultural district designation and overall historical restorations of the downtown buildings are still works in progress, major steps have been made through the partnerships among community members.

The challenges of maintaining past cultural capital forms in a qualitatively different future, as mentioned above, are twofold: simple nostalgia is an insufficient justification and previous meanings often no longer match the new reality. Subsequently, maintaining past cultural capital forms in a different future often entails re-creating previous meanings through a commodification of culture as notions of use value (e.g. preserving cultural meanings for sentimental and emotional reasons) are overtaken by visions of exchange value (Stough 1994). High and Lewis (2007: 29-31) describe this process in maintaining aspects of North
America’s industrial history. The authors contend, “Coming, as they do, in the wake of
deindustrialization, proposals to preserve industrial structures are usually judged on their
tourism potential as part of a town’s efforts to retool for the post-industrial era” (p.30).
Bennett (2006) depicts a similar commodification of past community meanings in Chicago
during the ‘rebirth of Bronzeville.’

This pattern surfaced throughout the Maytag Bowl and downtown preservation projects. Although both projects represent methods of maintaining cultural niches that
produce Maytag era collective identities and senses of place, each project alters the cultural
capital to reflect Newton’s transition into a destination town. At a City Council meeting in
2008, for example, council members pointed out that the Maytag Bowl renovations are
significant for keeping the landmark’s historical appeal, but they also stressed the project’s
importance as a strategy for attracting visitors and tourists (Field notes 10/6/2008).
Likewise, preserving the downtown area allows residents to stay connected to aspects of
Newton’s past, yet the practice strongly relates to assuring that ‘Newton looks its best’ for
people who live outside the community. Speaking of the downtown project, Newton’s
community development director references this point, “The downtown is the civic heart of a
community. It’s how we are viewed by outside visitors” (Jennings 2007a).

Along with preserving existing spaces, residents constructed new social spaces to
maintain previous cultural capital forms. Constructing social spaces, including built
structures and celebratory events, that commemorate a community’s history meanings keeps
a cultural past alive while also allowing residents symbolically move forward (Barthel-
Dandaneau (1996) and Savage (2003), for instance, examine constructing built structures –
an automobile theme park in Flint, Michigan and various historical monuments in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, respectively – as ways of honoring industrial heritages within postindustrial conditions.

Renew Newton members started to maintain previous cultural forms in new social spaces by sponsoring a variety of public art projects. Already responsible for many community sculptures and murals, Renew Newton members set their sights on additional projects during Newton’s transition. At the 2007 Iowa Sculpture Festive, group members revealed a sculpture of Maytag’s Ol’ Lonely Repairman (Figure 10) as a way to “preserve the image of quality and dependability that characterized Maytag products and workers during the past decades” (Special to Newton Daily News 2006a). Acknowledging Maytag’s departure, 113 miniature versions of the Ol’ Lonely Repairman sculpture were made available for purchase, one miniature sculpture for each year Maytag operations were in the community. Months earlier, Renew Newton members financed a mural of an old printshop (Figure 11), which is located directly outside the downtown square. The mural does not directly honor Maytag’s heritage, but the images does symbolize the strong work ethic and reputation of dependability that is associated with local Maytag workers and the community as a whole.
Newton’s Jasper County Museum directors also assembled new spaces to preserve the Maytag culture. Working with Whirlpool officials after their purchase of Maytag,
museum directors added numerous pieces of Maytag memorabilia to the museum’s already large collection and organized a new wing that is solely dedicated to telling Maytag’s story (Field notes 8/4/2007). Discussing the additions in the *Des Moines Register* (Ryberg 2007), a retired Maytag worker and museum volunteer states, “We will always keep the story alive here.”

Jasper County Museum directors later helped organize a Maytag workers’ reunion in July 2008. Approximately 500 former Maytagers joined each other for an afternoon at Maytag Park to share memories and discuss post-Maytag life. Along with live music, a car and motorcycle show, and other family-oriented entertainment, Jasper County museum volunteers provided books of Maytag photographs for attendees to view. Another first-time event at Maytag Park that summer was ‘Fred Rocks: Rock ‘n Roll in the Maytag Bowl.’ Members of the non-profit group Arts Connection of Jasper County arranged the event in hopes the music festival would “re-energize” the community and, at the same time, honor the Maytag name. With permission from living Maytag family members, group members coined the festival’s name “in recognition of Fred Maytag and in appreciation of the fabulous Maytag Bowl” (Special to Newton Daily News 2008a).

Compared to preserving existing meaningful social spaces in Newton, creating new spaces relies less on obtaining financial resources (with the exception of the Ol’ Lonely sculpture, which was primarily financed by the Maytag Corporation’s Community Foundation – one of the foundation’s last gestures to Newton), but it equally depends on social networks among community volunteers, non-profit groups, and local/regional organizations. For instance, making the public art a reality required putting together a collection of private donors, community volunteers, local artists (and their connections to art
outlets, including a bronzing company in Colorado), and groups such as the Arts Connection and the Iowa Sculpture Festival Committee. Similar social constellations of various businesses, groups, and individuals were involved in the Jasper County Museum Maytag memorabilia additions and events at Maytag Park.

These practices of keeping cultural aspects alive through constructing new social spaces mirror those of preserving existing spaces with regard to re-creating cultural capital. Although earlier cultural niches lost their efficacy during Newton’s transition, creating spaces that pay respect to Maytag era meanings realigns the cultural ways with the community’s emerging structural realities. This realignment of culture allows previous meanings to be carried over to the post-Maytag reality, but it alters the meanings to reflect Newton as a destination town. In particular, each new space, with the exception of the Maytag reunion, matches the goal, as outlined in the Community Vision Statement, “to be the center for festivals and events that celebrate the arts and culture.”

While community members overcome challenges of maintaining past cultural capital in a different future by re-creating meanings so they fit Newton’s post-Maytag era, obstacles still linger. One obstacle is the stigmatization of past meanings (Dandaneau 1996; Dudley 1994; Savage 2003). Many residents, especially former Maytag employees, view the Maytag name in a different, more critical light following Maytag’s departure from Newton. For example, anti-Maytag sentiments in letters to the editors of local and regional newspapers, ‘boycott Maytag’ and ‘boycott Whirlpool’ bumper stickers, and a general sense of betrayal across the community all express feelings of resentment toward Maytag rather than feelings of pride. At the Maytag reunion, a retired plant worker states, “I’m still very bitter about what went down. I drive by (Maytag) and I just shake my head” (Karr 2008a). The moving
forward discourse is another obstacle for maintaining the past. Forums such as ‘Forging
Ahead: A Community Dialogue’ and ‘Transitioning into the Future’, along with goals to
develop a rebirth of Newton, emphasize the ‘new’ over the past. As a local pastor told a
crowd at Newton’s sesquicentennial celebration, “Just add a second ‘W’ to Newton, you get
a ‘New-town’” (Field notes 8/5/07).

“Newton can’t always be known only as the Maytag town. We need to see ourselves as
something other than the place where Maytag used to be”
- Newton Transformation Council member, January 22, 2008

Turning back to Bourdieu’s concept of hysteresis as a framework for examining
Newton’s cultural change, the re-creation of previous cultural capital in ways that fit
emerging structural realities can be seen as a feature of successfully overcoming the
hysteresis phase. Residents’ re-alignment of Newton’s Maytag culture allows meaningful
pieces of a past to continue in their post-Maytag life. However, residents must also create
new cultural capital that matches their post-Maytag life to fully pass through the hysteresis
phase and, thus, catch up to their new reality as a whole.

While socio-economic factors shape the availability of particular meanings, the
relationship between building methods of community sustainability and re-creating cultural
capital runs even deeper. The organization of new cultural niches that match new structural
realities is important because being ‘stuck in past’ following periods of social change
interferes with community development (Fitchen 1991). In addition, because community
members’ available cultural toolkit frequently ties into establishing financial lifelines, new
cultural niches not only represent spaces where cultural capital develops but cultural niches
are also spaces where individuals gain the needed knowledge, skills, and motivation for
successfully developing new methods of financial sustainability (Fitchen 1991). Therefore,
organizing new cultural niches has both symbolic and financial implications for communities in transition.

These points are evident in Newton’s transition. On the one hand, residents acknowledge the significance of not allowing their past culture to disappear, yet they realize that holding on to the past too strongly can interfere with their ability to move forward. In the words of a NTC member, “Newton can’t always be known only as the Maytag town. We need to see ourselves as something other than the place where Maytag used to be” (Interview RQ). On the other hand, residents understand that creating new cultural capital has use value regarding filling the symbolic opening in the community’s cultural fabric and it has exchange value with respect to providing fertile grounds for building new community sustainability methods, whether it be establishing a social context for local entrepreneurship, manufacturing renewable energy, or tourist-centered cultural consumption.

“Countless local leaders, organizations, and citizens have played a role in the town’s transition from corporate town to entrepreneurial incubator.”

- Elizabeth Saunders, IAbiz (Advocate for Iowa Business) magazine, Spring 2007

The recognition of Newton as a ‘community of entrepreneurs’ was one of the first collective identities to appear after the announcement of Maytag’s departure. Community leaders’ desire to emphasize self employment opportunities is not only part of Newton’s Community Vision Statement (“Newton aspires to become a center of excellence with ... an innate culture of entrepreneurship”) but it is also a key component of an overall diversification of the local economy. Many residents lost their jobs due to Maytag’s departure, and the main strategy for getting people back to work was to build employment from within the community and becoming more self-reliant, rather than waiting for the next company to replace Maytag’s presence.
The turn to local entrepreneurship is perhaps expected. Over the last few decades, North America’s economic restructurings and the latest stage of globalization have shaped an economy in which community members must play by new rules of the game, rules that are framed by, amongst other forces, hyper-agricultural and hyper-industrial services, increased mobility of capital, and financial deregulations of world markets (Diochon 2004; Goetz 2008; Koval 2006). An effect of this, as Jaffe and Quark (2006) argue, community members must emphasize self-employment, especially those who previously relied on agricultural and industrial bases, and adopt entrepreneurialism as a means to ensure economic survival and as a prerequisite for participation in the ‘new economy.’ This emphasis is evident in both urban and rural communities, but more so in rural areas where self-employment has more than doubled, from 2.2 to 5.3 million individuals, over the last forty-years (Goetz 2008).

The focus on entrepreneurship does not imply that entrepreneurs did not exist in Newton prior to Maytag’s departure. Entrepreneurs have always been involved in the local economy, and this traces back to Newton’s most famous citizen, F.L. Maytag. As the story goes, F.L. possessed the ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ even at a young age. When working alongside other farm field hands, at the age of 16, he envisioned a safer way to cut the bands off grain bundles and to feed the grain into threshing machines after watching many co-workers receive injuries on the job. F.L., with Parsons, developed his insights into the Parsons Band Cutter and Self-Feeder Company, which later evolved into the Maytag Company (The Spirit of Maytag: 100 Years of Dependability 1993). This layer of the Maytag legacy did not escape residents during their transition. Foreseeing the community’s upcoming emphasis on entrepreneurship, a Newton Daily News reporter highlights the connection to F.L Maytag:
The days of chasing smokestacks appear to be nearing an end. But it just might be [time for] another Fred Louis Maytag, a Newton farm-hand who grew his big idea for a new product into a dominant position in the world. Many new answers for community recovery have emerged in recent years as hundreds of communities have been forced to look for creative solutions after suffering massive job losses. One of the most promising of those is community-fostered entrepreneurship (Hussman 2005e).

Although entrepreneurship had always existed in Newton, it was not presented as a significant dimension of Newton’s cultural fabric until the community’s post-Maytag transition. Yet, it is one thing for residents to claim that Newton is a ‘community of entrepreneurs,’ and it is another thing for people to actually possess the collective identity. To ‘bridge the gap’ between desired cultural capital and actual cultural capital, residents began organizing cultural niches in which people could create the appropriate meanings that, when shared by the residents, become inscribed in Newton’s collective consciousness and, in turn, transform the desired cultural capital into actual cultural capital.

Many people work together to make the entrepreneurial spirit into an actual collective identity, but NTC and NDC members, both separately and unitedly, lead efforts. Following the announcement of Maytag’s departure, NTC members began arranging an infrastructure for fostering a local entrepreneurial culture. The first initiative, financed by state and federal funding with supplemental monetary backing from NDC and a collection of local businesses, was opening a Small Business Development Center at Newton’s Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) facility. At the business center, people who are interested in entrepreneurship or who are in the early stages of implementing their own business have access to start-up literature and to professional services such as market research support, counseling sessions, and business workshops. While NTC members arrange the services, NDC, SCORE (a nonprofit association dedicated to counseling entrepreneurs and growing
small businesses), and The Kauffman Foundation of Entrepreneurship (sponsor of ‘Fast Trac’ small businesses assistance programs) are responsible for providing the assistance.

NTC’s entrepreneur action team members promote an entrepreneurial culture through a variety of projects. Along with being active in the Small Business Development Center, team members, collaborating with NDC, worked to designate Newton and Jasper County as a ‘My Entre.Net” region. This designation allows Jasper County citizens to receive various community development and entrepreneurial services from the University of Northern Iowa Regional Business Center, the John Pappajohn Center, and other entrepreneurial services. Furthermore, action team members hold bi-weekly to monthly meetings during which they discuss different issues about becoming successful entrepreneurs, bring in guest speakers from regional and local businesses, and supply each other with social support and advice.

For some participants, the meetings and overall social networking have resulted in new self-employment opportunities:

I’ve started my own business. We’ve had a couple others that were in our entrepreneur action teams who have now also started a business. I mean, just the networking opportunities that you get when you are involved in a group like that. It is all strictly voluntary. There is nobody in our groups that is paid anything. They do it because they want to help. It was a godsend to some of us. We didn’t know what to do, but have those people [experienced business people] in our group who has been through it, and was invaluable to us. I am hoping that this kind of thing can continue on (Interview EY).

Besides the recurring meetings, action team members coordinate other activities. In 2006 and 2007, members sponsored a Newton Transformation Council Entrepreneurial Fair. The fair consisted of various booths where regional small business leaders gave advice and information to attendees as well as seminars and workshops about starting businesses, taking existing businesses to the next level, and available resources for entrepreneurs. The action team also organizes different ‘outreach’ events. For example, they hosted a ‘Marketing
Outreach Event’ that featured an area business owner who outlined strategies and opportunities for marketing small business.

The NDC, in addition to being involved in many NTC projects, spearheaded many undertakings to promote local self-employment. After relocating their office to DMACC’s campus to be closer to the Small Business Center, the group started, in the words of a NDC director, “building the community from within and from the ground-up” (Field notes 11/7/2007). One of the first NDC events, sponsored in conjunction with Iowa State University Extension, Iowa Rural Development Council, among other formal organizations, was the 2006 Community Entrepreneurship Academy. This was the third year for the academy, but its first year in Newton, reflecting the emphasis on self-employment in Newton. During the event, city and business leaders talked about the community’s preparation for Maytag’s departure and highlighted new local entrepreneurial ventures, including a biodiesel plant, an art gallery, and the Iowa Speedway (Special to Newton Daily News 2006b).

In 2007, NDC directors kept busy by juggling two main projects. Along with hitting the road and courting the community to potential businesses, including a wind turbine blade manufacturing company, they moved forward on building an infrastructure for entrepreneurs. Again partnering with the NTC, group members set their sights on organizing a small business incubator. The main purpose of the incubator is to provide a location where people can develop business plans and work at a reduced cost while also allowing the growth of small businesses to eventually spur additional job opportunities for community members (Field notes 11/7/2007). Of equal importance for Newton’s transition, a business incubator could help diversify the local economy. During a business forum, a guest speaker and former
Newton resident points out this advantage, “[An incubator] helps produce a manufacturing base so you aren't relying on a Maytag to employ everyone. With an incubator your basket gets bigger with a whole lot of different eggs” (Lowe 2007).

After successfully recruiting the wind turbine blade manufacturing company (see below) and continuing progress on the business incubator, NDC directors began scheduling monthly plans for entrepreneurs. The plans outline a variety of workshops, seminars, and other activities that are open to all community members. The activities are opportunities for participants to acquire valuable informational and practical resources while allowing them to meet likeminded individuals and foster valuable social networks. A NDC director explains:

We started to put together six-month support plans for small business companies in existence already or for those who want to start up companies. It involves a lot of technical support, counseling, and training. We want to make sure that people are going to go into a new line of marketing when starting a business, or whatever it is. So, we are putting together classes. We've partnered with SCORE, and they are providing business workshops. We’ve been able to offer Fast Trac, which is out of the Kaufman institute. We’ve offered both new venture curriculum and growth curriculum this year, in the first two quarters. We also have one-on-one counseling that is available weekly and by appointment. We continue to listen to the entrepreneurs and new businesses about what they want to learn about. We offered, through partnership with DMACC, Quick Book training, so that they can do their own accounting and feel that they got that capability. We’re looking at doing some franchising classes so people can understand some of the options with franchising, as well as classes about what it takes to buy or sell a business. In doing events, like the other night [an EntreBash event], networking events, a lot of times for entrepreneurs they are just trying to find somebody who might be a good mentor, who might actually be a good partner, either supplier or customer, and just to continue to find ways of networking and to bring social networks together so that they are supported (Interview LE).

Organizing spaces such as the Small Business Development Center, NTC entrepreneur action team meetings, NTC Entrepreneur Fairs, Community Entrepreneurship Academy, and the counseling sessions, workshops, and seminars all provide community members with necessary resources for planning and growing new businesses. The same spaces also represent cultural niches in which community members create the necessary
meanings for bridging the gap between the recognition of a ‘community of entrepreneurs’ as desired cultural capital to the recognition serving as an actual community identity.

On a collective level, actions within the spaces, whether it be one-on-one counseling sessions or larger gatherings, and the results of the actions, including functional businesses and public acknowledgments of residents’ efforts, produce meanings that people can use to identify Newton as an entrepreneurial community. For example, a photo essay in *BusinessWeek: SmallBiz*, a bi-monthly small business magazine, covered Newton’s turn to entrepreneurialism (Gilmour 2008). Titled “Life after Maytag: Entrepreneurs Remake a Town,” the essay highlights Newton’s biodiesel plant, a local art gallery, and Iowa Speedway (all of which were discussed at the 2006 Community Entrepreneurship Academy) as well as a new engineering firm, a beauty salon, and a payroll office. State officials also recognized residents’ efforts at the end of 2006 by awarding Newton a Community Entrepreneurship Award.

On an individual level, interactions within the social spaces produce meanings that people can use to self-identify as entrepreneurs. This internalization is significant for eliciting what a NDC director calls the social psychological “oh moment” for people who start their own businesses – “You kind of go through this evolution of ‘okay, this is just kind of something that I am doing on the side’ to ‘oh, I am a business person now. This is what I am doing’” (Interview LE). In turn, this creation of social identities of residents as entrepreneurs aids the re-creation of Newton as an entrepreneurial community.

However, the identity’s cultural reach must expand across the community if it is to symbolize an actual collective identity. With this in mind, local organizations actively make the culture visible through two main strategies. The first involves utilizing media outlets to
spread the word about local entrepreneurialism. NTC and NDC members regularly advertise events on their respective websites, on local and regional radio programs, and in Newton’s newspaper. Group representatives also take part in radio and newspaper interviews to inform people about available opportunities for starting businesses and about local small business accomplishments.

In addition to publicizing events, the Newton Daily News is a promotion vehicle for local entrepreneurship in other ways. A year following the announcement of Maytag’s departure, the newspaper ran a series of “One Year Later” articles that give former Maytag employees’ accounts of their post-Maytag life, all of whom are now self-employed. Along with describing their ‘moving on’ experiences, the former Maytagers discuss life as entrepreneurs and the steps they took to start their businesses. Likewise, the newspaper features “Special to Daily News” articles that highlight success stories of former Maytag employees who now have their own businesses. The articles detail the new businesses and emphasize the local organizations that assisted the community members. The follow excerpt illustrates a portion of a typical article:

Having always wanted to own her own business while helping other small businesses, the lifelong Newton resident took the plunge and, with the help of the Newton Development Corporation, the Newton Transformation Council and the University of Northern Iowa’s MyEntreNet Entrepreneurship Development System, opened Central Iowa Payroll, LLC (Special to Newton Daily News 2008b).

Not uncommon in small town newspapers, the Newton Daily News regularly runs a “Local Business Spotlight.” The spotlight covers a variety of local establishments, but during the community’s transition the profiles, many of which were provided by NDC, NTC, and UNI Regional Business Center leaders, focused on former Maytag workers’ businesses and on individuals who had used local organizations. For instance, a former Maytag worker
talks about how she began their cemetery maintenance company: “We decided we’d go [to the Fast Trac course]. It was an eight-week class and we just learned so much in there...I think people will be receptive. We don’t know of anyone who offers this service the way we do” (Lowe 2008a). The promotion of local entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship assistance opportunities is again evident in a spotlight of Milo and Co. Bakery (figure 12), a bakery for pets: “Our business plan said we should begin business in the fourth quarter of next year. We worked with SCORE and a community development group and they all said, ‘Do it now’” (Jennings 2007b). This positive spin on community entrepreneurship not only encourages the behavior but also places the entrepreneurs on pedestals for other residents to admire.

![Milo & Co. Bakery](image)

**Figure 12.** Locally owned Milo and Co. Bakery specializes in gourmet pet treats

Besides local media outlets, residents make the community’s entrepreneurial spirit visible by coordinating a number of ceremonies and banquets to celebrate the culture. In
2007 and 2008, NDC members organized a “Salute to Business and Industry Luncheon” to honor Newton businesses. At the luncheon, NDC directors acknowledge a local business person “who exemplifies and supports Newton’s innate culture of entrepreneurship” (as outlined in Newton’s Vision Statement) as the entrepreneur of the year. NTC members also host banquets to recognize residents’ business efforts and to encourage people who are thinking about beginning a business. During one gathering themed ‘Take Your Hobby to the Next Level,’ an ex-Maytag employee discussed his recently opened gift shop – Varieties (Figure 13) – and the steps he took to make his business a reality. Near the talk’s end, he characterized his experience of starting a new business: “I’ve had the time of my life since Maytag. It’s the best thing to ever happen to me” (Field notes 11/15/2007).

Figure 13. Located in Newton’s town square, Varieties offers crafts, clothing, and food from around central Iowa
Similar to re-creating previous cultural capital forms to fit a post-Maytag reality, the re-creation of Newton as an entrepreneurial community is best understood as a social practice that relies on tapping into networks and utilizing the resources of residents. Community leaders had a particular goal of building new job opportunities from within the community, and they worked alone and with groups outside of Newton to achieve this goal by organizing social spaces in which the necessary meanings, networks, knowledge, and skills can develop. Taken together, organizing and promoting primary cultural niches, such as the Small Business Development Center and entrepreneurial workshops, and secondary cultural niches, such as ceremonies and banquets that celebrate entrepreneurs’ accomplishments, function to make the recognition of Newton as ‘community of entrepreneurs’ an actual collective identity rather than an impression without substance.

“From Washertown to Windtown.”

Ideas of Newton as a ‘green community,’ which was later narrowed to Newton as a ‘windtown,’ also appeared during the post-Maytag transition. This cultural capital, like the entrepreneurial collective identity, ties into both replacing Newton’s identification as the Maytag town and providing employment opportunities for community members.

Many places that once symbolized the backbone of America’s industrial and agricultural landscapes are more and more the sites of an emerging economy based on ‘green jobs.’ According to a Worldwatch Institute report (2007), green jobs can be defined as:

Positions in agricultural, manufacturing, R&D, administrative, and service activities aimed at alleviating the myriad environmental threats faced by humanity. Specifically, but not exclusively, this includes jobs that help to protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity, reduce energy, materials, and water consumption through high-efficiency and avoidance strategies, de-carbonize the economy, and minimize or altogether avoid generation of all forms of waste and pollution (P. 11).
In 2006, there were approximately 193,550 green jobs, lead by employment in ethanol production, biomass power, and wind power segments, and an additional 350,000 jobs indirectly connected to the green economy in America. The employment numbers could more than double by 2020 (Worldwatch Institute 2007). Given the sector’s projected growth, community leaders with available factory space, land, and workforces are welcoming opportunities to become part of the movement.

The state of Iowa, which lost nearly 3,000 manufacturing jobs in 2007 according to the Iowa Manufacturing Register (3/17/2008), is among the suitors hoping to lure the operations of renewable energy manufacturers. After taking office in 2007, Governor Chet Culver followed through with his campaign promise of trying to make Iowa the renewable energy capital of the United States (or renewable energy capital of the world, depending on the speech) by setting up a $100 million Iowa Power Fund to attract green technology research and development. Discussing the initiative, Culver states, “Iowa is better positioned than any state in the country when it comes to being the national leader in renewable energy. The question is -- how do we maximize the potential?...The answer is in research and development. That is what the Iowa Power Fund is all about” (Dorman 2007). Culver also organized the Iowa Alliance for Wind Innovation and Novel Development (IWIND) to solely focus on wind energy research and manufacturing in Iowa.

Pointing out the soon-to-be available factory spaces and manufacturing-skilled workforce, along with its U.S. Interstate-80 friendly location, access to the Iowa Interstate Railroad (a rail line from Council Bluff, Iowa to Chicago, with an Intermodal facility in Newton), and land to spare, state and local leaders believed that Newton could benefit from the state’s commitment to renewable energy and that they could incorporate a green economy
into the community’s post-Maytag life. State representative Black, reflecting on the news of Maytag’s departure from Newton, stresses the opportunity:

I had over the weekend point[ed] to the fact that the new focus on Newton’s future should not have most of the eggs placed in a single basket. Diversification is the key, and manufacturing a variety of products enhances sustained economic viability and community vitality. As a community, we have a great reputation, and Maytag's workers were known for their education, training and dedication. Theirs was pride in a product with nationwide exposure, and even my travels abroad for agricultural sales and trade resulted in many identifying their knowledge of the Maytag brand. The sooner we approach decision makers regarding potential manufacturing opportunities, the sooner a sense of stability will return to our community and citizens. With the massive infrastructure that exists along with the buildings that served Maytag, a plethora of options must be pursued. One example would be that of wind-energy generators and blades. My Natural Resources Committee, in one of the last bills before session adjournment, passed a "Wind Energy Tax Credit" bill. This was intended to serve as an incentive for those seeking to invest in wind farms, with the sustainable, renewable wind energy electrical production sold into the grid of electric companies. Yet, if you order a wind generator with its tri-configured massive blades, you have to wait 18 months to receive it. Ironically, most are made in Germany, and Newton with its central location is perfect (Black 2006a).

With this context in mind, it is understandable why Newton residents included “We strive to create systems that fuel the world with renewable energy” in the Community Vision Statement. Furthermore, some residents already had put their foot in the renewable energy pool. After Central Iowa Energy directors purchased thirty acres of land at Newton’s north end, which is accessible to Interstate-80, construction workers broke ground on a 30 million gallon capacity biodiesel plant in April 2006 and completed the project a year later. Plant employees, many of whom are former Maytag workers, use vegetable oils and animal fats to manufacture biodiesel fuel, which can be blended with diesel fuel to power such things as automobiles, trains, and aircrafts. Along with being touted as a model of successful entrepreneurship in Newton, people praise Central Iowa Energy for representing part of Iowa’s green revolution and for kick-starting renewable energy as a new dimension of Newton’s community sustainability (Gilmour 2008).
While not directly related to creating local job opportunities, Newton is also associated with renewable energy through the Iowa Speedway. In June 2007, race sponsors held the first annual Iowa Corn Indy 250 in front of 36,000 fans at the Iowa Speedway, where the ‘green flag’ took on a double meaning. The flag symbolized the beginning of the race, but it also represented the corn-ethanol fuel that powered the Indy cars and the overall green theme of the event. During the nationally televised race, commentators repeatedly referenced the efforts of state officials and farmers to make Iowa a leader in renewable energy. At the race, stars of the cable television show American Chopper (a ‘reality’ series that documents the fabrication of chopper style motorcycles) revealed America’s first green chopper bike, which, like the Indy cars, runs on ethanol. The bike’s design features corn and soybean images and its wheel spinners resemble the blades of wind turbines. The construction and presentation of the bike at the Iowa Speedway were later aired in two episodes of the reality show. As a whole, local renewable energy advocates called the event a “perfect storm” (Carlson 2007), bringing national exposure to Newton, green technology, and the recently opened Iowa Speedway.

Less than a month after the inaugural Iowa Corn Indy race, rumors started spreading around Newton about the chance of a new manufacturing company coming to the community. NDC directors and area development leaders then released a joint press release to validate the talk and to provide some information about the business. Although the release does not identify the company or exactly what the company manufactures, it states:

The manufacturer is considering locating a facility in the area that could provide up to 723 new jobs over a 3 year period. Production level wages at the proposed facility will range from $12.25 to $13.40/hr plus benefits. The manufacturer was very impressed by the manufacturing base in the community and approached local economic development leaders about the possibility of building a new facility to house their operations. Governor Chet Culver and officials from Newton, Jasper County, the Iowa Department of Economic
Development and the Governor's Office played an active role in recruiting the company to Iowa. The structural composite manufacturer is currently considering several sites in the Newton area for the construction of a large composite manufacturing facility on approximately 40 acres of land to be leased by the company incentive package of $4.4M (City of Newton Press Release 7/12/2007).

A few days later city council members announced that the company was Arizona-based TPI Composites, Inc., which makes composite structures for military vehicles, electronic buses and monorail transporters, and wind turbines. The proposed manufacturing site, a stretch of farmland only a few miles from Central Iowa Energy’s biodiesel facility, consisted of a 316,000 square foot factory for building 90 to 150 feet long wind turbine blades. TPI directors originally inquired about using a section of Maytag’s Plant 2 facility for production, but it was determined that the size of the wind blades required more space.

Newton’s available land, workforce, and a $6.85 million incentive package ($2 million from the state, $4.85 million from Jasper County) all combined to make the deal a reality in November 2007. Although the original number of 723 jobs at the factory was reduced to approximately 500 jobs, most residents welcomed the news with open arms, and some even called it an early ‘Christmas present’ for Newton. Over one hundred community members and state representatives, along with regional and local media crews, gathered at Newton’s DMACC conference hall to hear the formal announcement of TPI’s manufacturing factory. Dressed in formal attire, city and state representatives stood in front of a large picture of the planned factory and other renewable energy images. Governor Culver praised community members’ efforts of bringing the company to Newton and restated his goal of making Iowa the renewable energy capital of America, labeling Newton as exemplar of the mission. After claiming that the TPI agreement is a new chapter in the community’s history,
Newton’s mayor hinted at the possibility of additional wind turbine manufacturing jobs on the way to Newton (Field notes 11/26/2007).

During the period that city leaders and TPI directors were finalizing the deal, another rumor about a potential new employer began to spread around the community. The speculation started after officials of Trinity Structural Towers, Inc., a Texas-based company that builds wind turbine towers to support wind blades, posted a job announcement for a plant manager position in Newton. Although the position was removed from the company’s website only hours after its posting (the exact reason behind the removal never came to light, but common thought is that city leaders did not want the posting to interfere with the ‘buzz’ of TPI’s announcement), the job posting and the mayor’s ‘there’s more to come’ comments at the TPI ceremony quickly became the talk-of-the-town as residents perceived the once blue-collar community transforming into a green-collar community.

At the beginning of 2008, city officials formally announced that Trinity Structural Towers was indeed interested in producing wind turbine towers in Newton, and company officials reposted the plant manager position on the same day. Trinity officials were exploring the opportunity to utilize a portion of Maytag’s Plant 2 for building wind towers, and, in doing so, they would also provide around 140 jobs for area residents. The good news, however, had a catch. Trinity officials asked the City Council to renovate 300,000 square feet of Plant 2 and to reroute a section of a local street to ensure adequate space for the 20 feet diameter and 250 feet long turbine towers, incentives worth nearly $1.2 million. Following some moderately heated debates over the proposal, City Council members approved the project and later obtain the needed financing with the assistance of a $630,000 grant from the Iowa Transportation Commission and an award of $580,000 from the U.S.
Commerce Department. Newton residents and state representatives again gathered to celebrate the Trinity agreement and to discuss the progress that Newton has made since Maytag’s departure. At the event, United States Senator Tom Harkin tells the audience:

Newton will soon be competing to be the renewable energy manufacturing capital of the world. It was a dark day a couple years ago when the announcement was made that Maytag was shutting their plant gates. Slowly and surely, with determination and not without a few bumps in the road, Newton has made great strides on the road to recovery (Karr 2008b).

By the end of 2008, it was safe to say that Newton, or at least a dimension of the community, was turning green. The biodiesel plant, Iowa Corn Indy 250 race, TPI wind blade factory, and Trinity wind tower plant all function as spaces in which meanings that associate Newton with renewable energy are produced. And, residents are using the meanings to create a sense of place, making the associations a form of cultural capital. Locals now refer to TPI and Trinity as “T and T” (although people still frequently confuse the two companies) while a few residents even sport ‘support wind energy’ bumper sticker on their cars. In an article covering the opening ceremony for TPI’s wind blade factory (Figure 14) titled “From Washertown to Windtown,” a Newton Daily News editor proclaims, “Windtown, U.S.A. is officially open for business” (Karr 2008c). The news of TPI and Trinity’s arrivals also was named the area story of the year in Newton’s newspaper: “And of course, the biggest news from the past year was Newton finding two companies, TPI Composites and Trinity Structural Towers, willing to commit to 640 green jobs.” The editorial goes on to highlight the changing culture that accompanied the companies, “Newton continues to receive national exposure...But now, thanks to the job creation here, those stories no longer focus just on the loss of Maytag. Instead, they paint Newton as the poster town for the surge in green technologies” (Newton Daily News Editorial 2008a).
Unlike the creation of entrepreneurship as a new cultural capital form, which people have in mind a potential identity and then rely on developing social networks and the appropriate skills to actualize the identity, residents relied primarily on existing built structures, land, attractive location of land, and workers’ skills to create a recognition of Newton as a green community. This model resembles older methods of organizing community cultural niches, but with a contemporary twist. That is, most company towns began with available factory spaces, a desirable location, and sufficient workers to produce a particular commodity. The community’s cultural capital is then heavily shaped by the company’s presence, which serves as a primary cultural niche. While Newton is a prime example of this model, many communities like Mattoon, Illinois (home to a Lender’s Bagel Bakery factory and the self-proclaimed ‘Bagel Capitol of the World’) and Hershey, Pennsylvania (birthplace and home to Hershey Chocolate Company where the local culture is firmly secured in all things chocolate) are other examples. What makes the organization of
cultural niches different from past models is that TPI and Trinity workers are producing a culture secured in the commodity of alternative energy rather than a home appliance, food, or other types of goods for personal consumption.

Like the creation of entrepreneurship as cultural capital, the reach of the green recognition is bolstered by local events and media coverage. Community leaders celebrated the news of TPI and Trinity’s arrivals in front of state politicians and regional media outlets, held ceremonies for Central Iowa Energy, TPI, and Trinity’s first days of production, and arranged open houses for TPI and Trinity facilities. *Newton Daily News* reporters promote the culture by carefully keeping track of the growing green industry, accounting for everything from job training at the facilities to ‘spotgings’ of the companies in the community (e.g. a photographs of a truck transporting a Trinity wind turbine towers into Newton). National media coverage about Newton’s turn to renewable energy also increases the new cultural capital’s salience. For example, National Public Radio’s “Beating Washers into Wind Turbines in Iowa” (Morris 2008), CBS’s Evening News “Town Reinvents Self with Wind Power” (Reynolds 2008) and *New York Times*’s “A Splash of Green for the Rust Belt” (Goodman 2008) all frame Newton as a community that lost its previous cultural ways, but is in the process of creating a new, ‘greener’ sense of place.

It is difficult to ignore the symbolism embedded in Newton’s transformation from “Washertown to Windtown.” A renovation of Maytag’s Plant 2 where community members manufactured washer and dryers and fostered much of their recognition as the Maytag town to make room for the production of Trinity’s 21st century, environmentally conscious technology (Figure 15); the employment of many former Maytag workers at the TPI and Trinity facilities (while official numbers do not exist, it is often said that about half of the
workforce at each facility are former Maytagers); the serendipitous-like timing of Maytag’s departure simultaneously occurring with TPI and Trinity’s move into the community gives off a ‘it’s meant to be’ appearance; and, the new employers’ arrivals shift attention away from what Newton used to be to what it is becoming, a turn of attention that matches the community’s moving forward discourse.

![Trinity Structural Towers manufacturing facility, located in the former Maytag Plant 2 factory](image)

**Figure 15.** *Trinity Structural Towers manufacturing facility, located in the former Maytag Plant 2 factory*

At first glance, the emergence of a green economy seems like a perfect fit for Newton. The jobs and tax revenue created by the companies help residents catch up to their new structural realities; yet, a structural fit and a cultural fit do not always go hand-in-hand. Dudley (1994), for instance, examines the cultural conflict that arose in Kenosha, Wisconsin during city leaders’ efforts to transform the once blue-collar city into a place that serves more ‘upscale’ needs of white-collar individuals. Petzelka (2004) and Curtis (2003) describe
similar tensions in the wake of community members’ turning to tourism as a new method of sustainability.

The cultural mismatch regarding the emergence of a green economy in Newton is not due to the ‘newness’ of the meanings, but it is because the cultural ways resemble the past too closely. With Maytag’s departure still fresh in many residents’ minds, people perceive the similarities between the Maytag and TPI/Trinity models of business and, as a result, they attach a ‘Maytag stigma’ to the new companies. This stigma, for the most part, lies in a mistrust of the new manufacturing companies staying in Newton for a prolong period, even though the large sizes of the wind energy blades and turbine towers make moving production to cheaper locations somewhat difficult. A former Maytag worker, who mentions he is likely to apply for a position at TPI, captures this apprehension, “I’m encouraging my grandkids to go to college and further their education and get into something other than manufacturing because it doesn’t really hold a promising future” (Associated Press 2/3/2008). Furthermore, because the TPI/Trinity models resemble the Maytag days, the companies’ presence triggers memories of being too dependent on manufacturing. A local real estate agent comments on possibility of becoming overly reliant on wind energy production: “I don’t know if that is all good. Because I don’t want to go from being a community that gots a lot eggs in the appliance industry to one that has a lot of eggs in the wind industry. Diversification has got to continually be a part of what we are trying to do so we are never left caught again” (Interview LL).
“The farmers’ market will have a new location, new times, a new festival feel...”

In addition to re-creating cultural capital around new employment opportunities, Newton residents are also catching up to their new reality as a destination town. This transformation from company town to center of cultural consumption represents another trend in both urban and rural communities to “capture consumer dollars to compensate for de-industrialization” (Harvey 1994: 376; for overviews, see Hall, Kirkpatrick, and Mitchell 2005; Hoffman, Fainstein, and Judd 2003). What researchers and business people alike label as cultural ‘rebranding,’ community members reshape previously industrial landscapes into ‘unique’ spaces of shopping, entertainment, and other leisurely activities to distinguish a place from surrounding areas and to lure visitors and tourists for consumption of the commodified culture (Curtis 2003; Dandaneau 1996; Greenberg 2000; Hannigan 1998; O’Hara 2003).

Hoping to capitalize on their proximity to Interstate-80, a half-hour drive to Des Moines, and the Iowa Speedway as a destination anchor, Newton residents began organizing an infrastructure for making tourism a part of their post-Maytag economic diversification plan. In March 2006, Jasper County voters approved a one-cent local option sales tax in a special election. Voters overwhelmingly supported the tax, anticipating well over $1 million yearly revenue from the Iowa Speedway and future developments around the community. Some proposed development included a Love’s Country Store (a truck stop that includes a gas station, a convenient store, and a fast food restaurant), an AmericanInn Hotel, a Pizza Ranch (family-oriented restaurant), and a waterpark. All of the projects were eventually realized, with the exception of the waterpark.
Besides setting up a new physical infrastructure, city officials and local groups focus on additional changes to adjust to the community’s post-Maytag life as a destination town. Some city officials try to help local business people change their mindsets about the past and the present. A city official explains:

We have to be a little more creative because we are changing the dynamics of Newton. We are not changing them, but the dynamics of Newton are changing from being a blue-collar, factory, manufacturing city to now as a tourist destination city. And so, we have to try to help change the mindset of the community itself first. To let them realize that the companies are no longer here anymore and you have to change your [pause] you have to change your business hours to reflect that because you don’t have the factory workers getting off at 3:30 in the afternoon and shopping downtown. You need to stay open later and on different days because the people are going to shop at different hours, and some people can’t get there until 5:30 or 6:00. So, you have to try to change the mindset (Interview BA).

Other residents also believe that it is time to change ways of the past, starting with Newton’s downtown parking situation. Downtown parking limits have been a regular issue of concern, but now, with the emphasis on attracting visitors and tourists, many residents argue that parking time restrictions represent a greater liability than in the past. Newton Daily News editors highlighted this issue at the beginning of the 2008 Iowa Speedway racing season: “Now, as Newton emphasizes downtown revitalization to attract both tourists and new small businesses, perhaps the easiest way to welcome people downtown is to do away with parking time limits entirely” (Newton Daily News Editorial 2008b).

Residents increasingly use community beautification as another strategy to make Newton more tourist friendly. As mentioned above, Renew Newton members began beautifying the community’s physical appearance by sponsoring sculptures and murals and a Red Pride campaign in 2005. Subsequent efforts by group members include improving the physical appeal of town entryways and planting flowerbeds around the town square. In May 2008, Renew Newton and various local organizations held a ‘Red Pride Clean Sweep Forum’ to ‘restart’ the Red Pride campaign that had lost momentum since its onset. At the forum,
city officials and guest speakers from ‘Keep Iowa Beautiful’ discussed the importance of a place’s appearance before approximately fifty residents. Reinforcing the idea that it was time for a cultural rebranding, a city official tells the audience, “This is really about selling Newton by giving it curb appeal. More than ever, we need to give a good first impression. Think about it, we all know how important first impressions are” (Field notes 5/13/2008).

Connected to becoming a destination town and giving visitors an aesthetically good first impression, some residents sought to identify Newton as a place of arts and festivals. Similar to entrepreneurship, the arts and festivals have always existed in Newton. Long-standing groups such as the Arts Connection of Jasper County and Art A La Carte, annual festivals such as the Bowlful of Blues and the Iowa Sculpture Festival, and a handful of public art pieces all gave Newton a presence of arts and festivals prior to its transition into post-Maytag life. However, the arts and festivals did not represent a highly recognized part of the community’s cultural fabric until residents turned to what Phillips (2004) calls “art-based community development approaches” after the Maytag closings. On the one hand, people use art as a business to produce individual and group-based incomes, typically following the organization of local art centers, cooperatives, and studios; on the other hand, people use art/celebratory events as a tourism tool for luring others into a location, usually via public art displays (e.g. murals, sculptures, and art presentations), regional and local art shows, and festivals.

People commonly use the arts and festivals in establishing a particular location as a site of cultural consumption (Borrup 2006; Janiskee and Drews 1998; Law 1993; Markusen 2007; Storm 1999; Witt 1987; Zukin 1995). Although this strategy has been frequently used for urban renewal in larger cities where people have access to various cultural resources such
as museums, performing art centers, and local artists, residents in smaller towns now see arts and festivals as viable options for community development (Borrup 2006; Markusen 2007; Rosenfeld 2004). Lacking the resources that are found in larger areas, smaller town residents rely more on a bottom-up approach in making arts and festivals a component of their community.

Newton residents organized a variety of cultural niches to make the arts and festivals an actual dimension of the community’s cultural fabric. A local artist opened Kreativ Ent. Art Gallery in 2007. In addition to featuring works of area artists (who also volunteer at the gallery), Kreativ Ent. serves as a space for artist receptions and for art classes, which cover such topics as caricature, water coloring, greeting cards, and wool rug hooking. A local artist quickly admits that the receptions and classes are not only about acknowledging the works of a particular artist and helping people learn different techniques, but each events is also a way to increase the overall recognition of the arts and to expand social networks of the artist community. Identifying to the relationship between the receptions and establishing an arts culture, the artist states:

At the receptions, like the one we had last week, you really don’t know who or how many people will show up. You get friends and family, co-workers and old friends and other people who read about it in the paper and thought ‘That sounds neat’ and check it out. Of course, our attitude is the more the merrier. The more [people] that come, the more likely they will become interested in other receptions or events...Also, I think it [having people attend receptions] takes some of the fear of art away for some people. They find out that art is not something to be afraid of but something that brings everyone together” (Interview TP).

Throughout 2007, Iowa Sculpture Festival committee members renovated an abandoned warehouse building off of the town square into the Centre for Arts and Artists (CAA) (figure 16). The CAA serves as another primary cultural niche where, according to a CAA committee member, “[We will] make efforts to facilitate and enhance all art work
within our community – performing, visual, literary, and more – through a creative synergy that other art organizations can relate to and benefit by” (Jennings 2007c). The Centre consists of a main gallery and rooms for pottery making and kilning on the first floor and individual and group studios on the second floor. Local artists also use Centre workspaces for classes, demonstrations, and social gatherings. Along with updating the Centre for additional artistic endeavors, including a professional photography lab, CAA directors hope to set up a sculpture foundry in a nearby property.

Figure 16. The Centre for the Arts and Artists

While Iowa Sculpture Festival committee members constantly promote the arts, the Iowa Sculpture Festival itself is a more established space. Since 2003, Renew Newton, Iowa Festival committee members, and other local groups host nearly thirty artists from around the country during the two-day event at Maytag Park (figure 17). The festival emphasizes bronze and metal sculptures, but it also showcases wood, glass, stone, and ceramic art pieces.
Festival organizers continue to find news ways to heighten the event’s notoriety as festival participants and audiences continue to grow. For example, organizers designed a brochure that maps and provides information about local sculptures and murals for the 2008 festival. Newton’s Convention and Visitors Bureau currently utilizes the brochure as a tourism guide for visitors. The 2008 festival also featured for the first time a passenger train from Des Moines to Newton, where event attendees were then taken to Maytag Park. Sponsored by the Iowa Interstate Railroad, festival organizers want to incorporate the train ride as a permanent event fixture.

Figure 17. The 2008 Iowa Sculpture Festival

A number of secondary cultural niches help produce and reinforce the arts cultural identity. The presence of murals and sculptures, including those related to maintaining Newton’s Maytag culture, is difficult to overlook. As outlined in the Iowa Sculpture Festival public art brochure, Newton features eight murals and fifty-nine sculptures, twenty-nine of
which were cited since the Iowa Sculpture Festival’s initial year. Sugar Grove Vineyards and Gatheringplace is another local art outlet. Located on a set of rolling hills in a historic Grange hall, Sugar Grove offers outdoor live music and local art shows during the spring and summer months while offering indoor live music and dinner theater shows during the fall and winter. In 2008, Newton’s Farmers’ Market became a niche for the arts when CAA directors took over coordinating the event and gave it a “new location, new times, new festival feel” (Lowe 2008b) by moving vendors off the town square to the recently designated ‘cultural green space’ near the CAA and by including live music and area artists. A market volunteer discusses the changes, “We’re adding in music and the arts and hopefully bring in some new life into it so it’s a little more of a social event.”

The new “festival feel” of the Farmers’ Market represents a trend of creating festival-like atmospheres across Newton. As the writing on the wall regarding Maytag’s departure was becoming clear, residents began experiencing a festivalization. While using festivals to foster community solidarity and/or generate financial revenue is not a novel practice (see Derrett 2003; Gotham 2005; Janiskee and Drews 1998; Law 1993), Newton’s case is somewhat extreme. In 2005 and 2006, residents started Thanks with Franks (a downtown event where local business people give away free hot dogs, which are later judged on their creativity), Corks, Cooks, Chords, and Wine Festival (a food, wine, and music festival at the Iowa Speedway), and the Red Hat Nationals (a day-long event for Iowa chapters of the Red Hat Society). The next year, residents organized the Battle of the Bands at Maytag Park (an all day music festival and competition of local bands) and Ocktoberfest (an afternoon festival that features Halloween inspired activities, dancing, food, and a beer tent). In 2008, residents started Newton Idol (Newton’s version of the television show American Idol),
Indiefest (an all day alternative music festival that showcases unsigned area bands), Weekend Pit Stop festival (an evening event that corresponds with the Iowa Corn Indy 250 race, featuring food, live comedy, music, and a beer tent), Family Fun Fest (an all day family-oriented festival of food, games, music, and a car and motorcycle show), Fred Rocks: Rock and Roll in the Maytag Bowl (an all day music festival), and Twelve Days of Christmas, Newton Style (a day-long event that includes Christmas-themed visits to the Jasper County Museum, Iowa Speedway, and Newton Community Theater).

All in all, Table 1 shows an almost fivefold increase of annual events/festivals after 2004, from a total of three events/festivals in 2004 to a total of fourteen in 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1: Annual Festival/Event Name</th>
<th>Years in Newton (as of 1/1/2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twelve Days of Christmas, Newton Style</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Rocks: Rock and Roll in the Maytag Bowl</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Fun Fest</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekend Pitstop Festival</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indiefest</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newton Idol</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle of the Bands</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocktoberfest</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Hat Nationals</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corks, Cooks, Chords, and Wine Festival</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks with Franks</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa Sculpture Festival</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowlful of Blues</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Weekend Bluegrass Festival</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The festivalization ties into the Community Vision Statement’s emphasis on becoming “the center for festivals and events that celebrate the arts and culture,” but it also relates to the statement’s reference to “epitomizing the quality community: smart, innovative, safe, fun, and cool.” For example, rationales behind the Family Fun Fest and Ocktoberfest are to offer events to Newton residents and people from surrounding areas where families and their children can spend time together. A Family Fun Festival planner explains, “Kids
need more to do. This will give kids something to do and its good, clean fun” (Lowe 2008c).

Similarly, The Battle of the Bands at Maytag Park and Indiefest offer area middle-school/high-school age individuals something “cool to do in Newton” (Interview DL).

The increase of festivals does not come without problems. Some city officials worry about advertising the festivals solely to Newton residents rather than to people outside the community. The thought is that if a particular event is going to produce extra sales tax and hotel/motel tax revenue for Newton, people should concentrate on publicizing the event statewide (Field notes 5/13/2008). Furthermore, some residents are concerned about trying too hard to attract visitors – to an extent that it corrupts perceived moral standards of the community. This issue was raised at a City Council meeting where council members debated granting a beer sales permit for the Weekend Pit Stop festival at Maytag Park (Figure 18). During a twenty-minute discussion, a few members believed that selling alcohol on park grounds is “wrong” and it “sends a poor message to the young people in the community.” A third member tried to look at both sides of the coin by contending that the event may send a bad message to younger people by selling alcohol on park grounds, but it is an opportunity to bring racing fans away from the speedway and into the downtown area. Before the council eventually approved the permit, another member, after reflecting on the discussion, argued that “the community has to understand it is a different day, different game...We have to provide this [type of social environment] for the people or we are going to drive people away” (Field notes 6/2/2008).
The promotion of arts and festivals, similar to local entrepreneurship promotion, makes the culture visible outside the spaces where the meanings are produced. The Arts Connection distributes a bi-monthly *Arts Blast Newsletter* throughout the community that outlines upcoming festivals and activities at the Newton Community Theatre, Kreativ Ent., Sugar Grove, and CAA. The Convention and Visitors Bureau includes the CAA as a stop during group tours, advertises art events and festivals on local radio stations, their website, and in the *Newton Daily News*. Reporters at the *Daily News* closely cover the culture. In addition to highlighting fundraising events, presentations, progress and opening of new spaces, and festivals (the before and after), reporters now publish a ‘Local Artist Spotlight.’ Each spotlight coincides with an artist reception at Kreativ Ent. and provides a biographical background about the artist, descriptions of her/his work, and information regarding the artist’s creative inspirations. Like the local business spotlight, the artist spotlight recognizes
a group that has always existed in Newton, but who currently plays a different, more integral role in the community’s post-Maytag life.

Residents’ creation of the arts and festival cultural capital resembles practices involved in creating Newton’s entrepreneurial identity more so than the sense of place that frames Newton as a green community. While the latter approach represents a top-down driven culture, the former illustrates a culture that surfaces as a result of developing social networks and a knowledge base to successfully transform the desired cultural capital into actual cultural capital. Experienced and beginning artists, volunteers, and other supporters work together to supply spaces for the arts to grow. For instance, Kreative Ent.’s volunteers are the gallery’s lifeline due to a lack of funds to pay employees. Likewise, people who share an interest in the arts donate much of the equipment at the CAA, including an estimated $25,000 worth of film machinery that was given as a gift for the Centre’s photography lab. In the spaces, people also transmit knowledge and skills through classes, demonstrations, and general social interactions at events to help individuals who are outside the networks understand and enjoy art, thus widening the recognition of and interest in the arts.

The practice of building a festival culture also entails tapping into social networks and knowledge bases to make the culture a reality. The Battle of the Bands at Maytag Park and Indiefest, for example, are both results of NTC members helping festival organizers obtain the proper event permits and of area music fans using their social connections to find participating bands and to promote the events. Larger festivals, such as Family Fun Fest and Weekend Pit Stop festival, rely on broader community support to make the events successful. A Weekend Pit Stop festival planner details the combined efforts of local businesses and
organizations that make the event possible, emphasizing the importance of utilizing social networks and volunteered services to overcome financial deficiencies:

One of the things we wanted to do is the ‘Weekend Pit Stop.’ That is just something we wanted to do to offer something for the visitors here, and the community as well, to pull them away from the speedway so they could see that there is more to offer than just what is out there at the speedway. Is it great out there? Yeah, it’s great out there. But there is a whole city here. And we love being able to showcase Maytag Park when we do those sort of things. The Chamber of Commerce sponsored a shuttle from the speedway to the park, to and from. We thought it was pretty successful for the first year. The nice thing about it was that, what do I want to call it, it was a community sponsored event. The local businesses at the event donated their services. For instance, Forbes donated all of our fliers for us. The radio station did free publicity for us, and Dodds did not charge us for trash pick-up. So, we had a whole list of sponsors – Wallace Funeral Home supplied us with tables and chairs. I mean, it was just amazing the community support we got for that because we don’t have the funds for that big of a show. Iowa Telecom paid for the entertainment. So, it was this that sort of a thing that we felt that was just awesome, the community support (Interview SP).

“In two thousand six the other shoe dropped; Maytag was sold – sad to say; But just let us look on the brighter side; They opened a new Speedway.”
- Beverly Cross, Sesquicentennial Newton, Iowa Poem, 2007

The arts and festival cultural capital emerges, in part, as a dimension of Newton’s transformation into a destination town. Local sculptures, murals, demonstrations, concerts, festivals, and the like not only characterize the community as a place of arts and festivals but each also functions as an anchor to attract tourists. While this cultural capital continues to grow, the collective identity of Newton as a ‘racing town’ following the Iowa Speedway’s opening carries the greatest cultural reach. The racing town identity ties into the community’s destination town status and, due to its cultural reach, represents Newton’s primary tourist anchor.

Because of the low availability of major league teams (e.g. National Hockey League, Major League Baseball, National Football League, etc.,) and insufficient resources for major league sports (e.g. stadiums, transportation structures, workforce, etc.,), community leaders of non-urban core areas most often focus on luring minor league sport teams, arena football
teams, horse racing, and/or motor speedway venues to facilitate economic development and to market a particular area as an attractive place to visit (Belanger 2000; Kraus 2003; Lee and Russo 2002; Mason and Duquette 2008; Smith 2001). For instance, a study of nine communities with recently opened motor speedways, similar to Newton’s Iowa Speedway, suggests that racetracks are good for tourism and hospitality businesses and for community marketing and identity construction (Kitsap Economic Development Council 2006). Most research, however, finds that long-term economic benefits of professional sporting events are minimal (Baade 1996; Noll and Zimbalist 1997; Rosentraub 1997).

The construction of the Iowa Speedway, which was originally called Newton Motor Speedway, was controversial. Some debated issues included tax policy concerns of Iowa lawmakers who did not want to set an overly generous precedent for state tourism projects; noise and future development concerns of property owners who live near the 225 acres of former farmland that is now home to the racetrack; concerns of city leaders and residents who perceived a lack of information about the project from speedway officials; and, questions from almost everyone about the speedway’s financial status – even after the speedway’s groundbreaking in June 2005.

Financing for the Iowa Speedway officially closed in January 2006. In the end, city officials gave developers $3.3 millions in grants ($1.3 million for land acquisition and $2 million for construction costs) and they agreed to cover an estimated $13 million worth of road, sewer, and utility improvements, much of which was obtained through state grant money (Karr 2006c). The city receives a $1 surcharge on all Iowa Speedway tickets, including concerts and other non-racing events at the racetrack, in addition to revenue resulting from the local option sales tax. The surcharge money is being used to cover the
interest on grant money that was used for new construction around the facility. The city will not collect any property taxes from the facility until 2026 – a fact that still upsets many residents.

With the financing finished, promotion of the Iowa Speedway went into full effect. Mayor Chaz Allen and racetrack designer and spokesperson Rusty Wallace held a public luncheon in Newton before a sold-out audience and they later went on a statewide campaign to discuss the project. State legislators also framed the Iowa Speedway as an exciting opportunity and a smart investment for Newton residents and the state of Iowa:

A basic tenant of the principles of tourism is the fact that "destination" attractions fare far better than "points en-route." Newton, with the Iowa Speedway, will be a destination for tourism, with folks from all over the country arriving to participate in the nation's top spectator sport. I wouldn't have believed it myself, until after having followed my son, Stewart, who is in the racing industry and in fact a driver, to his various races in the vintage road course series across America. An appropriate example is his favorite track at Road America at Elkhart Lake, Wis. Race weekends will find that sleepy little town with typical attendance approaching 25,000 visitors. All indications are the Iowa Speedway also will be bursting at the seams... Add to this the plans for a Love's Country Store just off exit 168. I have stopped at Love's stations in Oklahoma, and they are great. Love's is rapidly creating a clientele of professional, cross-country drivers and the regular motoring public. They also are leaders in providing biodiesel and ethanol for the motoring public. Thus, they will be selling Iowa products. Make no mistake about it, the Iowa Speedway will impact our community, Jasper County and Iowa to an extent that few could imagine. And it will start to happen soon... very soon, with groundbreaking of Love's anticipated for yet this spring... Faith and trust... Newton will soon be a destination city! (Black 2006b).

In the midst of the promotion, Whirlpool officials announced the closings of Newton’s Maytag operations. The announcement fostered a dichotomy with respect to the Iowa Speedway’s role in the community. Many people, focusing on the potential of the Iowa Speedway and related developments, emphasized the racetrack as the bright side of local affairs. For instance, a letter to the editor suggests, “Don’t cry Newton. Losing Maytag could be your ticket to bringing big-time auto racing and jobs to the Iowa Speedway” (Powers 2006). Yet, other people, focusing on the lack of job creation by the racetrack’s presence, were more suspicious about the Iowa Speedway as ‘saving’ the community. In the
words of a retired Maytag worker, “What will 1,000 people do in this town? They can’t all work at the racetrack” (Hansen 2006).

Embraced by residents or not, the association between racing culture and Newton grew as the Iowa Speedway opened for a shortened season in 2006 and during its first full season in 2007. Similar to the news of the wind energy companies locating to Newton, the serendipitous-like timing of the speedway’s opening not only provided media outlets with ‘feel-good’ stories about the community’s transition, but it also provided both residents and non-residents with meanings to identify Newton as something other than a Maytag town.

According to a city employee, the cultural change appeared to be automatic:

I think with Iowa Speedway, since the speedway was developed, I think that changed things right away. It was almost an instantaneous. [It was like] ‘Okay, we are no longer Maytag because Maytag is phasing out’ – because Iowa Speedway was here prior to the very last phase of Maytag and Whirlpool. That caused Newton to have an immediate, new genre, if that’s what you want to call it. It is like, ok, Newton is no longer Maytag, it is Iowa Speedway (Interview BA).

While the association between the Iowa Speedway and Newton became increasingly common, residents began establishing the idea of Newton as racing town as another cultural capital form. Various markers of the racing culture were apparent during the racetrack’s first full season. Several local business people incorporated the symbolism into their operations. An Interstate-80 billboard for Country Kitchen (a family-oriented restaurant) reads “Race into Country Kitchen” and an entrance sign for the Econo Lodge Inn & Suites (Figure 19) displays checkered flags and a “Welcome race fans” message. One local business even integrated the symbolism into business itself. The Raceway Café, which is owned by former Maytag workers, is a bar and grill that is full of racing décor and serves as a space for people to watch televised racing competitions, including stockcar, motorbike, and formula one events.
The racing culture was also visible closer to Newton’s downtown area. For instance, the Midtown Café’s interior was decorated with checkered flags, NASCAR t-shirts, miniature toy cars, and other racing memorabilia. The interior and exterior of multiple downtown bars presented similar racing inspired imagery. Newton’s Conventions and Visitors Bureau employees purchased checkered flags (Figure 20) and new city banners (Figure 21), which display a checkered flag design, to hang around the town square during the racing season. Furthermore, Renew Newton members sponsored two downtown murals that draw upon the racing culture. As part of a larger “Welcome to Newton” mural, Iowa Speedway symbolism appears on an individual who is wearing a Rusty Wallace number 2 (Wallace’s car number) t-shirt. The second mural (Figure 22) titled “Race Car, Newton” shows a blue, number ‘2’ racing car, closely resembling Rusty Wallace’s former vehicle.
Figure 20. Checkered flags around Newton’s town square

Figure 21. City banner in Newton’s downtown area
Despite a few problems, such as parking issues at the Iowa Corn Indy 250 that caused two-hour delays for some race fans and two cancelled events due to poor tickets sales, city leaders and racetrack officials touted the Iowa Speedway’s first full season as a success. Over 200,000 fans visited the speedway for concerts and racing events over seven weekends, the Iowa Corn Indy 250 was featured on national television, and Indy Race League (IRL) directors signed a two-year extension of the Iowa Corn Indy event. Yet, some community members still questioned the racetrack’s presence in Newton. A local business person discusses the lingering apprehension following the 2007 racing season:

I would say there is still a little controversy around the speedway. People just aren’t sure if it is going to make it. But I think it is gaining ground. I think it is going to be here for the long haul. We got more development going on out there – convenience stores, hotels. I think there
are still plans for a water park out there. As more of that stuff happens then more people will be comfortable with agreeing that building the speedway was a good thing (Interview CZ).

In addition to a perceived lack of development near the speedway, many people attributed the naysayers to generational gaps (i.e. older residents who were unable to embrace Newton’s new reality) and to feelings surrounding the looming Maytag closings, which occurred one month after the 2007 race season.

At the same time, some Iowa Speedway supporters were also bothered with the state of affairs. They did not question the racetrack’s construction but questioned why local businesses did not take more advantage of the racing culture. A Newton resident discusses this issue in a letter to the editor:

I don’t believe the track was built to ‘save Newton’ and I don’t believe the track is going to make money for this town, (other than a percentage from ticket sales). The town should be looking at ways to make their own money. I’ve yet to see this town do anything to bring race fans into town. If you don’t get them in town, they are not going to just leave their money on the town’s doorstep. I’ve seen very few business’s promote themselves on race weekend or partner with the track. I’ve noticed Raceway Cafe, Okoboji’s and Country Kitchen with banners and welcome signs and that is great...We had 35,000 fans coming for the IRL race and what did Newton do to get any of them into town, before or after the race? When comments are made about race fans, or concert goers (at the track) they are stereotyped as beer drinking, not too bright troublemakers... Whoever, or whatever committees, or groups of people who make the plans for Newton to capitalize on events, hopefully will partner with the track and start bringing more revenue to town...[I]t would be nice if, instead of having complaints, we could have some positives and turn Newton into a fan-friendly, active community with lots to offer (Richardson 2007).

As the 2008 season began, residents continued efforts to create a racing town collective identity. Perhaps they learned lessons from the previous season about promoting the racetrack, or the several months between the Maytag closings and the new racing season may have given residents adequate time to grieve the loss of Maytag and to gain more confidence in the speedway. For whatever reason, the racing culture’s salience increased significantly as residents organized new social spaces to highlight the racing town imagery and to further integrate the symbolism into the community.
For the Iowa Speedway’s second season, Convention and Visitors Bureau employees again put up checkered flags in the downtown area, but they also raised new flags that specifically identified each weekend’s race. For example, during the week of the second season’s first race, the ARCA RE/MAX Prairie Meadows 250, four ARCA REMAX series flags flew around the town square. Newton Daily News reporters also stepped up efforts to promote the culture by publishing a weekly ‘racing page’ titled “Nuts and Bolts.” Debuting for the kick-off of the 2008 season, column writers explain that “[Nuts and Bolts] is your page, the local Jasper County race fan” and focus their stories on local drivers and local racing events rather than national stories.

The initial race of 2008 was also accompanied by the first Miss Iowa Speedway contest. The contest’s winner, who must be at least 18 years of age, a single female, and enrolled in or planning to enroll in an accredited college in the United States, is crowned at the speedway prior to an event and is expected to attend all major races. Along with becoming ‘the face’ of the Iowa Speedway for a calendar year, the Miss Iowa Speedway winner receives a $1500 college scholarship. A Newton High School senior won the 2008 contest, beating out another Newton resident who finished first runner-up.

The Weekend Pit Stop festival was another new event during the Iowa Speedway’s second season. As mentioned above, the racing-themed festival at Maytag Park included a comedian, live music, food, and a beer tent for over 200 people in attendance, some of whom were Newton residents while others were fans in town for the Iowa Indy Corn 250 (Field notes 6/20/2008). The rationale behind the Pit Stop festival was twofold. Chamber of Commerce and Conventions and Visitors Bureau directors wanted to incorporate the racing culture into community life and to provide entertainment for Newton residents. Taking
advantage of the largest attended race at the speedway, organizers also wanted to plan an event to showcase the community to non-residents. With this in mind, organizers arranged a shuttle from the campgrounds near the Iowa Speedway to Maytag Park for visitors who wanted to participate in the activities.

An increase of racing posters, flags, and banners in Newton represents the most visible difference between the 2007 and 2008 racing seasons. A number of posters and flags were donated by the Indy Racing League and a local chapter of Big Brothers, Big Sisters. The decorations were free, but a condition for receiving a poster was that it had to be publicly displayed to show support for the speedway. Although not all 2,500 available posters were openly visible, it was difficult to drive around the community without seeing the images hanging from residents’ homes and local businesses (Figure 23). Taking a queue from this promotion, residents started putting out a variety of banners (Figure 24) and flags (Figure 25) to welcome fans and to support the racing culture.

Figure 23. ‘I am Indy’ flag outside a local business
Figure 24. Racing banner outside a Newton home

Figure 25. Checkered flag outside a Newton home
The number of local businesses that integrated racing symbolism into their operations also increased significantly. In addition to displaying posters and flags for decoration, more people used the racing culture in their billboards and company signs. For example, restaurant and gas station billboards presented general greetings such as “Welcome race fans” and “Welcome Iowa Speedway visitors” whereas intentions of some signs, such as “If you are a race fan turn left” (Figure 26) and “Racing special – 20% off,” related to attracting visitors into their businesses. Furthermore, a local credit union incorporated racing imagery (checkered flags and race cars) into its electric sign that flashed “Race in for great rates” (Figure 27). While the advertisement is directed at Newton residents instead of visitors, it illustrates the racing culture’s growing presence in the community.

Figure 26. ‘If you are a race fan turn left’ sign
Visitors took notice of residents’ efforts to embrace Iowa Speedway events. In a story that originally ran on Indycar.com (the official website of the Indycar series) and was later reprinted in the *Newton Daily News*, a sports journalist recounts his trip to Newton and the somewhat unexpected impressions of the trip:

Marketing experts will tell you that you’ve got to stage events in or near the country’s major population markets in order to be successful. I would suggest those folks pay a visit to Newton and Iowa Speedway before their next consultation. This past weekend, the IndyCar Series and the Firestone Indy Lights made a stop at the 7/8-mile D-shaped oval built in the middle of the rolling farmland just off of Interstate 80. Newton is a town of about 15,000. A quaint, quiet little town, Newton’s nearest big city neighbor is Grinnell — population 10,000...For miles around, every gas station, convenience store and restaurant that you pulled into proudly displayed posters, banners and “I am INDY” flags. Everyone wanted to know about the drivers, the cars, the speed, the event...It was, by all accounts, a great event. But, more than that, it meant something to those people. If you had told me two years ago that I would be looking forward to making an annual trip to the greater Newton-Grinnell area for a race I would have laughed in your face. I am not laughing now (King 2008).

The racing culture that now permeates throughout Newton does not appear out of thin air, but results from, as in the cases of creating other cultural capital forms, the combined practices of community members. These practices resemble a mixture of the top-down
approach of the emerging ‘green community’ sense of place and of the more bottom-up approach evident in creating entrepreneurship and arts and festival cultures. Like the former, making a racing culture is possible due to the available land and built structures that are not only physical apparatus of the Iowa Speedway but also a primary cultural niche in which people create meanings that can be used to recognize Newton as a ‘racing town.’ However, the culture of the Iowa Speedway only represents potential cultural capital until residents begin to embrace the meanings. Outside of the timing of the Iowa Speedway’s construction, which was a blessing or a curse depending on one’s point of view, embracing the meanings is difficult because of the social distance between the Iowa Speedway and most residents. Unlike social spaces that are closely situated to town centers and are major sites of employment, such as the TPI and Trinity factories, or Newton’s former Maytag facilities, the Iowa Speedway’s location on the ‘other side’ of Interstate-80 and its low numbered, seasonal employment produce a social distance between the racing culture and residents’ everyday actions. This distance is why tapping into social networks and residents’ skills, resembling the bottom-up approach, to organize secondary cultural niches is important. Building social spaces such as the Weekend Pit Stop festival and integrating the racing symbolism across Newton help minimize the distance, thus bridging the gap between the racing town recognition as potential cultural capital to the meanings serving as an actual collective identity.

While making the racing culture an actual part of the community’s cultural fabric, re-creating cultural capital that is related to the Iowa Speedway is also replacing previous meanings that were associated with Maytag. The checkered flags around the town square and other racing decorations across Newton fill the place of the Maytag blue lights on the
headquarters building and manufacturing plant that formally shined over the community. Iowa Speedway hats, t-shirts, and sweatshirts are a common sight while Maytag jackets and hats are becoming less visible. The Weekend Pit Stop festival is held on the same grounds where the Maytag Picnic once was an annual event, and the Miss Iowa Speedway contest symbolizes the Maytag Queen pageant of Newton’s post-Maytag life.

The transformation from Maytag town to racing town is also present in Rusty Wallace’s evolution into Newton’s unofficial father figure, a symbolic position previously held by F.L. Maytag. While the Maytag name still presides over Maytag Park, Bowl, and Pool, Wallace’s name, within a relatively short time period, is also becoming prevalent around the community. During the speedway’s construction, for example, City Council members renamed a stretch of local roadway “Rusty Wallace Drive” (Figure 28). The main lobby in Newton’s City Hall displays a framed Iowa Speedway poster on which Wallace inscribed “Congratulations Newton! – Rusty Wallace.” Furthermore, Wallace’s presence is apparent in the two downtown murals that draw upon the racing culture. Interestingly, both murals not only reference Wallace, but each captures the F.L. Maytag to Rusty Wallace changing of guard (personal communication 8/14/2007). The “Race Car, Newton” mural (Figure 22) shows an older man looking at a younger man, perhaps his son, who is looking at the number 2 racing car. In the ‘Welcome to Newton’ mural (Figure 29), an individual, who is wearing a Rusty Wallace t-shirt, stares at a seemingly abandoned appliance store over which a Maytag sign hangs. Metaphorically, the murals express Newton’s future looking at the community’s past.
Figure 28. Rusty Wallace Drive sign

Figure 29. Rusty Wallace image in ‘Welcome to Newton’ mural by Carl Homstad
As in the case of creating a ‘green’ sense of place in Newton, obstacles exist in creating cultural capital within the community’s reality as a tourist destination. Time is perhaps the largest obstacle. On the one hand, it takes time for new cultural capital to fully develop – “people only know what they know,” and it takes time for people to embrace the ‘newness’ of the arts and festival and racing cultures. On the other hand, researchers find that residents of destination towns are more likely to embrace tourist-centered cultures if they perceive socio-economic benefits from the cultures, including improved built infrastructures, increased tax revenue, and employment opportunities (Brunt and Courtney 1999; McGehee and Andereck 2004; Wang and Pfister 2008). As a destination town that is still in its beginning stages, it will take time for such benefits, if any, to appear in Newton. The seasonality of the arts and festival and racing cultures is also an obstacle. For example, Newton’s racing town identity comes to the forefront during racing season. When the season ends, however, the checkered flags and other racing decorations across the community disappear. Thus, residents must adjust to temporal dimensions of new cultural capital forms (Crow and Allan 1995).

In addition to time, it is difficult for residents to rally around or to identify with meanings that are primarily directed at visitors and tourists (Bennett 2006; Engler 1993; Curtis 2003; Krannich and Petzelka 2003; Petzelka 2004). In other words, it is one thing to commodify a community by ‘selling’ a culture that consists of new and often unfamiliar meanings and traditions; and, it is another thing to primarily sell the product to people who live outside the community, thus adding onto the psychological separation between residents and the community culture that is initially imposed by the culture’s commodification. This is
likely to be the case for Newton residents who were familiar with a culture that was primarily
directed at themselves for such an extended period of time.

Re-creating a ‘New-town’

Newton’s Maytag closings resulted in a mismatch between established cultural capital
forms and the community’s new structural realities. Because previous cultural niches were
unable to continue producing cultural capital under the new conditions, residents experienced
a deculturation of the collective identities, senses of place, and other cultural ways that were
provided by Maytag’s 113 years in the community. In addition to perceiving a symbolic
opening in Newton’s cultural fabric, residents also began asking the question: Who are we?

To answer this question, residents did not passively wait for new meanings to appear
over time; instead, they actively organized new social spaces in which people re-created
previous community capital forms and made new community meanings to match their post-
Maytag social conditions. Along with helping residents culturally catch up to their new
realities, and thus successfully pass through the community hysteresis phase, the meaning
making practices assisted the ‘moving forward’ process by fostering solidarity and a pro-
change mentality among residents and by developing a social context for new methods of
community sustainability to emerge.

Although some new cultural capital forms are more salient and encompass a larger
cultural reach than others, each fits Newton’s post-Maytag reality because each is, in part,
structured by and a reflection of the new methods of community sustainability. As in the case
of re-creating past Maytag cultural aspects to fit the art and festivals dimension of Newton’s
as a destination town, each new cultural capital form is not simply culture for the sake of
having culture; instead, each cultural capital form possesses exchange value with respect to building new community economic foundations.

From this point of view, one that resembles Bourdieu’s conceptualization of hysteresis on an individual level, cultural change during community transitions, while an active process, is determined by structural-economic realities. In other words, community level hysteresis could be interpreted as a phase during which major social change produces a mismatch of previous cultural capital forms and new economic realities; as such, community hysteresis is later passed through as community members catch up to the social change by recreating cultural capital under the new economic conditions.

Yet, this structural-economic framework is only part of the story. The framework is missing the dialectical symbolism of social practices, which Bourdieu often alluded to in his discussions of social reproduction (Bourdieu 1984, 1990b, 1998; Bourdieu and Passeron [1977] 1990). For Newton residents, even though the objective structures that helped produce past community cultural capital no longer exist (e.g. Maytag headquarters office and manufacturing plant, Maytag traditions and rituals) or have been transformed by Newton’s social change (e.g. symbolism of Maytag Park, Pool, and Bowl), traces of the past meanings are still secured in their mental schemas, self-conceptions, and overall understandings of life. These cultural traces are evident not only in residents’ desires to re-create past Maytag meanings within their post-Maytag reality, but the cultural traces are also evident as a collective symbolic force that shapes the community’s transition as a whole. To best highlight this process, it is necessary to reveal community cultural changes that did not fully develop due to residents’ resistance of the meanings.
CHAPTER FOUR

“THOSE WHO WANT TO BUILD THE CASINO SAY THAT ‘IT’S ABOUT GETTING NEWTON BACK ON TRACK.’ WE HAVE TO ASK OURSELVES: IS THIS WHO WE REALLY ARE? LET’S DO THINGS OUR WAY, AND OUR WAY ISN’T A CASINO...”
- JASPER CITIZENS FOR CASINO TRUTH CAMPAIGN MEMBER, ANTI-CASINO RALLY, JASPER COUNTY COURTHOUSE, MARCH 6, 2008

If successfully passing through community hysteresis only entails re-creating new cultural capital forms that match emerging structural-economic realities, using hysteresis as theoretical guide to examine community cultural change becomes a framework comparable to structural functionalism and rational choice traditions. In terms of the former, the ‘loss’ of cultural capital could be explained by structural changes throughout a social space, whereas the re-creation of cultural capital is determined by overall efforts to support local economic sustainability; in terms of rational choice theory, the cultural mismatch could also be explained by structural changes, while community members’ re-creation of culture represents efforts to maximize economic benefits during their social change. Whether focusing on a macro or a micro level of analysis, both perspectives frame re-creating cultural capital as a practice that is subservient to community economic revitalization.

Perhaps due to Bourdieu’s relative underdevelopment of the concept or due to his concentration on the structural-economic shifts within capitalism that result in cultural mismatches rather than the re-creation of cultural capital to catch up to the shifts, hysteresis as a theoretical framework could easily be interpreted as a structural functionalist or a rational choice perspective. This would not be the first time that such interpretations of Bourdieu’s sociology have been made. While Emile Durkheim’s structural-functionalism perspective is evident in Bourdieu’s work, an overly Durkheimian reading of Bourdieu’s
sociology ignores his focus on individuals’ ‘practical sense’ (perceptual and evaluative schemata that people apply in their everyday life) that strategically guides and constructs social practices (Bourdieu 1990a, 1990b, 1998; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). A juxtaposition of Gary Becker’s rational choice model on Bourdieu’s notion of practical sense, while not rare, misinterprets Bourdieu’s motivational factors behind social practices. Becker’s model emphasizes a cost/benefit mentality of economic concerns, but Bourdieu stressed that motivations behind social practices are largely symbolic aspirations (i.e. actions driven by self-conceptions and collective identities), which are a product of an individual’s history (Bourdieu 1984, 1993, 1998; Calhoun 1993; Lash 1993). For example, lottery winners often continue working after receiving their prizes although it is not an economic necessity. This pattern is partly out of habit, but it is also due to individuals’ desires to maintain ideas of who they are and what they represent as a whole, even if their economic realities have significantly change.

As mentioned above, what is missing from a structural-economic interpretation of hysteresis, and what would make hysteresis a truly Bourdieusian theoretical framework, is attention to dialectical symbolism. Focusing on how past cultural ways inform individuals’ catching up to new structural realities not only highlights both economic and symbolic considerations of social change, but it emphasizes an interplay of structure and agency during social transitions. This interaction of structural forces and purposeful actions reveals how individuals strategically play the cards they are dealt when adjusting to new social realities, including situations during which individuals decide not to play their cards at all.

The influence of Newton’s past cultural ways is evident in residents’ desires to recreate Maytag meanings within their post-Maytag life. Yet, these social practices could be
interpreted as economically driven insofar the re-creation of Maytag meanings possesses exchange value as part of residents’ turn to the arts and festivals for community development. As such, in the following I examine a second illustration of dialectical symbolism occurring during Newton’s transition. This illustration focuses on how residents pull upon past collective identities and senses of place to campaign against the construction of a local casino, which, at first glance, looks like a perfect fit for Newton’s post-Maytag life; however, a structural fit does not always translate into a cultural fit. And, when the discrepancy is large enough, residents make their voices heard and resist potential cultural capital through their collective agency.

"The whole city of Newton is changing. They used to have all their eggs in one basket so to speak with Maytag. Well, here's a basket with an egg. I call it a golden egg with this casino."
- Jasper County Gaming Development Corporation chair, WHO Channel 13 News, January 10, 2008

Like the use of arts and festivals and of sporting events, legalized gambling, or gaming, represents another common community development strategy, especially for encouraging area entertainment and tourism. Following an expansion outside of Nevada and New Jersey in 1987, the American Gaming Association reports an estimated 450 existing commercial casinos across eleven states in 2004. The number of tribal casinos has also drastically increased over the last twenty-years, with nearly 400 operating casinos in 2004 (Morse and Goss 2007). Commercial and tribal casinos supporters perceive gaming as a means for providing jobs, achieving economic development, and establishing additional retail and tourism opportunities. Furthermore, commercial casino supporters view gaming as major sources of local taxes and as benefactors for local charities and organizations (Eadington 1996; Gross 1998; Morse and Goss 2007).
For some communities, particularly those in economically depressed areas, the introduction of gaming can be part of an image makeover. This was an intention of casino supporters in Atlantic City. In 1978, local casino supporters saw gaming as a method to deflect attention away from “the ravages of deindustrialization” and to recapture a past of symbolizing the “nation’s playground” (Simon 2003). More recently, city officials in Gary, Indiana welcomed the opening of Trump Casinos and Hotel (now the Majestic Star Casinos and Hotel) on the edge of Lake Michigan. Similar to the intentions of casino backers in Atlantic City, the introduction of gaming in Gary was not only about increased employment opportunities and a larger tax base, but it also related to reinventing the city’s identity. As O’Hara (2003) outlines, the casinos were an integral component of casting representations of the former ‘steel city’ away from a public imagery of crime, pollution, and urban decay to associations of a “New Gary” based on tourism and gambling.

Seeking to increase Newton’s financial base and to help re-create Newton’s sense of place within its new reality, a group of area residents, headed by the Jasper County Economic Development director, formed the Jasper County Gaming Development Corporation (JCGDC) at the beginning of 2008 in hopes of building a casino next to the Iowa Speedway. Both Newton and Jasper County officials declared a ‘wait and see’ approach to the casino, acknowledging that a number of steps still had to be made before the project could become a reality. These steps included obtaining enough Jasper County residents’ signatures to set up a casino referendum, a favorable referendum vote for the casino, and receiving a state gambling license from the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission.

The JCGDC had their ‘coming-out’ to Newton residents at a standing-room-only City Council meeting. Before over sixty people in attendance and three regional television news
crews, two JCGDC spokespersons sketched an overview of the planned casino and of their visions of what a casino could provide Newton and Jasper County (Field notes 1/21/2008). The spokespersons focused on the economic fit of the project, especially given the community’s Maytag situation and its concentration on diversifying the local economy. They referred to the project as a “casino and resort complex” and as an “entertainment place” more often than a simple ‘casino,’ perhaps to avoid any negative connotations, and suggested that the project would bring 400-600 jobs into the community and it would operate as an economic anchor for new business development. Furthermore, it was argued that the casino’s tax revenue could support additional city undertakings, such as renovating the Maytag Bowl, building a skateboard park, which had been recently discussed by some residents, and finishing a stretch of bike and walking trails on Newton’s south end. All of these benefits, according to both spokespersons, came with “No cost to Newton” due to the fact that an area real estate development firm, who already owned the land for the project, pledged to fund the construction without any assistance from local taxpayers.

In addition to focusing on an economic fit, the spokespersons discussed the project’s cultural fit with Newton’s post-Maytag life as a destination town. During the meeting, a JCGDC member displayed a conceptual layout diagram of the casino, a hotel, and open spaces for camping and potential entertainment and retail developments, all of which were approximately one mile south of the Iowa Speedway. The member talked about how the proposed 70,000 square foot site could provide visitors and area residents with entertainment and retail opportunities and, in turn, how the project could transform Newton into the “state’s biggest tourist attraction.” He explains, “We believe it will add to tourism by being able to create a synergy between the track and the hotel/casino and other entertainment venues that
will be there. The drive-by traffic alone, we think, will be able to pull enough folks who are driving through Iowa off the road [and into the casino area].” Taken together, the JCGDC members argued that building a casino would economically improve Newton, but it is also part of a larger cultural change that would help alter the community’s sense of place. As one member told the council, “We’re making an effort to move Newton forward and change the face of Newton.”

Following their coming-out to the community at the City Council meeting, JCGDC’s next steps were to begin rallying support across Jasper County and to obtain enough signatures to call for a casino referendum vote. For a referendum vote to occur, JCGDC members needed to collect 1,485 signatures (a number based on ten-percent of the total Jasper County voters in the last gubernatorial election), and, to do so, they placed petitions throughout local businesses in Newton and at other venues in Jasper County. JCGDC members and non-members contended that signing a petition was not necessarily a sign of support for a casino; rather, signing a petition could be showing one’s support for the casino’s construction or it could be showing one’s support for a referendum vote on the casino, which would essentially put the project’s fate in ‘the hands of the people.’ On March 4, less than two months after the group’s formal campaign started, JCGDC members turned in 2,570 signatures to the Jasper County Board of Supervisors. At the meeting, a JCGDC member also presented board supervisors with a $15,000 check to fund the referendum vote, which was to be held just over a month later (Jennings 2008a).

Casino supporters attempted to rally support for the project by using three general arguments. First, supporters believed that a casino made economic sense. The 400-600 jobs would be a welcomed addition to Jasper County, and with Maytag’s departure many people
needed the wages. A Newton resident highlights this in a letter to the editor, “Vote yes on April 8. We need the jobs. Jasper County has the highest unemployment rate in the state. Even if the jobs don’t pay that well, any job is better than none when the unemployment [assistance] runs out. And who wants to drive 35 to 50 miles to commute to a better job when gas is so high? Vote yes for our economy” (Heater 2008). Increased tax revenue for Jasper County communities was also seen as a plus. Newton alone could receive an estimated $400,000 annually from casino taxes, along with a percentage of an estimated $2.7 million that the JCGDC would, by law, distribute to local charities and civic organizations (Jennings 2008a). Supporters also claimed that the casino would bring additional economic benefits by fostering more commercial and entertainment developments. Highlighting this idea, a JCGDC member told City Council members at a second meeting that the casino would quickly turn into “Newton’s little treasure chest” (Field notes 3/17/2008), bringing more jobs, more tax revenue, and a wide range of business opportunities into the community.

The second reason for building a casino revolved around the cultural compatibility of the project. Similar to JCGDC’s vision of Newton becoming the “state’s biggest tourist attraction,” casino supporters viewed the project as another stepping stone for transforming the community into a legitimate destination town. As a Newton Daily News columnist states, a casino translated into much more than a single casino, it represented growing local tourism as a whole:

[The project] would include a lot more than a casino, such as four or five retail outlets, including a ‘big box’ store, a resort-style hotel and RV camping. The development would complement the Iowa Speedway nicely. When you can get a development such as this, synergistic effect, drawing other developments to it...Look at I-80 exit 168 interchange. Already it is starting to spring to life. Only a couple years ago, there was nothing there at all, except the rural water building. Now, we have Prairie Gas [a local gas station], Love’s Country Store, and more is planned. The speedway was the catalyst for that, and a casino and retail outlets would create a destination area for Newton (Jennings 2008b).
While people stressed the ‘synergy’ with the Iowa Speedway, they also pointed out an advantage of a casino is that gaming occurs throughout the year rather than seasonally. JCGDC members believed that local businesses and entrepreneurs could use the year-round tourism and increase recognition of Newton as a destination town to get visitors into the downtown area, thus creating a “win-win situation” for both newer and existing businesses (Field notes 3/17/2008).

Supporters’ third argument related to minimizing various objections of anti-casino advocates. Some area residents did not believe a casino in Newton is feasible due to the close proximity of two existing casinos. Prairie Meadows Racetrack (horse racing) and Casino in Altoona, Iowa is twenty-five miles west of Newton and the Meskwaki Bingo Casino Hotel in Tama, Iowa is approximately forty-five miles northeast of Newton. Casino supporters pointed out that multiple gambling facilities within small geographical distances is not unique, and they believed that Newton’s Iowa Speedway and the location on Interstate-80 allow a local casino to stand apart from nearby gaming. Supporters deflected other concerns about a casino negatively affecting family life and potentially causing a variety of social ills. To counter these issues, they cited the nearby gaming facilities, suggesting that the possibility already exists for casinos to negatively affect families, and they argued that a casino would actually help families by providing jobs and donations to local charities and organizations. In addition, many people accused anti-casino advocates of taking a “page from the Republican directory by using the fear mongering tactic” (Guthrie 2008). Along this line, supporters preached individual responsibility and generalized the creation of social ills to other addictive behaviors such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, and shopping – all of which are left to individual discretion.
From the supporters’ point of view, a casino represented a perfect fit for Newton. With Maytag’s departure, residents needed employment opportunities and city officials needed to rejuvenate a weakened tax base. Furthermore, given residents’ recent turn to tourism as a method of community sustainability, a casino, a hotel, and future entertainment and retail developments would add a year-round tourist infrastructure that could work with and support local arts and festivals and the Iowa Speedway. Overall, supporters hoped that the structural fit of a casino, on top of the fact that taxpayers did not have to finance the project, would result in enough ‘yes votes’ for the measure to pass.

![Figure 30. A ‘Vote Yes’ for gaming in Jasper County sign](image)
“What will a casino bring to Newton’s long-term future? Some jobs, paying various wages. An entertainment venue for residents and out-of-towners alike. [And] A reputation of being a ‘casino town.’”

- Alex Huxley, Newton Daily News, 2/19/2008

Of course, as anti-casino advocates pointed out, there are more than economic considerations when discussing the possibility of building a multi-million dollar gaming facility within a community of 15,200 residents. People in smaller cities and rural areas are more likely to report noticeable social consequences of a casino’s construction than residents of larger cities and urban areas (Carmichael, Peppard, and Boudreau 1996; Eadington 1996; Timothy 2005). Some consequences, whether perceived or actual, include a marginalization of residents from community activities, a diminished sense of community, more traffic congestion, local productivity losses, a faster pace of life, and higher crime rates.

With many of these issues in mind, resistance against the casino began immediately. At the City Council meeting where the JCGDC announced the project, most audience members adamantly shook their heads in disagreement when the spokesperson stated that the casino’s construction came with “No cost to Newton” (Field notes 1/21/2008). Anti-casino columns and letters to the editor in the Newton Daily News, which outnumbered pro-casino letters almost two-to-one, starting appearing soon after JCGDC’s announcement. A number of anti-casino voices expressed suspicion about the project: “This certainly is something that didn’t happen overnight. Looking at all the involvement, detail, and diagrams my best guess is perhaps this had up to a year in the making. This was hidden very well from the community” (Balex 2008). Other voices, worrying about potential social changes a casino could bring to the area, expressed the adage that if something sounds too good to be true, it usually is – “Don’t let the gloss and glamour, or the temporary comfort of a quick fix, fool
you. The city of Newton certainly does not need the albatross of a casino around its neck. It would be the final nail in the coffin of Newton’s future” (Huxley 2008).

Two days after the JCGDC presented county board members with petitions in support of a casino referendum, members of Jasper Citizens for Casino Truth (JCCT) formally introduced their anti-casino group to Jasper County residents at a rally outside Newton’s Jasper County Courthouse. JCCT’s purpose was to give people the ‘other side of the story,’ and to urge voters to turn down the gambling measure. Voting down the measure would not allow the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission to grant a license for casinos in Jasper County for ten years and it would prevent another Jasper County casino referendum for eight years. During the rally, adults and children held homemade anti-casino signs, and speakers discussed how a casino could affect families and local businesses, questioning economic benefits of a casino with studies and statistics that suggested otherwise (Field notes 3/6/2008). In addition to questioning the validity of economic benefits, participants raised doubts about a casino’s overall cultural compatibility with the community: “Those who want to build the casino say that ‘It’s about getting Newton back on track.’ We have to ask ourselves: Is this who we really are? Let’s do things our way, and our way isn’t a casino...” After JCCT’s introduction rally, the 2008 Jasper County casino campaign went into full effect.

Throughout the campaign, anti-casino advocates’ used arguments that centered on a few different threads. The biggest argument related to a perception of the casino damaging area families. As a JCCT member told City Council members on eve of the referendum, “It’s not that I am totally against the casino. I am really just pro-family” (Field notes 4/7/2008). The pro-family argument suggested that a casino increases local crime, gambling
addition, and individual money problems. These issues, in turn, ultimately affect family life, marriages, and children for the worse. For some people, the idea of hurting families in the name of money and jobs did not match what the community represents. A Newton resident illustrates, “Our community is better than this. More opportunities will come to Newton and they will not be damaging to our homes. I urge you to vote no on April 8. Don’t be complicit in the destruction of families that are already struggling” (Bollhoefar 2008). Other anti-casino residents questioned the morality of a casino. An anti-casino resident explains, “I believe there are better ways to create jobs and tourism that are more family oriented. We as voters need to look at the moral issues of gambling and decide which is important, all the nice recreation that would go along with a casino in our area or protecting the structure and integrity of our families” (Kramer 2008).

People also protested the casino’s construction due to the type of money and jobs that gaming provides. They were not against bringing visitors into Newton or developing employment opportunities in Jasper County, but they believed that gaming represents the wrong method for achieving these goals. At JCCT’s first rally, for instance, signs read - “Enjoyment at whose Xpen$e” and “The poor get poorer,” both reflecting a resistance against making profits off of other individuals’ financial loses. A Newton resident expresses the same mentality in a letter to the editor:

I think the casino’s [supporters] attempt to delude [people] with claims that they benefit communities by creating jobs, tourism, and economic development. It is an elaborate smokescreen. Casinos operate solely for the purpose of parting people from their money. Former Nevada deputy attorney general Chuck Gardner put it this way: ‘No one in history of mankind has ever developed or operated a casino out of a burning desire to improve the lot of humanity.’ I am voting no on April 8. I hope you will too. Let’s put our minds together and come up with something that will keep our community wholesome...We’ve done it before, let’s do it again (Black 2008).
When speaking of ‘better ways’ to build the local economy, anti-casino advocates frequently mentioned renewable energy, which, with the recent additions of TPI and Trinity, was already becoming part of Newton’s post-Maytag life. At the final anti-casino rally in Newton, a JCCT member tells the audience, “Similar to putting together washing machines, making biodiesel or wind turbines is a long-term growth industry, something we are proud of’ (Field notes 3/18/2008). Thus, some people believed that making a profit and creating jobs by selling a product, such as manufacturing renewable energy materials, is not only more viable than a casino but it is more in line with the community’s ‘character.’

Connected to the pro-family and ‘wrong type of economic strategy’ arguments, anti-casino residents worried about a casino decreasing overall quality of life in Newton and Jasper County. They understood that the county is experiencing unprecedented social changes; however, they wanted to maintain their pride in the area, and building a casino, in their eyes, was a step in the wrong direction. In the words of one Newton resident, “What we need, in my opinion, is good jobs that pay $16, $18, $20 an hour with benefits. Not a business that takes our money and our pride” (Gilpin 2008). These perceptions of a potential decrease of community pride were intertwined with concerns of what message a casino sends to community members and people who are passing by the area. As a Newton Daily News columnist asks: “Do you want a casino as a reflection to all who pass by, come to visit, or just wonder what the citizens have done to the community?” (Suiter 2008).
“No Dice! Jasper County voters deny casino gambling measure.”
- Headline of Newton Daily News, April 9, 2008

After the ballots were counted, almost 62% of votes were against bringing gambling to Jasper County (4,252 ‘no’ votes against versus 2,614 ‘yes’ votes) (Karr 2008d). As expected, casino supporters were disappointed with the outcome. They acknowledged that ‘the people have spoken,’ but they still believed it was a missed opportunity for Newton residents and Jasper County. On the other hand, anti-casino advocates were pleased with the outcome, believing they had helped area residents stay clear of a path that they would ultimately regret.

While there are many reasons why voters turned the casino measure down, an examination of ‘why’ both challenges and completes the use of hysteresis as a theoretical framework for interpreting community cultural change. When focusing on the structural-economic side of the framework, a casino appears like a perfect match for Newton. Like
developing tourism anchors through arts and festivals and the Iowa Speedway, a casino is compatible with Newton as a destination town. Furthermore, a casino and its related developments, such as hotels, retail outlets, and camping grounds for visitors, is not be a singular method of sustainability. Such a project would complement other tourist attractions and provide residents with additional opportunities for bringing people and their consumer dollars into the community during the ‘off season,’ making Newton a year-round destination town.

Through the eyes of many Newton residents, however, the casino was not the perfect fit as it may initially appear. JCGDC’s announcement sparked a backlash against the idea of a casino in Newton, even though it would provide jobs, tax money, and chances for additional economic development. This backlash was more than the hesitancy that surrounds TPI and Trinity’s reintroduction of manufacturing into the community. The discrepancy between economic fit and cultural fit was large enough to foster a collective resistance against the project. Thus, although a casino could have helped Newton residents catch up to their social change, the project’s potential exchange value did not outweigh non-economic concerns of those who voted against the gambling measure.

Revisiting anti-casino advocates’ arguments reveals why a straight structural-economic perspective of community hysteresis only explains one side of the story. Within the arguments, a symbolic dialectic captures Newton’s cultural past shaping the community’s future cultural ways. While it would be difficult to find a community where people do not claim pro-family attitudes, much of Newton residents’ pro-family mentality traces back to the generations of families who were directly or indirectly part of the community’s ‘Maytag family.’ Maytagers embraced ideas of taking care of their actual and work-related family
members, and they took pride in looking after each other inside and outside the workplace. Consciously or not, Newton residents pulled on aspects of this culture by suggesting that they were protecting area families by voting against the casino. Their concerns about rebuilding the community with other peoples’ paychecks can also be seen as a cultural product. Newton residents helped grow the community and created widely known reputations through their dependability and strong work ethics. Earning a living and financing the city through gambling loses opposed to hard work run counter to over 110 years of local history. Finally, Newton’s cultural past is evident in residents’ beliefs that a casino would decrease quality of life insofar the past not only influences residents’ belief systems, but it also acts as a symbolic measuring stick to which potential futures are compared. Although people know that the Maytag town days are in the past, the idea of being a ‘casino town’ did not measure up for the majority of referendum voters.

*Re-creating a ‘New-town’: Take Two*

Hysteresis as a theoretical framework to explain community cultural change represents a structural-economic perspective if re-creating new collective identities, senses of place, and general cultural ways only correlate with losing and rebuilding financial sustainability. As I outline in chapter 1, Newton’s Maytag closings sent residents into a hysteresis phase due to the decreased efficacy of previous cultural capital forms within the community’s post-Maytag reality. Furthermore, as I examine in chapter 3, residents’ re-creation of cultural capital to catch up with their post-Maytag reality both reflects and supports local economic developments.

However, as I argue in this chapter, a straight structural-economic interpretation of community hysteresis overlooks how previous cultural ways, while not as objectively present
compared to the past, help shape the creation of new cultural capital forms. Because people are not completely starting from scratch, they pull upon a shared cultural history to inform their social practices, whether it is re-creating previous community meanings to match a new reality or using previous meanings to resist the emergence of undesirable cultural capital forms. For Newton residents, even though a casino is a structural-economic match for the community, the dialectical symbolism involved in their social change demonstrates that a structural-economic match does not always translate into a perfect fit due to possible incompatibilities between past and new cultural ways.

When acknowledging both the structural-economic and the symbolic subjectivities of social change, employing hysteresis as a theoretical framework to examine community cultural change not only provides both sides of the story, but it also captures the interplay of structure and agency during social transitions. Along with producing the cultural mismatches that begin the hysteresis phase, structural-economic forces guide residents’ re-creation of cultural capital because the cultural forms reflect and support new methods of sustainability. Yet, residents’ actions are not totally determined by exchange values inherent in new community meanings. Re-creating cultural capital also entails residents’ considerations of new collective identities and senses of place. If residents believe that ‘this is not who we are’ or ‘we can do better than this,’ they can ultimately decide against cultural capital forms that possess exchange value in favor of reinforcing aspects of past cultural ways within their new reality.
“SPACE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SPACE IS A MAJOR COMPONENT OF THE CULTURAL CANVAS WE ALL EXPERIENCE. WE CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF PLACES WITH CORNERSTONES, PROVIDE TEMPORARY IMMORTALITY WITH HISTORICAL LANDMARKS, AND MOURN THEIR PASSING WITH MONUMENTS. WHEN WE SPEAK OF ‘GOING HOME,’ WE MEAN NOT ONLY RETURNING TO PEOPLE BUT ALSO RETURNING TO PLACE AND SPACE...WHEN WE CHANGE SPACE, WE CHANGE OURSELVES. WE USE SPACE TO REINFORCE OUR SENSE OF SELF AS WELL AS TO SHAPE IT. OUR STRUCTURE AND USE OF SPACE IS A PUBLIC STATEMENT OF WHO WE ARE, WHO WE WANT TO BE, AND HOW WE WANT OTHERS TO DEFINE US.”

Moving ‘beyond the ruins’ into their post-Maytag life, Newton residents’ re-creation of community cultural ways involves more than making new meanings to replace past meanings. Although hysteresis as a theoretical framework provides a lens through which a loss and re-creation of cultural capital can be interpreted, it does not lend itself for an analysis of other dimensions of community cultural change. Newton residents’ practices of meaning making re-create collective identities and senses of place within a new reality, but their practices can also be viewed as part of creating a new historical stage in which key characteristics of the community’s culture are transformed. For instance, cultural boundaries may become more inclusive or exclusive, peoples’ emotional and social connections with community meanings may be altered, and new collective representations can change the community’s overall feeling of place.

Newton’s cultural changes are still a work in progress. However, during the two years after Whirlpool officials announced Maytag’s departure, residents have actively re-created (and resisted) cultural ways to an extent that a new community culture is visible and is recognized by residents and non-residents alike. In the final chapter, I take a closer look at
Newton’s cultural changes by taking a step back and evaluating effects of the changes in terms of the community making a postmodern turn. To conclude, I examine implications of cultural changes evident in a postmodern turn for rebuilding community sustainability as a whole.
CHAPTER FIVE

MAKING A POSTMODERN TURN: CONSEQUENCES FOR COMMUNITY CULTURE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Consequences

As I mention in chapter 2, researchers frame contemporary patterns of social change in a variety of ways. When focusing on cultural dimensions of social change, researchers most often use the concept of postmodern and/or postmodernity to discuss a perceived shift of cultural ways across North America and Western Europe since the mid-1970s. Although there is no consensus about causes and consequences of the shift, those who subscribe to the idea of postmodernity believe that fundamental cultural changes have occurred and are still occurring throughout the social world.

Jameson (1991), Harvey (1989, 1994), and Anderson (1998) continue a neo-Marxist tradition of examining the relationship between capitalism and culture. Extending and adjusting premises from, among others, Theodor Adorno (2001), Walter Benjamin (1999), and Guy Debord (1994), the theorists understand culture as a potential tool of subordination and resistance, and they argue that different capitalist practices produce different cultural manifestations. This relationship between capitalist practices and cultural manifestations is even deeper insofar it is grounded in historical periods. As Marx and Engels outlined in The Communist Manifesto, a society’s modes of production within a historical period not only shape social conditions, but introductions of new economic structures also undo and redo a society’s cultural formations.
Jameson, Harvey, and Anderson all view postmodern culture as developing in response to the latest historical stage of capitalism. When explaining the economic shift that enables postmodern cultural expressions, Jameson and Anderson emphasize the transition from an earlier phase of monopoly, production-driven capitalism to a later phase of multinational, consumption-driven capitalism. While acknowledging the importance of the rise of consumption-driven capitalism, Harvey pinpoints a move from Fordist production practices to a more flexible style of capitalism with increased international flows of capital to explain postmodernity (see Alversson 2002: 21-27; Featherstone 1995: 78-80). Rather than seeing the development of postmodern culture as a complete historical break from the past, the theorists contend that postmodernity is a turn away from cultural expressions of modernity that emerges unevenly over space (e.g. rural vs. urban areas) and time (e.g. sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly). For instance, just as modes of production characteristic of earlier and later stages of capitalism co-exist, such as manufacturing plants and Disneyworld-like sites of cultural consumption, so do cultural expressions of modernity and postmodernity.


1. A promotion of cultural consumption, primarily through a production of spectacles (e.g. festivals and sporting events) and a commodification of cultural production to capture consumer dollars.
2. Meanings are flattened as surface intensities become emphasized over deeper meanings and personal connections with cultural forms.

3. A waning of affect takes place insofar people are less likely to make personal connections with cultural forms.

4. Nostalgia replaces past collective and individual identities that are no longer viable within new social conditions.

5. Fragmentation of meanings occurs and is embraced by people who are adjusting to less stable, more discontinuous social conditions.

6. A depoliticization of social life in favor of more playful and increasingly distant relationships to social affairs.

Applying the framework to Newton’s cultural changes, I keep the insights of Jameson, Harvey, and Anderson by focusing on economic shifts within the community as a precursor to Newton’s postmodern turn; however, instead of examining the influence of macro-level structures of contemporary capitalism, I perform a meso-level analysis by looking at the relationship between an introduction of new methods of community sustainability, which represent integral components of larger contemporary capitalist practices, and the emergence of a postmodern community culture.

The most obvious characteristic of Newton’s postmodern turn is the promotion of cultural consumption and the commodification of cultural production following the announcement of Maytag’s departure. This is not too surprising, given an economic shift from manufacturing material products inside the factory to consumption-oriented practices outside the factory is a transition that enables the development of postmodern culture. This transition collapses the relationship between capitalism and cultural production to an extent
there is an “eclipse of the distinction between base and superstructure” (Jameson 1991: xxi), or, according to Anderson (1998: 55), “culture has necessarily expanded to the point where it has become virtually coextensive with the economy itself.”

For Newton residents, local manufacturing did not completely cease. TPI and Trinity’s arrivals guarantee a continuation of manufacturing products, although with a contemporary twist, in the community’s near future. The major difference with respect to local manufacturing within Newton’s post-Maytag life is that the primary products are not material commodities, such as washing machines or wind turbine blades; rather, the main product is symbolic culture. The production of symbolic culture, whether it is creating opportunities for leisure at art shows, entertainment at festivals, experiences at the Iowa Speedway, or aesthetic inspired feelings through community beautification, represents the collapse of capitalist production and cultural production that illustrates an important dimension of postmodern culture.

The production of symbolic culture goes hand-in-hand with Newton’s transformation from company town to destination town. As I discuss in chapter 3, re-creating cultural capital that identifies Newton as a community of arts and festivals and as a racing town relates directly to rebuilding methods of sustainability around tourism. Thus, a significant part of Newton’s post-Maytag cultural canvas is not culture for the sake of culture, nor expressions derived from material commodities, but it is culture that has been commodified to attract outsiders and their consumer dollars. Residents’ community beautification projects and organization of festivals and events to celebrate the arts, as well as the fireworks, aircraft flyovers, roar of racecars, and musical acts at Iowa Speedway races, are all deeply embedded
in a larger spectacle in which people are encouraged to ‘have a good time’ and to ‘enjoy the show,’ and, most importantly, to spend their money freely as possible.

Postmodern culture also entails a flattening of meanings and an emphasis of surface intensities over deeper meanings and personal connections to cultural forms. To illustrate this point, Jameson (1991: 6-14) compares Vincent Van Gogh’s *A Pair of Boots* to Andy Warhol’s *Diamond Dust Shoes*. Van Gogh’s painting, which Jameson uses to represent visual art of modernity, shows a pair of worn-out work boots that captures an intimate look at peasant life within a stratified society and implicitly suggests an unfairness of the social order. In contrast, Warhol’s piece, which Jameson uses to represent postmodernity, depicts a collection of party pumps that says relatively little about social life outside a hyperreal representation of glimmering pumps that honors a ‘good life’ of unreasonable consumerism. The attention on the consumer rather than on the worker and the focus on overindulgence rather than on social issues heighten surface expressions at the expense of social concerns and lasting emotional connections with the meanings.

This characteristic of postmodern culture reveals itself in Newton residents’ reliance on cultural consumption as a new method of sustainability. Because Newton’s Maytag culture was a culture made by local residents for local residents, both Maytagers and non-Maytagers took pride in the Maytag name to a degree where the meanings were ingrained in their self-conceptions. In contrast, people may enjoy Newton’s post-Maytag reality that centers on cultural consumption, but it lacks the personal element that made residents so invested in the Maytag name. Although residents may help set the stage by sponsoring public art, organizing festivals, and promoting and attending races at the Iowa Speedway, these cultural aspects, in the end, are about the ‘other’ (Figure 32) – the visitor, the tourist,
the consumer – opposed to Newton residents, making it difficult to establish intimate bonds with the meanings. Furthermore, a similar flattening of meanings is present in the sense of place that characterizes Newton as a green community. Albeit not related to the community’s turn to cultural consumption, the real or perceived prospect of TPI and Trinity’s presences in Newton being only short-term, an economic attribute that Harvey (1989) strongly ties into postmodernity, flattens meanings that are associated with the sense of place because the culture is surrounded by residents’ uncertainties about its future.

In addition, residents’ focus on community beautification and promoting cultural consumption produces a concern for surface intensities at the expense of deeper meanings and personal connections with Newton’s cultural fabric. While it is a stretch to compare this to the depthless imagery that Jameson (1991) and Harvey (1989, 1994) find in Las Vegas, New York’s Times Square, and Disney World, or even in the Paris arcades that Benjamin
(1999) examined during the first half of the twentieth century, yet the underlying premises are similar. For instance, when residents looked at Maytag Park or Maytag Bowl, they saw something that spoke to them on an intimate level. The badges of pride, traditions, and legacies captured within the spaces symbolized a living history and acted as a biography for people. On the other hand, making over Newton’s visual image and displaying decorations that attest to the community’s racing culture (Figure 33) may be aesthetically stimulating, yet the cultural pieces, with an exception of those referencing the past, are missing a story that fosters deeper emotional bonds with residents. This transformation is not by accident. The intention of Maytag Park and Maytag Bowl was to honor a local history as well as to provide spaces for residents’ leisure, whereas community beautification and racing images function as ‘postmodern stage props’ (Chaney 1994) to attract visitors and tourists and to encourage consumerism.

Figure 33. *An Indy Racing League banner on a resident’s garage*
The flattening of meanings and increased surface intensities tie into a waning of affect, a third feature of postmodern culture. Going back to Jameson’s comparison of Van Gogh’s *A Pair of Boots* to Warhol’s *Diamond Dust Shoes*, the former captures an emotional concern about social inequalities; the latter, according to Jameson (1991: 8), “evidently no longer speaks to us with any of the immediacy of Van Gogh’s footgear; indeed, I am tempted to say that it does not really speak to us at all.” Thus, in addition to, or a consequence of, a flattening of meanings, Jameson argues that postmodernity entails a decrease, but not a disappearance, of emotional connections with cultural forms.

This waning of affect is present in Newton on two levels. As I touch on in chapter 1, due to a symbolic transformation that accompanies the Maytag closures, some dimensions of the Maytag culture came to an end (e.g. Maytag traditions and rituals) and other dimensions (e.g. Maytag Park and Maytag Bowl) loss their aura because a living history becomes a past history. Discussing the Maytag culture within Newton’s new reality, a former Maytager describes this loss of efficacy: “It takes about a year or so to let go, to finally get to the point where your brain gets around the fact that you are not really going to go back to work. You just kinda, I mean, for those of us who worked there it is going to be strange in twenty years when your children go – ‘What is Maytag?’ So, you know, it [the Maytag culture] will fade” (Interview LT).

With regards to Newton’s post-Maytag culture, a waning of affect exists as a result of the emphasis on cultural consumption and the uncertainty of TPI and Trinity’s local presence, although it is likely that self-employed residents establish strong connections with the community’s entrepreneurial culture due to the emotional highs and lows that come with self-employment. Cultivating personal bonds with Newton’s arts and festival or racing town
cultural capital is problematic due to the depthlessness of the cultures, rather than an absence of historical foundations. For example, residents may embrace the racing town recognition as a collective identity; however, the identity is missing an intimate story that invokes, let alone causes anyone to search for, lasting connections with the recognition. Making this distinction between the personal and the collective, a Newton resident explains, “It’s [the Iowa Speedway] a new identity for Newton, but not for us, not for the people” (Interview HT). As stated above, the short-term prospects of TPI and Trinity cloud the green culture with uncertainty. Even though the companies may symbolically replace Maytag to a certain degree, the apprehension interferes with residents getting too personally invested in ideas of Newton as a green community.

While postmodernity represents a cultural sea change, it is not accompanied by indifference to the past. Instead, the cultural change, due to peoples’ desires to maintain aspects of a previous social world within new realities and an inability to establish deep connections with new cultural expressions, inspires a state of nostalgia and a fascination with past collective and individual identities. Jameson (1991: 18-25) discusses this tendency by analyzing the emergence of “nostalgia film.” Labeling George Lucas’s American Graffiti as the genre’s inaugural film, Jameson sees the movies as attempting to recapture a lost sense of place and to regain feelings of the ‘good old days.’ Highlighting this nostalgia, Harvey (1989: 62-63, 85-87) points out the increased visibility of the ‘heritage industry,’ which includes a growth of museums, architectural designs and rehabilitated city landscapes that echo past styles, and commercialization of history for advertising purposes. Jameson and Harvey stress that these actions revive and reinvent the past, and, keeping in line with their
emphasis on depthlessness, they also stress that the nostalgia is a copy or an idea of the past, an artificial style rather than the original thing.

Newton residents’ re-creation of previous cultural forms during the community’s transition captures this postmodern characteristic, and, as Jameson and Harvey suggest, this tendency is not independent of the capitalist system. Newton’s sudden cultural change that was caused by an economic shift sparked what Featherstone (1995: 93-96) calls a ‘localization’ – a renewed focus on community collective identities and senses of place that have been disrupted by social change. Residents’ creation of public art that honors the community’s past, plans to restore the Maytag Bowl and downtown buildings, organization of ‘Fred Rocks: Rock and Roll in the Maytag Bowl’ (Figure 34), and even their opposition to a local casino all represent efforts to maintain collective identities of a previous, more stable era within a new, less predictable post-Maytag life.

Figure 34. Fred Rocks Festival at the Maytag Bowl
These efforts to revive the past are also part of the community’s new methods of sustainability. With the exception of residents’ voting down a casino, each is a component of Newton’s transformation into a destination town, rather than instances of nostalgia for the sake of nostalgia. Discussing the ‘Restore the Pride’ initiative for revitalizing the Maytag Bowl, a project supporter illustrates the use of history to attract consumer dollars: “I love this plan. It’s tourism at its best. This is your icon. It’s your identity. It’s what you are. This icon brings dollars to your backyard” (Jennings 2009). All in all, the emergence of nostalgia in Newton has a twofold purpose – it maintains personal connections to a local past and it helps build a foundation for fostering cultural consumption through a commodification of the past.

Increased fragmentation and a normalization of discontinuity are also characteristics of postmodern culture. Jameson (1991: 25-31, 90-96, 370-375) outlines, and Harvey (1989) and Anderson (1998) agree, that the “psychological expression of postmodernism is a fragmented self” (Garner 2007: 596). This is probably the most complex argument Jameson puts forth. For my intentions, it is useful to focus on increased fragmentation in terms of social, symbolic, and temporal changes of space. Similar to modernity, a breakdown of the whole is present due to intensified specialization or compartmentalization in the division of labor. Unlike modernity, compartmentalization in postmodernity has increased to the point where the parts do not necessarily add up to a whole. Whether looking at postmodern art, literature, or urban design, the expressions resemble an afternoon of channel surfing instead of time spent putting pieces into a coherent puzzle. The fragmentation of social spaces results in a shattering of symbolic spaces. In contrast to modernity in which separation exists, but a narrative can be found, postmodern culture is de-centered to a degree where finding a lasting narrative is problematic, if not impossible; subsequently, ideas of ‘Identity’
are replaced by notions of ‘identities.’ Places such as Las Vegas or Disney World’s Epcot Center provide the best examples. Although the spaces are bounded under a single name, people need to walk only a few hundred yards to cross distinct symbolic boundaries and enter new symbolic worlds. The social and symbolic transformations of postmodernity tie into a temporal change of space. Because parts do not necessarily add up to a whole and different narratives replace a lasting narrative, a continuation of time is difficult to grasp. Time, lacking historical or symbolic bearings, becomes unpredictable, consisting of a disjointed mixture of periods of boredom and periods of exhilarating highs. The totality of these changes, social, symbolic, and temporal, is “the emergence of the multiple in new and unexpected ways, unrelated strings of events, types of discourses, modes of classification, and compartments of reality” (Jameson 1991: 372).

This fragmentation, of course, should be seen as a reflection of economic practices that represent late capitalism. For instance, with the development of new technology that permits unprecedented global flows of capital, workers who fabricate parts of the same commodity likely will never meet their co-workers, who may live in a different country, or even see the final product that their parts comprise. Symbolic fragmentation mirrors efforts to economically stay afloat within multinational capitalism and practices to distinguish commodities, material or symbolic, in pursuit of consumer dollars. For people to economically compete on a global level, they increasingly search for smaller ‘niche markets’ that are sheltered from local, national, and international competitors. Similarly, efforts to differentiate products and to make them ‘stand-out’ are key to profit in the game of cultural consumption. Finally, the breakdown of social and symbolic spaces that accompany increased global flows of capital and common practices that people use to compete in a
multinational, consumption-driven economy make it difficult to cognitively map a temporal history to guide social actions because it often appears that the pieces just do not add up. Furthermore, a devaluation of gaining profits through long-term strategies in favor of more flexible and short-term profit opportunities, including ‘just-in-time’ delivery systems, twenty-four hours a day casino-like financial speculation, and ‘one-time spectacles’ such as festivals and sporting events, all serve to normalize the unpredictability, discontinuity, and highs and lows of postmodern culture.

Focusing on the relationship between Newton’s cultural changes and the introduction of new methods of community sustainability, parallels can be drawn with respect to an emergence of ‘the multiple’ and to increased fragmentation of time. Comparing Newton’s pre-Maytag closings cultural capital forms to its post-Maytag cultural capital, a multiplication of community meanings is clearly evident. As Figure 35 shows, Newton’s cultural capital prior to Maytag’s departure is strongly linked to a single Maytag identity. The collective identity of the ‘Maytag town’ was a result of an interconnectedness among various deep-seated cultural niches, including traditions and rituals, legacies, work spaces, and places of leisure that all fostered associations between Newton and the Maytag name. Figure 36 shows that the single Maytag town cultural capital has been transformed into multiple cultural capital forms with weaker links to Newton’s overall collective identity. In addition, there is little connectedness among cultural niches of different cultural capital forms. Excluding relationships between the Iowa Speedway and community festivals/public art and between the green community sense of place and the Iowa Corn Indy 250, the social spaces that help organize Newton’s post-Maytag cultural capital are largely separate from each other.
Acknowledging that the ‘company town’ model, especially one based on the production of consumer goods such as washing machines, is incompatible with contemporary capitalism, this multiplication of community culture mirrors city and business leaders’
conscious efforts to diversify the local economy and to no longer keep all of their ‘eggs in one basket.’ Thinking about Newton’s possible cultural directions, a NDC director discusses a cultural fabric that reflects a desire for economic diversification:

I would hope that it wouldn’t be just with one industry or one company, but it would be perceived as a thriving community that has a variety of dynamic subcultures and opportunities and possibilities. You know, someplace where people would want to live. Whether you want to be involved in the arts and culture, there is that, or whether you want to be part of growing industry, like the wind technology, there is opportunities for that. You know, whether you retire in a community that allows you to have a sense of community and different things to do. So, just so it is seen that way, as opposed to, again, just being identified with one industry or one company. A thriving community with options, you could say (Interview LE).

The director’s emphasis on ‘variety,’ ‘opportunities,’ and ‘possibilities,’ and the de-emphasis on being identified ‘just with one’ reflects a desire to diversify Newton’s local economy and, at the same time, to protect its economy from the uncertainty of contemporary capitalism. Taken together, post-Maytag mindsets to ‘spread the community’s eggs around’ and to ‘never get caught again’ bring forth a compartmentalization of social and symbolic spaces throughout Newton.

Looking at post-Maytag methods of sustainability, many temporal changes that characterize postmodernity can be seen. As mentioned in chapter 3, the seasonality of local tourism differs significantly from the consistency of the community’s Maytag cultural production. Furthermore, the fragmentation of time is present on an emotional level with regards to the highs and lows of tourist culture. For example, excitement of an afternoon festival or a weekend of races at the Iowa Speedway quickly disappears as soon as the event comes to an end. Within Newton’s entrepreneurial culture, inconsistency and emotional rollercoasters also become normalized. Sennett (1998: 147) labels this experience as the “entrepreneurial disorder” because unpredictability and highs and lows of doing business are
taken as the way of things. Similar to residents’ attitudes toward TPI and Trinity, entrepreneurs understand that uncertainty about the future is part of participating in the game.

A depoliticalization of social life in favor of more playful and distant relationships to social affairs is a final feature of postmodern culture. Coinciding with the rise of consumer capitalism over industrial capitalism and an emphasis on organizing controlled spectacles over producing material commodities, communities across North America and Western Europe have undergone a severe decrease in political participation, a pattern that is highly correlated with the decreased presence of unions at manufacturing facilities. As Best and Kellner (1997: 85) contend, “[People] abandon the union hall for the shopping mall and celebrate the system that fuels the desires that it ultimately cannot satisfy.”

Harvey (1989: 88-93, 1994) uses Baltimore’s city landscape as a typical and instructive example of this cultural change. Once a site of civil rights demonstrations, street riots, anti-war protests, and counter-cultural events, city leaders and business professionals began to ‘make-over’ Baltimore’s downtown public spaces during the 1970s. The efforts included starting the Baltimore City Fair in 1970, building a Science Center in 1976, opening Harbor Place (a festival-like marketplace) in 1980, building a National Aquarium in 1981, reorganizing Baltimore Marine Center (a marina with shops and luxury apartments) in 1994, and constructing a number of hotels to house visitors and tourists. This spectaclization of space, which is an extension of what Adorno, Benjamin, and Debord detailed, is both an economic and a culture response to Baltimore’s deindustrialization. City and business leaders needed to revive the economy by bringing consumers into Baltimore, and they had to mask social unrest that accompanies deindustrialization by creating images of fun, excitement, and people having a good time to obtain the consumers’ dollars.
It would be a mistake to suggest that Newton residents have become more distant from social affairs. In fact, I would argue that Newton’s transition is responsible for getting more people involved in community life. As I show in chapters 3 and 4, residents actively re-created community cultural capital and worked together to rebuild local economic structures, and their resistance to a local casino also demonstrates participation in shaping post-Maytag life. However, it is difficult not to see a depoliticalization in favor of a culture of play. The formal presence of Maytag’s local union is gone, and so is a living history of labor strikes, battles to strengthen workplace security, and campaigns for the ‘greater good.’ The community’s turn to the arts and festivals and its connection to spectacles at the Iowa Speedway signify a new culture that rests on images of fun, excitement, and having a good time.

A telling example of how cultural consumption has penetrated Newton’s cultural canvas occurred at the final City Council meeting of 2007. Reviewing the year, council members did not once mention the Maytag closings or the Maytag name in general, even though they discussed the many challenges the community encountered. Yet, council members touted the fact that Gene Simmons from Kiss (rock band) Dale Earnhardt (NASCAR fan favorite), Danica Patrick (Indy Racing fan favorite), Ashley Judd (professional actor), Patrick Dempsey (professional actor), Poison (rock band), Ratt (rock band), and various famous politicians during Iowa Caucus season all spent time in Newton (Field notes 12/17/2007). Moreover, this emphasis on play reveals itself in Rusty Wallace’s (Figure 37) evolution into Newton’s unofficial spokesperson. While F.L. Maytag symbolized hard work, dependability, and a deep-seated history of ‘family,’ Wallace represents the thrills of the Iowa Speedway. As Wallace asks people in a heavily aired radio
and television promotional campaign, “Iowa, are you ready to party? Come on down to the Iowa Speedway in Newton, Iowa – America’s place to race.”

![Rusty Wallace Stone by Sam Bass and Berry Frank at the Iowa Speedway](image)

**Figure 37. Rusty Wallace Stone by Sam Bass and Berry Frank at the Iowa Speedway**

Overall, residents’ re-creation of cultural capital during the community’s transition represents efforts to pass through a hysteresis phase, and it also portrays a community making a postmodern turn. As residents create new collective identities, senses of place, and other cultural ways around methods of sustainability that are integral components of contemporary capitalism, cultural expressions of postmodernity – cultural consumption, flattening of meanings, waning of affect, nostalgia, fragmentation, and playfulness – have started to emerge throughout Newton. To paraphrase Harvey (1989: 344), cultural life is often held to be outside rather than within the embrace of capitalist logic; however, wherever capitalism goes, its system of mirrors comes not far behind.
Implications

To examine the implications of Newton’s postmodern turn for rebuilding community sustainability, I employ Flora and Flora’s (2008) Community Capitals Framework (CFF). CFF, as outlined in chapter 2, offers a way to analyze community change and community development efforts by conceptualizing a community as possessing seven different capitals: cultural, natural, human, social, financial, political, and built. People utilize the capitals, separately and together, to build additional community assets and to achieve community sustainability. A loss of a major employer, a natural disaster, or any sudden disruption of community capitals may trigger a ‘spiraling-down’ period during which sustainability is threatened by a decline of one or more capital forms that results in a decrease of other community capitals. To reverse this pattern, people develop new community capitals and enhance the presence of existing capitals, thus beginning a ‘spiraling-up’ process (Emery and Flora 2006).

The sequence of developing community capitals matters following a spiraling-down period. Although peoples’ instincts may be to initially concentrate on financial capital, especially after a loss of a major employer and tax base contributor, this strategy may come at the expense of both ‘jumping the gun’ in terms of starting development efforts without a sound plan and decapitalizing other community capitals by solely focusing on financial resources (Flora and Flora 2008; Larsen 2008). Discussing community capitals that generate additional community resources, researchers point to social capital (Emery and Flora 2006; Flora and Flora 1993; Flora, Sharp, Flora, and Newlon 1997), human capital (Emery, Flora, and Fey 2007; Gutierrez-Montes 2005; Larsen 2008), and political capital (Emery, Wall, Bregendahl, and Flora 2006) as significant for beginning an upward spiraling process.
While people must be mindful of all community capitals and how they interact with each other, a postmodern turn, whether in Newton or in any community that is undergoing similar changes, increases the importance of re-creating cultural capital during early stages of community development due to the heightened emphasis on cultural consumption and to the ‘newness,’ or unfamiliarity, of economic practices that accompany a postmodern turn.

A community’s transformation into a destination town involves residents establishing an atmosphere or an image that attracts people and manufacturing an overall experience that keeps the community on top of peoples’ minds when they are thinking about places to visit. However, because this transformation also involves a flattening of meanings and a waning of affect, which are embedded in the emphasis on cultural consumption, re-creating cultural capital is important for encouraging residents’ participation in shaping a particular image or experience. Residents must share a vision – a collective identity or a sense of place – or share a desire to create a vision if they are going to successfully sell the vision to people and use cultural consumption as a revenue generator.

The importance of re-creating cultural capital is present when looking at the ‘racing town’ aspect of Newton. Even though the necessary built capital (Iowa Speedway facility, city roads, Interstate-80, street signs, etc.,) and political capital (support from city officials and business leaders) were being adequately utilized during the Iowa Speedway’s first full racing season in 2007, the racetrack’s presence in the community was minimal. With the exception of some racing decorations sporadically displayed throughout Newton, a person could have traveled across the community without even knowing that races were occurring. As such, the proper physical and political infrastructures existed, but the Iowa Speedway lacked additional support from residents, and it showed. Iowa Speedway officials labeled the
season as a success, but, unable to rally around the meanings of the racing culture, residents did not fully embrace the speedway, and many residents doubted its future.

Acknowledging a shortage of support for the Iowa Speedway, city officials and other community members actively worked to create the racing town collective identity as a coherent, meaningful form of cultural capital rather than waiting for the culture to appear on its own – after all, it is this image that residents needed to sell if the speedway was going to become a key money-maker. The increased salience of the racing culture at the beginning of the second season, including new flags and posters, *Newton Daily News’s ‘Nuts and Bolts’* racing page, the Miss Iowa Speedway contest, acted as a foundation for developing social and human capitals. The investment in creating cultural capital helped foster social networks to enlarge the culture’s visibility and increased trust about the speedway’s future in Newton; and, rallying around the collective identity, residents’ used their skills and abilities to promote the culture and to organize Iowa Speedway-related events. Subsequently, the interactions among cultural, social, and human capitals not only reinforced the racing town image via the Weekend Pit Stop festival, people incorporating the culture into their businesses, and more flags, posters, and banners throughout the community, but the interactions among capitals also improved the odds of the Iowa Speedway becoming a viable economic anchor.

So far, residents’ efforts have paid-off substantially. The Iowa Speedway has gained national recognition as an up-and-coming racing venue, and Newton is gaining a national reputation as a racing town. This ‘buzz,’ along with impressive attendance numbers and Rusty Wallace’s consistent campaigning on the speedway’s behalf, assisted Iowa Speedway officials in bringing two high-profile NASCAR races to Newton for the 2009 season.
Residents celebrated the unexpected news of the NACAR events, which are considered the most prestigious races in the United States, and they even saw some karma involved because one of the races was previously held in Mexico, a country that many people equate with Maytag’s departure from the community (Figure 38). Discussing Iowa Speedway’s 2009 season, which has been labeled the ‘Dream Season,’ Rusty Wallace describes the racetrack’s unusually quick success:

There’s not a track in America other than the Daytona International speedway that has the inventory that we have. We’re talking [about] the Indy Car Series live on ABC, The [NASCAR] Nationwide Series, The [NASCAR] Camping World Truck Series, ARCA, ASA [American Speed Association racing league]. We’ve got everything. I didn’t think we’d get it here this quick. I really didn’t (Iowa Speedway Website 2009).

Bucking the trend of cutting back spending on sports in a down economy, Iowa Speedway season ticket sales have grown from 5,000 in 2008 to over 20,000 in 2009, and construction has begun on new grandstand seating to accommodate a predicted 50,000-70,000 fans that may attend the NASCAR races.

Figure 38. ‘Touché Mexico’ sign following the news of NASCAR coming to Newton.
A similar pattern is found when looking at residents’ use of festivals as revenue generators. Like making the racing culture profitable for the community, Newton’s festivalization entails a commodification of culture at the expense of residents’ abilities to form deep connections with the culture. Before a particular festival or event can bring people into the community to spend their money at local shops, gas stations, restaurants, and hotels, residents must get on the ‘same page’ to make the event attractive to potential visitors. Once residents share a vision that, as stated in the Community Vision Statement, “We aim to be the center for festivals and events that celebrate the arts and culture,” then they can develop additional community capitals to make the events an economic dimension of Newton’s post-Maytag life.

After creating a pro-festival mentality, primarily through the efforts of NTC members and Newton’s Conventions and Visitors Bureau directors, and getting the ball rolling by starting one new festival in 2005 and three new festivals in 2006, residents coordinated a total of eight new festivals in 2007 and 2008. As I explain in chapter 3, event organizers, lacking financial capital, mobilized local social networks and knowledge bases to help transform the community into a legitimate ‘center for festivals.’ Again, like the racing town culture, shared culture capital serves as a foundation for developing the needed social and human capitals and, in turn, making the identity a reality. Although the number of festivals “may have reached their peak” according to a one festival organizer (Interview SP), each festival continues to grow and become, event by event, another dimension of community sustainability.

In addition to the emphasis on cultural consumption, the newness of economic practices that are introduced into a community during a postmodern turn also increases the
importance of re-creating cultural capital in early stages of the social change. Unlike some types of community change involving economic transitions within similar industries or labor markets, a postmodern turn involves economic restructurings where old rules of the game no longer apply (Griswold 1994). Because of this fundamental change, it is imperative for community members to perceive and to be comfortable with new methods of sustainability as viable economic strategies (Emery, Flora, and Fey 2007).

With the exception of TPI and Trinity, which resemble manufacturing practices similar to past Maytag operations, the concentration on cultural consumption and local entrepreneurship represents this unfamiliarity of economic practices. Focusing on the latter, NTC and NDC directors understood that a supportive entrepreneurial culture needed to be created before residents could embrace ideas of self-employment. NTC and NDC events, workshops, and informal gatherings, SCORE counseling sessions, Newton Daily News coverage of new businesses, and the like built a collective identity around local entrepreneurialism. This identity provides would-be-entrepreneurs with an opportunity to see themselves as part of the culture and increases the likelihood of residents participating in events where they can form social networks and learn the tricks of the trade. In turn, the interaction among cultural, social, and human capitals helps establish entrepreneurship as a viable economic method.

An example of this process can be seen at the first ‘Entrebash’ during the summer of 2008 (Field notes 6/10/2008). NDC, University of Northern Iowa Regional Business Center, and Jasper County Economic Development directors hosted the event, which was advertised as an informal gathering to give small business owners and people who are thinking about starting a business information about financing, sales, finding markets, and available local
services for area residents. A mixture of over forty experienced area business people and newcomers to self-employment attended the event. Two newcomers to the group, a former Maytager and a part-time secretary, decided to participate after going to a NTC sponsored workshop a month earlier. With their sights set on starting an all natural health spa, the partners talked about how “all of the things going on” with respect to starting new businesses in Newton and “hearing about people we know” starting businesses served as motivation for making the leap from thinking about opening a business to actually trying to open the spa. They continued to say that starting a new business is “a little scary, but very exciting,” and they hoped that “getting to know the right types of people and [becoming familiar] with the ropes [the operations of starting a business] would move us one step closer to changing our lives.”

Reinterpreting the partners’ path, the significance of creating cultural capital during the early stages of building local entrepreneurship can again be seen. The existence of a collective identity that they could recognize and see themselves participating in, even though they may have never been self-employed, provided the partners with motivation for attending entrepreneurship events. The events serve as spaces of capital conversion in which experienced business people and mentors convert invested cultural capital into social and human capitals by familiarizing residents with valuable social networks and the needed knowledge for starting a business. The social and human capitals, in turn, help the partners move ‘one step closer’ in making self-employment a workable economic practice.

This pattern is also present in residents’ efforts to transform the arts into a dimension of the local economy. Because most residents are not involved in the arts scene, the newness of the culture represents a barrier in making the arts a revenue generator. Similar to creating
a culture of entrepreneurship during early stages of the community’s transition, fostering a shared vision of the arts as a key component of community life helps overcome this barrier and encourages people to participate in the culture. Creating cultural capital around the arts by holding workshops and events, festivals, highlighting the arts in the *Newton Daily News*, and erecting sculptures and murals across the community not only expands the culture’s visibility but it develops other community capitals that are critical for growing the arts from within the community.

Artist receptions at Kreativ Ent. Art Gallery illustrate this interaction among capitals. As I discuss in chapter 3, the heightened visibility of the arts helps attract residents who are outside the art scene to the monthly receptions. At the receptions, artists make sure to introduce themselves to attendees, and they try to connect the dots in terms of how they may share common acquaintances or past experiences in the community. A gallery volunteer believes that making such connections is vital for growing local arts: “That’s the advantage in living in a small town. Everyone seems to know each other, or, if they don’t, they had the same teachers or know someone’s co-workers, or something. Once you realize that ‘Oh, we do kind of know each other,’ then its more likely you may see them again [at an art event] sometime in the future” (Field notes 8/21/2007). In addition to developing social capital, the receptions are an opportunity to pass on human capital. Artists approach attendees and start conversations about specific works. These conversations get people familiar with the work (e.g. the artist, the type of art, how it was created), but the conversations also provide an occasion to teach people the appropriate skills and abilities to enjoy the art. A local artist explains this strategy:
I tell people that it is about how it [art] affects a person and can make them feel a certain way. And, if they like that feeling or if they respond to a certain piece of art, then that’s all that matters. Whether it is children’s art or a crack in the wall or a piece that they’ve paid a lot of money for or hardly any money for, that doesn’t matter. That doesn’t matter, you know. It’s about trying to get them to understand that you don’t have to be able to read a story into every piece of art. It can be just the color or the texture or the composition. It doesn’t matter because it can be anything, not just some deep philosophical meaning. So, we try to help people understand how to look at art, and it helps people become a little more comfortable with it (Interview TP).

Thus, an investment in making the arts culture visible leads to additional community capitals that operate to reinforce a new collective identity and to foster support for the arts as an economic dimension of Newton’s post-Maytag life.

Overall, the emphasis on cultural consumption and the unfamiliarity of economic practices that accompany a community’s postmodern turn increases the importance of re-creating cultural capital during beginning stages of the social change. Newton residents demonstrate that creating a collective identity or a sense of place early can help people overcome a lack of personal connections with less than meaningful cultures and the newness of sustainability methods by providing them with shared visions of the future and with rallying calls for rebuilding their community from the bottom up. The investment in cultural capital, in turn, serves as a foundation for developing additional community capitals, especially social and human capitals, that ultimately assist the community’s spiraling-up process as a whole.

_Final Thoughts_

The latest trend of economic restructurings in which Newton residents and many other community members across North America find themselves is a product of many factors. While corporations have long maneuvered for more control of the market, desired inexpensive labor, and bought and sold other businesses to manipulate stock prices, during the mid-1970s increased deregulation and the financialization of America’s economy
(Krippner 2005) allowed corporations to use debt as a strategic mechanism within the contemporary global capitalism. A newer version of buy or get bought surfaced in the business world; even if corporations did not have ‘real money’ to acquire rivals, easy access to ‘play money’ allowed corporations to purchase rivals by taking on large sums of debt. Maytag officials used this strategy to acquire Hardwick Stove Company in 1981, the Hoover Company in 1989, and Amana in 2001. Whirlpool officials followed suit in 2006 by using debt to acquire the Maytag Corporation, assuming over $900 million of Maytag’s existing debt in the process.

The downside for Newton residents and other community members caught up in similar situations is twofold. First, after assuming large sums of debt, corporations must find ways to reorganize, which often includes breaking down and eliminating new assets that have been acquired. For Whirlpool officials, closing Newton’s Maytag facilities was a key component of this procedure. Second, while much has been made of how these economic restructurings have pushed wealth distribution to the upper segments of society, what has also occurred is the pushing down of risk from corporations onto community members. After a major employer is relocated or shut down completely, profits and stock prices may rise, but individuals are left to rebuild their communities on their own.

Newton residents are certainly not the first community members to take on this risk, and what is becoming more apparent in light of the recent debt induced economic crisis is that community members will continue to encounter social changes during which local cultures and economies are transformed as businesses ‘trim the fat’ to minimize financial concerns. What can be taken away from Newton’s case is the importance of residents working with each other to lessen actual and potential negative consequences when
rebuilding their community. Working together, residents not only demonstrated resiliency in the face of daunting change, but they collectively minimized risk by tapping into community resources to strategically playing the cards they were dealt. Moreover, their resistance against a local casino helped Newton save face in the eyes of many residents, and it also, unbeknownst to anyone at the time, helped residents dodge a bullet: due to an inability to repay outstanding debt, the real estate development firm financing the casino filed for bankruptcy and shut down operations only weeks after the gaming referendum.

On February 27, 2009, Newton Daily News published a special thirty-page section titled “Progress Edition 2009: A look at the people, businesses and organizations that will shape Newton and Jasper County in 2009” (Newton Daily News Special Section 2009). The section’s front page consists of five different images: an architectural drawing of the Maytag Bowl restoration project; two Indy cars racing around the Iowa Speedway; the newest community sculpture in front of the YMCA; a local entrepreneur; and a row of wind turbine blades at the TPI facility. The five images not only reflect the progress residents have made over the last three years, but the images also capture how residents have transformed social spaces and the cultural canvas throughout Newton. Although Newton’s Maytag culture will never completely disappear, the community's postmodern turn resulted in a cultural undoing that was followed by a re-creation of Newton’s cultural capital.

After Whirlpool officials closed the book on Maytag operations, Newton’s mayor insisted that people should focus on this progress rather than on what the community had lost, and he hoped that residents’ responses to the community’s transition could serve as “a blueprint for other communities” experiencing similar social changes (Field notes 12/17/2007). While I have concentrated on the cultural aspects of Newton’s transition, this
study sheds light on how people re-create community collective identities, senses of place, and other cultural ways through social practices that are structured by economic shifts in the community; however, the practices must also fit previous conceptions of what a community symbolizes as a whole. These practices take time and involve coordinated efforts of various residents working together, but through patience and collaboration new community culture is made. Furthermore, Newton’s transition illustrates that re-creating cultural capital is a vital part of rebuilding a community because it represents a double resource. Creating new cultural capital helps people answer such questions as What is our place in society? – Who are we? – and, What do we symbolize?, and new cultural capital generates additional community resources that help people move down a path to renewed community sustainability.
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