

Religious Dimensions of Contexts of Reception: Comparing Two New England Cities

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ABSTRACT

We compare how religion is present in Portland, Maine and Danbury, Connecticut and how it influences the ways organizations provide social services to recently arrived immigrants. We find that a range of municipal, civic, and religious organizations shape contexts of reception in each city. In Portland, municipal organizations provide most of the services for the large refugee population. Religious organizations are more central in Danbury, and providers speak more often about religion in their work with the city's economic migrants. Collaboration among organizations is common, although religion sometimes acts as a barrier to collaboration in Portland. We argue that the religious dimensions of cities as contexts of reception are not homogenous and that variation between them is best explained by local factors including history, demographics and organizational ecology.

INTRODUCTION

When John and his family landed at the Portland International Jetport in Maine in 2000, they were greeted by a case worker from Catholic Charities.¹ Born in southern Sudan, a Catholic in a Muslim majority country, John fled from the political conflict and the challenges of living in Khartoum to Cairo, where he and his family lived for six months before being relocated to Portland. Through a contract with the municipal government, Catholic Charities provides services for all newly arriving refugees, and a case worker met John at the airport and helped him and his family move into a subsidized apartment. Representatives from the People's Regional Opportunity Program (PROP) and the Salvation Army helped locate household supplies and warm clothes. Someone from another social service organization helped John to obtain a class B driving licence and a job delivering milk in the greater New England area. Shortly after he arrived, John and fifteen other relocated members of his tribe – the Azande – organized a Sudanese Catholic mass with support from the Bishop of Portland. When we talked, John was employed and helped his wife care for their children. He assisted with the Azande church service and was looking forward to becoming naturalized.

In contrast, when Javier, an undocumented immigrant from Brazil, arrived in Danbury, Connecticut, he was met by friends and family. He had lived in the States before, was deported, and returned to Danbury because, in his words, "Everyone always spoke well about this city, that it was safe, tranquil, and that it was nice to immigrants. If you came illegally you had problems obtaining a licence, social security number, and things like that, but still I had heard good things,

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especially with work – that the work is good.” Javier had degrees in business administration and accounting and experience working in factories and restaurants. He started attending Portuguese language services at the Seventh Day Adventist Church when he arrived and quickly found a job through Brazilian friends at church. Apart from work and church, he told us he had little time for other activities. He found strength in his religious beliefs and the community in Danbury: “It [religion] gives us strength to continue with life and to battle life’s difficulties,” he explained.

John and Javier received support from religious and secular organizations when they arrived in Portland and Danbury. Their own religious backgrounds influenced the kinds of services they received, just as the configuration of organizations in these two cities led some services to be provided by religious organizations, some by secular organizations, and some by both or not at all. John’s experience would have been different if he had settled in Danbury or arrived as an economic migrant rather than a refugee. His experience also would also have been different if the religious and secular social service organizations that help immigrants in Portland divided their labour in different ways.² If he had been met at the airport by someone from the local mosque, for example, or if it had been city workers that helped him set up his household, John’s early days in Portland would have put him in touch with different people and organizations. It is not that these hypothetical scenarios would have been better or worse, but rather that the nature and quality of his early experiences in the city would have been different.

This article compares how religion is present as a context of reception for immigrants in the cities of Portland and Danbury and how it shapes the experiences of refugees and economic migrants who have settled there in recent years. We focus primarily on the organizations and individuals that provide social services to recently arrived immigrants. We ask first how religion shapes the configuration of organizations that provide these services and how they collaborate with one another. We then consider how social service providers see religion influencing the experiences of immigrants in both cities. Our attention to the religious dimensions of Portland and Danbury as cities complements existing research about how individuals’ religious beliefs influence their migration pathways (Hagan and Ebaugh, 2003; Hagan, 2008; Stepick, Rey, and Mahler, 2009), how immigrants’ religious organizations shape their experiences in new places (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000; Foley and Hoge, 2007; Kniss and Numrich, 2007; Mooney, 2009; Warner and Wittner, 1998), and how religious transnational networks create larger senses of believing and belonging (Levitt, 2007). It also enlarges studies of religion in immigration that have tended to focus on large gateway cities. We note that in European and, to a lesser degree, in US scholarship, the ways in which religion influences immigrant integration, as a resource and a barrier, is not sufficiently explored.

We find first that a range of municipal, civic, and religious organizations in both cities provide services for immigrants (Sun and Cadge, forthcoming). Rather than being confined to churches, mosques and other congregations, however, religion is also present in and through a range of social service organizations that are configured and work together. While Catholic Charities Maine plays an important role in Portland, municipal organizations are more central than religious ones in service provision for immigrants there. In Danbury, religious organizations – especially the Association of Religious Communities – are central to service provision for immigrants, although collaboration is common. Despite differences in which organizations provide services and how they collaborate, social service providers in both cities emphasize how much religion influences immigrants’ lives. In response to the wider range of religious organizations serving immigrants in Danbury, providers there speak about religion more often and in broader ways than do those in Portland.

Our comparison of Portland and Danbury reveals historical, demographic, and organizational factors that influence how religion becomes part of contexts of receptions for refugees and economic migrants in new destinations in the United States. It shows first that the religious dimensions of cities are not homogenous but shaped by local factors. We point out these factors here, although we are not able to disentangle them without additional cities for comparison. The history of immigration and the presence or absence of religious organizations serving previous generations are just

some of the contextual factors shaping the religious dimensions of Portland and Danbury. Immigrant demographics also play a central role. Refugees who arrived in Portland – most recently from the Sudan and other countries in Africa – brought with them state funding that enabled the city to provide many more services than in Danbury where economic migrants brought no such funds. While religious organizations in Danbury have a long history of serving immigrants, they were also the people who saw the needs of recent economic migrants – mostly from Brazil and Ecuador – and stepped in to provide social services, both historically and more recently.

These findings enlarge academic discussions of contexts of reception by illustrating the important – and variable – role religion plays in influencing immigrants' experiences in new places. They suggest ways in which national and regional attitudes toward religion, and its role in the public square, strongly shape if and how religion influences immigrant incorporation. For policymakers, these findings point to the presence of immigrants in cities that have not traditionally been called home by many foreign-born. They show how mainstream American organizations respond to immigrants in the absence of organizations started by immigrants themselves and suggest a potentially inverse relationship between municipal services for immigrants and the actions of congregations and faith-based service organizations on the ground. They further illustrate the central role of organizational collaboration in small cities and the barriers some social service providers in small cities perceive to collaborating with faith-based organizations.

BACKGROUND

A well established body of research explores how the contexts in which immigrants arrive shape their experiences in new places (Hernández León and Zúñiga, 2003; Mooney, 2009; Portes and Rumbaut, 1996; Portes and Borocz 1989). While US-based scholars of immigration are increasingly paying attention to religion, they tend to focus on religion as a dependent variable rather than asking how religion shapes immigrants' experiences or contexts of reception in broader ways. Much research describes how religious organizations, started and attended by immigrants, help create strong ethnic communities and ease isolation in the United States (Cadge and Ecklund, 2007; Chen, 2008; Yang and Ebaugh, 2001). Other studies show how immigrants' religious organizations help them bridge to other people and institutions by fostering political and civic coalitions and facilitating job training and opportunities (Jones-Correa, 2001; Kniss and Numrich, 2007; Min, 1992; Putnam and Campbell, 2010).

Sociologists of immigration – including those that focus on religion – have paid limited attention to how contexts of reception are nested in larger geopolitical and religious hierarchies. Contexts are conceived of nationally even though immigrant incorporation and related policies and community responses to immigrants vary considerably across physical, political and religious spaces within nations. Geographers use the concept of scale to call attention to the uneven and heterogeneous impacts of globalization (Brenner, 2004). Neoliberalism challenges the traditional nested hierarchies of local, regional, and national by unevenly distributing resources and power to particular regions and cities. Cities and regions are located differently depending on their position vis-a-vis global national, and regional circuits of power and resources. City scale can have important consequences for incorporation and for immigrants' enduring ties to their homelands. Cities can also use immigration and diversity to reposition themselves vis-a-vis geopolitical hierarchies (Caglar and Glick Schiller, 2010; Jaworsky, Levitt, Cadge, Hejtmanek, and Curran, Forthcoming; Glick Schiller, and Levitt). The experiences of cities and of immigrants contribute to national debates and policies, but less is known about how they vary locally and about how religion contributes to city scale.

Religion is central to how people in a range of US-based contexts of reception have and continue to respond to immigrants (Foner and Alba, 2008). Some congregations historically provided sanctuary to

undocumented immigrants while others kept more distance (Caminero-Santangelo, 2009; Irazabal and Dyrness, 2010). In places that have not traditionally received large numbers of immigrants, studies show some religious organizations assisting newcomers and others struggling with how much to welcome them (Cabell, 2007; Dunn, Aragonés, and Shivers, 2005; Odem, 2004). Beyond congregations, religious social service organizations also assist immigrants in multiple ways (Nawyn, 2006). Some use explicit religious talk and resources while others – like Catholic Charities – move between religious and secular expectations and demands placed on them by their histories, Boards of Directors and funding sources in the US context (Bruce, 2006).

We focus here on how religion influences immigrants' contexts of reception through the social service organizations that assist them in Portland, Maine and Danbury, Connecticut. We compare two smaller New England cities rather than the traditional gateway cities of New York or Los Angeles because immigrants are increasingly moving to these "new destinations" (Brettell, 2006; Fennelly and Leitner, 2002; Dunn et al., 2005; Massey, 2008; Millard and Chapa, 2004; Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell, 2008). Particularly in New England, many smaller cities, like the two in our study, are unaccustomed to ethnic or racial diversity in their midst, and new immigrants do not have established groups of co-ethnics to assist them when they arrive. As a result, a wider range of established organizations – including those with religious ties – are coming together to serve immigrants in Portland, Danbury, and other small cities that have received large numbers of immigrants in recent years (Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 2008). We selected these two smaller cities because of their location in New England and the fact that each recently responded to large numbers of immigrant newcomers.

The City Contexts

Portland, with a population of about 63,000 in 2007, is Maine's largest city. The Irish were some of the city's first immigrants, arriving in the mid-1800s, followed by French Canadians, Portuguese, Scandinavians, Italians, Eastern European Jews, Armenians, Greeks and Poles by the turn of the last century (Eagan, 2005). In recent decades, new arrivals came as the result of federal legislation, local policies, and the city's emergence as a refugee resettlement site. Since the 1970s, refugees have come to Portland from Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, Cuba, and the former Soviet Republics (Canniff, 2001). More recently people have been arriving from Iraq, Afghanistan and the African countries of Rwanda, Congo, Sudan and Somalia.

Portland was home to between five and six thousand foreign-born residents in the late 2000s when this data was gathered. This is a nearly 50 per cent increase since 1990 (Allen, 2006). Fifty-three different languages were represented among students in the Portland Public School System which had the largest number of ESL (English as a Second Language) students in the state. Over the last several years, Portland also became a destination for refugees moving away from their original settlement sites. While there are no official figures on these secondary migrants, unofficial estimates suggest there may be as many as 10,000 refugees divided between Portland and the nearby city of Lewiston (Allen, 2006). Many find work in meat or fish packing plants or other factories or in service-based or medical professions. That many of these immigrants are black deserves special mention in a largely white state.

When they arrive in the city, newcomers receive support from secular as well as religious organizations. Since the 1970s, Catholic Charities Maine Refugee and Immigration Services (CCMRIS) has been the primary provider of resettlement services to refugees in Maine. In addition, many city agencies have incorporated a multicultural or immigrant/refugee component into their services, including the Housing Authority, Health and Human Services, the Police, and even the City Manager's Office. The city website lists events for a wide range of ethnic heritage communities and uses diversity and multiculturalism as a tool to promote urban revitalization. The value of diversity

was also evident as our respondents referred to immigrants/refugees as “new Mainers,” a testament to their conscious effort to minimize negative otherness that may come with a migrant label (Jaworsky et al., Forthcoming).

Throughout its history, Danbury, with an estimated 2007 population of 78,000, welcomed white ethnic groups, primarily from Ireland, Germany, Italy, and Eastern Europe. Irish immigrants fleeing the Potato Famine arrived in the 1840s and were followed by Germans and Italians looking for work. Later in the century, Eastern and Central Europeans arrived along with Lebanese and Syrians (Devlin, 1984). Large numbers of people from Portugal arrived in Danbury after changes in the immigration laws in 1965 as well as people from Cambodia, India and the Dominican Republic. Beginning in the 1990s, there was an influx from Central/South American countries, especially Brazil and Ecuador. These economic migrants have been key to the city’s economic revitalization through their work in manufacturing, construction, and the service sector. In 2007, city officials estimated that the foreign-born population was much larger than the 32 per cent reported by the Census, because there were approximately 12–15 thousand undocumented residents in the city. According to the Mayor’s 2006–7 annual report, over 60 nationalities spoke more than 45 different languages in Danbury.

Although the city’s website welcomes visitors in four different languages, reaction to this influx – especially to those without documents – has been mixed in the city and among immigrants themselves. The city attracted national attention in the 2000s when Mayor Mark Boughton requested that state troopers be deputized to deal with the city’s growing illegal immigrant “problem”. Along with the formation of an activist group, a regular stream of federal raids since 2006 has given the city an “anti-immigrant” profile nationally, particularly in the eyes of immigrants’ rights advocates. Many including the Mayor himself, however, attribute the revitalized downtown and the city’s tremendous economic growth to the large Brazilian community that opened scores of businesses and restaurants. Although some work as day labourers or in service jobs, many Brazilians are solidly middle-class and more affluent than other Latinos in the area. Newcomers to the city receive assistance from a range of organizations, including 15 immigrant churches and a number of faith-based social services including the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, and the Association of Religious Communities (ARC), an 83-member interfaith organization. Founded in the 1970s to help resettle Southeast Asian refugees, ARC now focuses on fighting xenophobia and fostering inter-faith dialogue.

RESEARCH METHODS

We began this research by identifying all the organizations in Portland and Danbury that provided social services for immigrants between 2006 and 2008 when the data were gathered. There was no sampling frame so we located organizations inductively through key informants, local newspapers, snowball sampling, and published lists of organizations in each city. They included municipal organizations supported by local, state and federal governments, civic organizations generally supported through private donations, and religious organizations tied to a local or national religious organization. Given the small size of each city, we are confident that we located most of the organizations working with immigrants during this time period.

We then interviewed representatives of 48 organizations that work with immigrants in each city (23 in Portland and 25 in Danbury). Interviews followed a semi-structured guide that included questions about the purpose, history, and mission of the organization as well as the services they offered, their client populations, and their experiences and observations of immigrants’ experiences in the city. A complete interview guide is included as Appendix A. Interviews lasted between fifty minutes and two hours and were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. Interview data

were supplemented with reviews of published information about each organization and participant observation in relevant locations, including Portland's Office of Multicultural and Multilingual Programs and a bilingual (Portuguese-English) language newspaper in Danbury. Researchers also visited religious services attended by immigrants, social events, political rallies, and related fundraisers in both cities.

Data were analysed inductively following the principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The authors worked collaboratively, using Atlas-TI software to develop and refine a set of codes, utilizing intra- and inter-city crosschecks to ensure that analytic categories were consistently applied across interviews as well as cities. The coded data were read in parallel with historical materials and local media sources (primarily newspapers) to facilitate our understandings of each context. We use the real names of each organization but do not name the representative(s) interviewed.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONFIGURATIONS

Religious organizations play different roles from the other organizations assisting recent immigrants in each city. With the exception of Catholic Charities Maine, the majority of services in Portland are provided by city agencies that added a multicultural or immigrant/refugee component to their work. These include the Housing Authority, Health and Human Services, the Police and the City Manager's Office.³ Since the 1980s, Catholic Charities Maine has been the primary provider of resettlement services to refugees in Maine through its contract with the city of Portland. While officially a religious organization, Catholic Charities Maine operates largely as a secular social service organization using public funds to resettle refugees.

Beyond Catholic Charities, few religious organizations provide direct services to immigrants in Portland. The Salvation Army and Root Cellar are the exceptions. A representative from the Salvation Army estimated that half of her clients are "new Mainers," often referred from the city's Family Shelter, who come looking for clothing and household supplies. The Root Cellar, a Christian organization, provides food, health services, English classes, citizenship programmes, and other services for immigrants and native-born Mainers alike. A staff member described the Root Cellar as "not a church" but a "Christian melting pot" comprised of volunteers from many area churches, "We want the Root Cellar to be...a Christian neutral zone where the only goal is to share the love of Christ." While members of local congregations volunteer at the Root Cellar and contribute to food banks, local congregations did not themselves provide direct services to refugees in the city.

In Danbury, local religious organizations play much more central roles in assisting immigrants. In contrast to Portland, where various municipal organizations assist refugees, the Danbury government does little to assist newcomers and what it does provide focuses almost exclusively on helping the immigrant businesses community. Many religious organizations, however, do assist immigrants. St. Peter's Catholic Church, for example, sponsors the Brazilian Catholic Social Centre as a place for parishioners to hold social events, meet a visiting Consulate representative, or drop in for immigrant-related advice and referrals. Local congregations also provide informal assistance. The small Four-Square Gospel Church offers English classes, helps new arrivals locate winter clothes, and helps them set up utilities and find jobs.

In addition to the services that individual religious organizations provide for refugees and economic migrants in Portland and Danbury, collaboration among organizations is the norm in both cities. In Portland, Catholic Charities was the first organization most providers mentioned when we asked who they collaborate with most often. Catholic Charities and city agencies often "trade clients," sending refugees back and forth to receive different kinds of services. As a city representative explained, "We actually have a very strong partnership with Catholic Charities

Maine. And we provide risk management, housing, cultural skills training...just a variety of services for people-secondary migrants coming into the state...Catholic Charities will send some of their clients over so they can attend our bus training [orientation to how to ride public buses], as opposed to them doing it separately. We have a good relationship...." Catholic Charities also worked with organizations like the Training Resources Council that provides education and employment counselling and Immigrant Legal Advocacy (ILA). The director of ILA explained, "We do all their [Catholic Charities'] legal and advocacy work, filing petitions, green cards, etc., and we do orientations to the legal system about four times a year for their clients and the staff." Such collaboration is necessary in a small city, she added, to "get things done".

While none of our respondents described difficulties working with Catholic Charities – which looks and acts much like a secular social service organization – a few hesitated to work with the Root Cellar or Salvation Army as religious organizations.

Collaborating with these more explicitly religious groups felt too much like crossing the invisible line between church and state. The leader of one such organization said his group does not "do a good job linking with the faith-based communities here. We do it, but we don't do it systematically, the way we cultivate and nurture our other relationships." When asked why, he explained: "It's the separation of church and state....we're very careful about that, in other words, about keeping religion personal and not having it influence service provision." The hesitation providers expressed about bringing religion into secular spaces reflects their own understandings of where those lines are and/or should be.

In contrast, respondents from the Salvation Army and Root Cellar saw themselves as able to provide services more quickly and flexibly than municipal organizations, a comparative advantage they tried to build upon. They tried to use their flexibility to build relationships with municipal and civic organizations that were hesitant to collaborate. A representative from the Salvation Army said she is much less encumbered by red tape than the state. She can sit with a client, in her words, "make a decision on my budget, on whether I'm going to provide a service for them or not...just the day-to-day nitty gritty." For this reason, she tried to offer services that everyone knows immigrants need but the state does not fund; "I've been down to General Assistance quite a bit trying to foster a relationship...they said, 'Is there any way that you can start to provide bus vouchers again for long distance?' I said, 'I couldn't write one every day, but I could do two or three a month,' and they were like...they got up and hugged me [laugh]. Because they can't do that, and we're the only place that can."

In Danbury there was little discussion of church-state issues, perhaps because the Association of Religious Communities was at the centre of most collaboration in the city. As the president of the ARC, a Catholic priest, explained, "There's not one community that we don't reach out to...that we don't already know [and] that doesn't know us well enough that they can't turn to us in times of need..." The Salvation Army was also a bigger player in Danbury than in Portland including a 30-member Women's Auxiliary involved in extensive programmes.

Unlike Portland, the leaders of many local churches in Danbury were well versed in social services and aware of where to send people in need. Some provided direct services while others referred people to organizations that could help. The Literacy Volunteers sent word out to local churches, for example, as did the ESL Director at the Library to fill workshops for practicing English language skills. Religious and secular organizations generally worked together smoothly in Danbury. Respondents did not mention their hesitations or concerns about collaborating as they did in Portland.

REPORTS FROM SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Despite differences in which organizations provided services and in how they collaborated to do so, representatives from both cities stressed how important religion is for many new residents. In

Portland, several spoke about how religion helps refugees develop strong identities and positive mental health, especially when they arrive from war-torn lands. The leader of a counselling organization, for example, explained how religion gives immigrants strength during difficult times: “I think that’s [religion] where they [immigrants] get their strength to work through whatever they need to do...” A representative of a small economic development organization has seen immigrants in Portland face “lots of challenges...they’re constantly facing with their children and the Americanization of children...that struggle.” She thinks immigrants have become more religious as a result, as they “retreat deeper into [their] values.”

Many in Portland described how they see immigrants build community through their own religious organizations specifically through masses in their native languages or involvements in the mosque or the Buddhist temple. As one leader explained, religious organizations “create that safe environment where they [immigrants] could be themselves and connect with their gods. Then there’s the trust issue, and connecting with other people, which is related to knowing who you are.” This interviewee spoke about the challenges Cambodian refugees faced twenty years ago in Portland when they tried to build a Buddhist temple and the sense of community, safety and self-sufficiency that resulted from overcoming these challenges, “Mosques and synagogues and temples – what they have done for people is something that no agency can do.”

Similar themes related to the trust, safety, and identity social service providers saw immigrants gaining from their religious organizations were evident – and amplified – in discussions in Danbury where many observed that immigrants become more religious in the States.⁴ The District Coordinator for ESL in the public schools sees the church as a support for newcomers. “[I]f you have a church or a religious place, you go through them and you get that support and you connect and you feel secure.” The Executive Director of the United Way believes people seek out the church because they come from places without strongly developed social service systems: “So where would be the first place that they would go for compassion and help? It would be the Church, I mean, that’s how our country was founded, and that’s where our support system was in the beginning.” The idea of “sanctuary” in a place like Danbury encompasses the idea of a safe haven, not only from the stresses of everyday life, but also from the precariousness of being undocumented in what is often perceived as an “anti-immigrant” city.

Many in Danbury see churches as bridge builders that not only help immigrants integrate into the mainstream but also work to counteract polarization around issues of illegal immigration. A founder of the Portuguese Cultural Centre (PCC) spoke about faith tempering the ugly debates about “illegals” that are “invading” Danbury: “It brings people together. I hear your point of view; you listen to mine. Maybe you and I could reach a point where we now begin to respect and like each other. And I think that’s important.” In Danbury, city leaders also spoke of how religious organizations offer frameworks of meanings, security and well-being. If not churches, several respondents asked rhetorically, who is responsible for all humanity? Words like “trust,” “safety,” and “comfort” came up repeatedly in response to questions about what it is that religious or faith-based organizations offer for economic migrants that secular social service agencies do not.

Religious groups provided specific resources for economic migrants when debates about illegal immigration heated up in Danbury. Speaking about how important it is for religious groups to take the lead on the issue, the director of the ARC explained, “You know, the bank makes money, but the faith communities’ job, based on their sacred texts, is to cultivate, nurture and act on goodwill. So we really need the faith community to not be afraid now, to act on goodwill – to be welcoming, showing hospitality to the stranger, the Golden Rule, name it how you will...” The ARC has a history of such activism. For example, after 9/11, the Network easily organized volunteers who were prepared to escort Muslim women (specifically those in headdress or *burka*) in case of an anti-Islam backlash: “two women for every woman, and a gentleman walking behind...luckily, we never had to do it.” The ARC also took out a full-page ad in the local paper to encourage the public to voice their opposition to partnerships that would harm local immigrants and to support

continued funding for the local Hispanic Centre that had operated in Danbury for over twenty years.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Religion plays important – and different – roles in Portland, Maine and Danbury, Connecticut but, in each case, strongly shapes the context of reception cities for recent immigrants. Aside from Catholic Charities Maine, which operates largely as a secular social service organization, municipal organizations provide the majority of services for newly arrived and secondary refugees coming to Portland from the Sudan, Somalia and a range of other countries. Only a few religious organizations provide services and they often confront barriers from representatives of municipal and civic groups in the city who fear that collaborating with them would violate the separation of church and state. In Danbury, a range of religious organizations provides social services to large numbers of economic migrants, mostly from Brazil and Ecuador, living in the city with and without documentation. Civic leaders partner easily with religious organizations. Representatives from both cities agree that religion strongly shapes how immigrants cope with their new lives, how they are received, and the kinds of services they are offered.

As case studies, Portland and Danbury show that religion influences the context of reception in cities but not in homogenous ways. Rather, the presence of religion in each city is shaped by historical, demographic, and organizational factors all of which are influenced by geography. Immigrants have been coming to Portland for over a century including, in recent years, people from a variety of religious backgrounds. The city has a large Catholic church, several other Christian churches, two mosques, and a Buddhist temple among other religious organizations. Despite this landscape, local congregations provide limited services to new immigrants. This is most likely because immigrants and refugees come from a range of countries and religions and because the city and state have stepped in given the large number of refugees. Unlike Danbury where many Portuguese and later Brazilian and other Latino immigrants had counted on help from the Catholic Church for generations, there has not been such pressure in Portland on one or more local religious organizations (see also Allen, 2010).

In Danbury, building on their experience with the earlier waves of Portuguese newcomers, Catholic institutions were willing and prepared to respond to the economic migrants from Brazil – many of whom were also Catholic – when they arrived in large numbers. As a representative of the Association of Religious Communities reported, the services it offered to Brazilians had roots in the help that religious organizations offered to the Portuguese and others, 30 years earlier. The Association of Religious Communities is experienced and prepared to respond to the needs of “Brazilians (who) started coming in the 1980s,” those of “the Hispanics (who) started coming in the 1990s,” and the problems experienced “most recently (by) Ecuadorians and Mexicans in the last 4 or 5 years.” Furthermore, both earlier Portuguese immigrants and more recent immigrants from Central and South America speak the same language and share aspects of a common culture, which helped religious groups respond effectively.

More than religious demographics, however, the demographics of the immigrants themselves played important roles in both cities. Refugees to Portland brought state funds that enabled city agencies to respond in ways that the Danbury city government could not. Refugees from war-torn countries in Portland were seen as deserving assistance. In contrast, tensions around economic migrants, who some residents accused of taking jobs from the native-born, and around migrants’ undocumented status, politicized immigration in Danbury in ways that limited the kinds of services municipal agencies could provide. That religious organizations are so actively involved in serving migrants in Danbury suggests that, in addition to history, there may be an inverse relationship

between how much municipal groups and religious organizations provide. Additional research from a broader range of cities is needed that holds constant the population of immigrants as either economic migrants or refugees to help disentangle these factors. The ecology of organizations in particular cities, their histories of working together, and ideas about the separation of church and state also influence how organizations distribute labour and collaborate when providing for immigrants.

While more in-depth research on the ways in which religion influences immigrants in new contexts of reception still needs to be done in a larger number of cities, this article suggests several conclusions for researchers and policymakers. First it shows how organizations are helping refugees and economic migrants to begin to adjust in smaller cities that are not traditional gateways for immigrants. It shows the varied ways religion is present in those cities and influences them as contexts of reception. Second, it suggests a potentially inverse relationship between municipal services for immigrants and the actions of congregations and faith-based service organizations on the ground. Finally, the comparison between these cities illustrates the central role of organizational collaboration in small cities and the barriers some social service providers perceive in collaborating with faith-based organizations.

Our findings also reflect the US context, with its long history of non-profit service provision, highly developed cadre of private philanthropic institutions, and relatively high degree of comfort with public religion compared to other countries at similar levels of development. Context of reception studies in Europe, where religion is just recently creeping into discussions of immigrant incorporation, and generally refers to Islam, would almost certainly yield different findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge funding from the Spiritual Capital Research Program and the Theodore and Jane Norman Fund for Faculty Research and Creative Projects at Brandeis University. Additional collaborations with Sara Curran, Jessica Hejmanek and Ken Sun influenced our thinking about this article. Previous versions of this article were presented at Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association, American Academy of Religion, and Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

APPENDIX A

A. Background

We are talking because this organization works with foreign-born city residents in Portland/Danbury. I am hoping to learn about how this organization was started and how you came to do what you do today.

1. How did you become involved with the organization? How long have you been involved? In what capacities?
2. When was the organization started? Who started it? What factors led to its founding? How was it supported financially?
3. What were the goals or purposes of the organization when it began? How did the organization work to meet these goals?
4. Were there funds for this organization at its founding? Where did the initial funding come from? How has it been financially supported over its history?
5. How were foreign-born people involved with the organization at the start? (as founders, leaders, participants, clients etc.)? How are they involved now?

6. What kinds of contact, if any, did the organization have with other similar organizations in the US or abroad when it was starting?
7. How is the organization structured to get its work done? Who makes decisions? What is the organizational construction? Are there members and do they participate in the decision-making process? Do clients have a role in decision-making? Where would you say your main ideas and strategies come from when planning or implementing your organizational programs with foreign-born city residents?
8. How has the organization evolved over time in terms of its mission, size, activities, interactions with foreign-born residents, interactions with people outside the US etc.?
9. How successful would you say the organization has been in helping new immigrants in the city? Why? What does it offer that other groups do not? What is its vision for the future?
10. Given unlimited resources, what would you change about how this organization works with foreign-born residents?

B. Work with Foreign-Born City Residents

11. Which groups of foreign-born residents is the organization currently involved with? How did the organization come to be involved with those groups? Why?
12. In what ways is the organization involved with these immigrants? Specifically:
 - a.) What kinds of services does the organization offer immigrants (economic, political, social)?
 - b.) Are these services open to people of all religious backgrounds?
 - c.) Are any of these services also provided to native-born residents? Why?
13. Why do you think it is important to provide immigrants with these services (i.e. social, political, economic, religious)?
14. What are the religious backgrounds of your clients? Are they involved with religious organizations in the city?
15. What do you think religious organizations bring to the table in their work with immigrants here that make them particularly powerful or not?

C. Collaborations with Other Organizations on Behalf of Foreign-Born City Residents

16. What kinds of contacts/collaboration do you have with other organizations working with immigrants in Portland/ Danbury/Olympia?
17. Are these religious or secular organizations?
18. What are the advantages of working with religious organizations? What are some of the challenges?
19. How do these collaborations influence your organization's capacity to work with foreign-born residents?

D. Perspective on City-Level Reception and Immigrant Experiences

Finally, a few questions about immigrant / refugees' experiences in the city more broadly.

20. What kind of feedback do you receive from clients? native-born residents of the city? foreign-born residents of the city?

21. What do you observe about how the city's foreign-born residents are integrated into the city? Are they assimilating or acculturating into the "mainstream"? Are they insular or isolated or some combination of both?
22. What is the general public discussion about newcomers and the city's responsibility, or lack thereof, to respond to them?
23. What are the biggest challenges that foreign-born residents in this city face today?
24. Where are foreign-born residents getting the most help in responding to these challenges?
25. Based on your experiences, how would the lives of immigrants in this city be different next week if all of the religious organizations here closed their doors?

E. Transnational Networks and Collaborations

To conclude, I'm curious about your relationships with organizations outside the city.

26. What kinds of contacts does your organization currently have with people or organizations in immigrants' home countries? Are these relationships direct or through another organization?
27. How does your organization interact with these people and organizations (i.e. lines of authority, etc.)
28. What differences do these linkages make for your organization? How has your organization changed what it does in response to these ties, if at all?
29. How do these ties influence foreign-born resident's integration into Portland/Danbury/Olympia?
30. Is there anything we haven't talked about that you would encourage me to think about?

NOTES

1. All names are pseudonyms.
2. We use the term immigrant in this article to describe both voluntary and forced immigrants (such as refugees). We acknowledge that these groups of immigrants move for different reasons and experience different adjustment processes. Most immigrants to Portland are refugees, and most immigrants to Danbury are economic migrants. We use these two terms throughout the article.
3. For more information about the configuration of these organizations, see Sun and Cadge (forthcoming).
4. We are aware of broader academic discussions about this question as well (Akresh, 2011; Connor, 2009a; Connor, 2008).(Connor, 2009b)

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