NEW PERSPECTIVES ON IMMIGRANT CONTEXTS OF RECEPTION
The cultural armature of cities

Abstract

We argue that important, overlooked differences in what we call the 'cultural armature' of Portland, Maine, and Danbury, Connecticut help explain the variation in how each city received new immigrants in recent years. Portland has a long history of contact with the outside world and used its cosmopolitan character to promote urban redevelopment and welcome immigrants from a range of countries of origin. Danbury's small-town, insular outlook, and the fact that most of its newcomers came from a single country of origin – some without legal documents – made immigrants' welcome more fragmented. While leaders in both cities speak of multiculturalism and tolerance, the 'cultural armature' of each led city leaders to put that talk into action differently. We describe how we see this 'cultural armature' at work and argue that it – in combination with demographic realities – led immigrants to be more warmly welcomed in Portland than in Danbury.

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1 Introduction

In this article, we heed the recent call by migration and urban studies scholars to bring questions of space, locality, and culture squarely into discussions of immigrant incorporation (Brettell 2005; Caglar 2007; Glick Schiller & Caglar 2009). These are two relatively unconnected bodies of research. While many urban studies scholars focus on how specific 'global cities' influence and are influenced by worldwide economic restructuring, they do not pay enough attention to how migration affects these processes. By contrast, migration scholars around the world, and in the United States in particular, have produced a large body of work on new destinations and contexts of reception. Much of this work, however, privileges the economic characteristics of localities without paying sufficient attention to variations in their cultural resources. Taking into consideration what we call a city's cultural armature may supplement economic and demographic arguments by contributing more thorough explanations of why certain places integrate immigrants with greater ease than others.

Over the last several years, we studied immigrant incorporation in three small cities in the USA: Olympia, Washington; Portland, Maine; and Danbury, Connecticut. In this paper, we focus on the latter two. While leaders in both Portland and Danbury present the cities as communities that celebrate diversity, in actuality Portland welcomes immigrants in a wider range of ways than does Danbury. This is, we stress from the start, largely due to demographic factors. While immigrants represent about 10 percent of Portland's population of 63,000, the foreign-born represent about one-third of Danbury's 77,704 residents. Further, in Danbury, an additional 12,000 to 15,000 residents are in the country without documents, while in Portland, many of the foreign-born arrive as refugees.

We contend, however, that demographics are not the whole story. In trying to understand how leaders in each city actually welcomed immigrants on a day-to-day basis, we noticed important differences in how each city created and deployed what we call its cultural armature. We inductively came to think of cultural armature as a combination of each city's (1) history and cultural geography, (2) urban self-presentation, (3) cultural responses to demography, and (4) prevailing ethos toward immigrants, which is particularly evident in municipal responses. We understand culture as the process of meaning making (Spillman 2002) and grant it relative analytical

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autonomy (Alexander & Smith 2003), while recognizing that it inter-acts with demographic, economic, and other independent factors that affect the ease with which immigrants were welcomed in these two cities.

We found that the cultural armature of each city varied signifi-cantly. While leaders in both Portland and Danbury marketed the cities as diverse multicultural communities, Portland – to use a com-mon expression – both talked the talk and walked the walk, while Danbury talked the talk but was not as welcoming to newcomers due to simmering anti-immigrant sentiment. Leaders in both cities, for example, spoke of America as a nation of immigrants and spoke about multiculturalism being good for their communities. The City of Danbury website welcomed visitors in four languages besides English during this research and the Mayor often spoke proudly of the linguistic diversity of the city's public schools (students from 43 nations speaking 47 different languages). The City of Portland similarly listed multicultural sports tournaments and cultural events on its webpage in addition to the wide range of services the city pro-vides to immigrants. Beneath the rhetoric, however, city leaders in Portland actively reached out to recent immigrants through a range of city and community programs. Immigrant residents were often referred to as 'new Mainers,' a testament to leaders' conscious efforts to include them and minimize negative 'otherness' that can come with an immigrant label. By contrast, in Danbury fewer ser-vices were available and anti-immigrant sentiment simmered below the surface.

Demographics had much to do with each city's response as did economics. In the last fifty years each city dealt with major eco-nomic declines due to de-industrialization and sought to reinvent itself. Culture, however, also played a role as Portland and Danbury developed what we call different cultural armatures that we describe and analyze through this article. These cultural armatures, in turn, influence how warmly immigrants were received in each city. We develop our argument by first providing additional theoretical back-ground and historical information about each city. We then explore the cultural armature of each place with attention to four factors that comprise it. We aim to show how these cultural armatures developed in different ways and what impact they had – in addition to demographics – in shaping how each city responded to new im-migrants in recent years.

2 Scholarly debates

Recent work, which calls attention to the centrality of space in shaping the migration experience, builds upon a conversation with a fairly long history that has been revitalized as immigrants head toward new destinations (Brettell 2006). These debates began with efforts to move theory away from its focus on how individual immigrants' characteristics shape incorporation toward a greater recognition of institutional structure and context. Portes & Rumbaut

(2006) emphasized the role of the receiving government, the char-acteristics of the host-country labor market and the characteristics of ethnic communities in shaping contexts of reception. Reitz (2002) described four contextual factors, including: (a) pre-existing ethnic and race relations within the host population; (b) differences in labor markets and related institutions; (c) the impact of govern-ment policies and programs, including immigration policy, policies for immigrant integration, and policies for the regulation of social institutions; and (d) the changing nature of international boundaries, part of the process of globalization. He argues that the character-istics of host societies can influence immigrant integration as much as, if not more than individual immigrant characteristics.

More recent studies take a broader view. They see successful immigrant integration as a function of the opportunities and barri-ers immigrants encounter in the receiving community. In addition to contextual factors like ethnic networks, social capital, and labor market conditions, this work stresses how programs, institutional cultures, and national and local policies affect immigrant integration (Fix & Zimmerman 2000; Waldinger 2001). Integration is a fluid process based on both individual and community level factors and thus, happens differently depending on the neighborhood, city, or state (Bloemraad 2006; Guarnizo, Sanchez & Roach 1999; Padín 2005). Perceptions about newcomers and openness or resistance to immigration (Bloemraad 2006; Padín 2005), media and discursive constructions of immigration and immigrants (Chavez 2001; Padín 2005), and local political mobilization (Bloemraad 2006) must also be taken into account. Other studies focus on how small-town com-munity members show newcomers 'their place', through individual acts of discrimination in work or social arenas, communicating racial prejudice and their distaste for immigrants (Millard & Chapa 2004).

Place, which is closely related to social space (Cresswell 2004), is also of central concern to scholars looking at new immigrant destinations. In their study of two non-metropolitan communities in Oregon and Colorado where there has been a significant increase in Latino immigration, Nelson & Hiemstra (2008) assert that examining socio-spatial relations is crucial to analyzing immigrant-receiving society interaction, and contribute to scholarship on the uneven geography of immigrant incorporation in the contemporary USA. Cabell (2007) stresses the importance of religious institutions in making particular locales more receptive. Finally, in her research on the dairy industry in Wisconsin, Valentine (2005) found that despite their initial hostility, employers became more welcoming when they realized how dependent they were on their immigrant workers.

This scholarship helps to unearth the causes and character-istics of newly emerging non-traditional immigrant geographies (Massey 2008; Singer, Hardwick & Brettell 2008). Comprehensive comparative metropolitan studies are also in short supply, as Singer *et al* (2008: 8) point out, not to mention systematic studies of rural and suburban cases. Much work focuses on Mexican migrants (Hernández-León & Zúñiga 2005) or particular pan-ethnic groups, such as Latinos (Godzniak & Martin 2005; Smith & Furseth 2006).

It looks at the Midwest (Millard & Chapa 2004; Valentine 2005), with its meatpacking industry or the agricultural industries of the 'New South', where Latinos are subverting the longstanding bi-racial order (Marrow 2011; Smith & Furseth 2006; Winders 2006). Our study, therefore, fills an important gap by including non-Latino groups and looking at small cities in New England.

Moreover, much of this research does not pay sufficient attention to how new contexts of reception are nested in larger geopolitical hi-erarchies as influenced by culture. Context of reception is conceived as national even though immigrant incorporation, as well as the promulgation of policies and community responses to immigrants, varies considerably across physical and political spaces *within* na-tions. As new immigrants move increasingly into communities that have not dealt with large numbers of foreign-born residents, these new destinations variously accommodate, celebrate, and resist their new residents for a range of reasons. Their local experiences scale up to contribute to national debates and policies. Furthermore, the current national security context makes some residents worried and fearful, and brings them into direct contact with the power of the state through arrests, detentions, and deportation.

We contribute to efforts to move beyond the emphasis on the economic characteristics of place to look at how place-based cultural resources shape immigrant incorporation. Cities have par-ticular cultural resources or what we call cultural armatures that they deploy in particular ways. Brettell (2005), for example, stresses the importance of a dominant set of values or an urban ethos in shaping immigrant incorporation. Glick, Schiller & Caglar (2009) argue that cultural diversity is an important factor in the competitive struggle between cities. Immigrants can be marketable assets in the places where they settle, even enabling some cities to reposition them-selves within the geopolitical hierarchy. Caglar (2007: 102) urges us to focus on the 'entanglements between immigrant incorporation, cultural diversity and urban development'. We bring these strands of scholarship together here by conceptualizing and assessing what we inductively came to describe as the cultural armature of a city. We think of a city's cultural armature as a combination of its (1) history and cultural geography, (2) urban self-presentation, (3) cultural responses to demography, and (4) prevailing ethos toward immigrants particularly evident in municipal responses. These factors combine to form a city's cultural armature, we argue, and supplement demographic and economic accounts of how a city responds to new immigrants. We develop this argument with refer-ence to Portland, Maine and Danbury, Connecticut as case studies and hope the concept can be fruitfully applied in other city contexts.

3   Research methods

We analyzed how recent immigrants were received in Danbury, Connecticut, and Portland, Maine, by collecting data from multiple sources. While cities are the units of analysis, the data about them

came through interviews and reviews of historical materials. We relied primarily on the experiences of 55 key city leaders as de-scribed during in-depth interviews conducted between the summer of 2006 and the summer of 2009. These leaders work for municipal groups, social service organizations, civic groups, and religious and faith-based organizations that work with immigrants in each city. We identified the organizations through snowball samples developed through existing contacts, listings in local directories, and key informants. We followed a standard interview guide in each city that included questions about the purpose, history, and mission of the organization as well as the services they offer, their client popula-tions, and their experiences and observations about immigrants' experiences. Interviews lasted between fifty minutes and two hours and were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed.

These interviews were supplemented with reviews of published information about each organization and participant observation in relevant locations. In Portland, a researcher volunteered with Portland's Office of Multicultural and Multilingual Programs and visited religious services attended by immigrants in the city. In Danbury, a researcher conducted field observations at social events, political rallies, and fundraisers throughout the city and volunteered at a bilingual community newspaper.

The historical and qualitative interview data gathered were analyzed inductively following the principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990). We worked collaboratively using Atlas-TI software to develop and refine a set of codes, working together with intra- and inter-city crosschecks to ensure that our analytic categories were consistently applied across interviews and across cities. The coded data were read in parallel with historical materials to facilitate our understandings of each city's particular context. The concept of cultural armature emerged during the coding process as we struggled to understand the cultural and historical factors – in addition to the demographic ones – that influenced how a city responded to recent immigrants. Before describing these factors we situate each city historically.

4   City contexts

4.1   Portland

Portland, with a population of about 63,000 in 2007, is Maine's largest city and is the commercial and cultural capital of the state. Immigrants have long been coming to Portland. The Irish were the first to arrive in the mid-1800s, followed by French Canadians, Portuguese and Scandinavians, and then by Italians, Eastern European Jews, Armenians, Greeks and Poles at the turn of the last century (Eagan 2005). Maine's earliest economic activities were fishing, fur trapping, and substance farming. Sawmill factories

were another early, natural development given the high percentage of forested land in the state (Rose 2003).

During the first half of the twentieth century, the city of Portland, and the state of Maine as a whole, experienced steady population increases. Following World War II, however, the population and commercial activity declined precipitously. By the 1960s, the maritime industry in Portland had reached a low point. The population decreased by nearly 10 percent between 1960 and 1970, dropping to levels from 50 years before. The state of Maine as a whole experienced a net out-migration of 68,789 this decade.[1] These trends began to reverse themselves in the 1970s when Maine began to attract in-migrants. While the pace slowed after the 1970s, in-migration to Maine has continued ever since (Benson & Sherwood 2004).

The influx of newcomers to Portland in recent decades resulted in part from federal immigration legislation, local policies, and, more recently, 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. More recent arrivals come from Iraq, Afghanistan, and the African countries of Rwanda, Congo, Sudan, and Somalia. Portland is currently home to between 5,000 and 6,000 foreign-born residents (Allen 2006, US Census Bureau), nearly a 50 percent increase since 1990. Fifty-three different languages are represented among the 1,172 students in the Portland Public School System, which has 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 they may be as many as 10,000, divided between Portland and the nearby city of Lewiston (Allen 2006). That many of these immigrants are black deserves special mention in a largely white state. Many find work in meat or fish packing plants or other factories or in service-based or medical professions. Though still a working port, Portland's economic base today is a broad mix of commercial, retail, manufacturing, and service industries.

The city of Portland has the largest population of citizens requiring social and other services in the state and the city has established a wide variety of service agencies. Non-profit organizations and faith-based initiatives also do a significant amount of the work. Since 1975, Catholic Charities Maine Refugee and Immigration Services has been the primary provider of resettlement services to refugees in Maine (Bombardieri 2000). 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. Groups like the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project and the Action for Self Reliance Association, an organization founded by and serving the Sudanese community, also play a critical role in providing services for the immigrant community.

4.2 Danbury

Throughout its history, Danbury, with an estimated population of 77,704 in 2007, welcomed white ethnic groups, primarily from Ireland, Germany, Italy, and Poland. Even before these immigrants, colonial settlers making the arduous two-week trek from Boston to New York during the 1700s often stopped in Danbury leading to a lively trade in agriculture and hospitality services. Irish immigrants first came to Danbury in the 1840s fleeing the Potato Famine followed by Germans and Italians looking for work. These immigrants were readily accommodated as store clerks rushed to learn German so they could serve rapidly growing immigrant populations. Germans revitalized the city's Main Street in the 1870s opening businesses, tailor shops, bakeries, taverns, and breweries (Devlin 1984). Immigrants from Eastern Europe followed including Poles, Slovaks, Czechs, Lebanese, and Syrians. As the twentieth century dawned, the majority of Danbury residents came from other countries.

Immigrant diversity continued into the 20th century even as the economic situation in the city changed. Agriculture and artisanship gave way to hat-manufacturing in the late 19th century which declined in the 1930s and 1940s as hats went out of vogue. De-industrialization followed and an aggressive redevelopment plan was put into place in 1959 to attract high technology firms, producing everything from helicopters to pencils and surgical sutures (Devlin 1984). It was not until the construction of two major highways, I-84 and Route 684, and the construction of the Danbury Fair Mall that industry and commerce began once again to grow.

By the late 1980s, the Danbury region had reinvented itself as a highly desirable suburban small city.[2] This expansion included the growth of big-box stores and malls that sent the downtown area into sharp decline. Large numbers of immigrants from Portugal arrived in Danbury after 1965 followed by smaller numbers from Cambodia, India, and the Dominican Republic and the 1990s – 2000s saw an influx from Brazil, Ecuador, and other Central/South American countries. These immigrants have been key to the city's economic revitalization through their work in manufacturing, construction, and the service sector. They also played a major role in rebuilding the downtown. Today, city officials estimate that the foreign-born represent a much larger proportion than the 31.9 percent reported by the US Census Bureau for 2007, possibly as high as 40 percent, bringing the actual total population of the city to well over 90,000 residents.[3]

While the city itself provides few direct services to immigrants in Danbury, a number of diverse non-profit organizations work with newcomers. They include civic organizations such as the Ecuadorian and Hispanic Centers, which foster community building, cultural connections with the homeland, and more recently, vocally advocate for immigrants' rights.[4] Numerous religious organizations also provide assistance. The Association of Religious Communities helped resettle Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s

and early 1980s and now focuses on fighting xenophobia and foster-ing inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogues. There are also more than a dozen Brazilian evangelical churches in Danbury that provide some direct services.

5   Cultural armatures and responses to immigrants

5.1   History and cultural geography

The histories of Portland and Danbury clearly influence the resources each city brings to its work with recent immigrants. While each has a long immigration history, their responses to others – to outsiders – have differed over time for historical and geographic reasons. As a port city, Portland has been at the intersection of global and local economic flows throughout its history; its residents have always had to adapt to newcomers. Economic relationships between the West Indies and Portland, for example, began in the early colonial period and turned the city into a key international port (Sanders & Helfgot 1977). Early on, Portland business people saw the potential for trade, particularly in rum and molasses, with the West Indies. By 1853, as a result of these close relationships, Portland imported three times more sugar and molasses than Boston. These tight trade connections with the West Indies promoted immigration from Cuba and other areas in Latin America. Scholar Carey (2005: 100) argues that the close relationship between Portland and the West Indies encouraged Portlanders to 'recognize themselves as global citizens and resist isolationist tendencies,' which he claims made Portland more welcoming to Hispanic immigrants later on.

Since the 1800s, Portland has been producing 'global citizens'. A rise in tourism in the last fifty years also means that Portland constantly hosts newcomers. As many as 6,000 visitors disembark from cruise ships on any given summer afternoon continually flood-ing the streets with visitors. There are also several sites throughout the city that function as what Elijah Anderson (2004) calls 'cosmo-politan canopies,' or places where people come into contact with one another. Under these metaphorical umbrellas, they engage in conversation and 'folk ethnography' that provides the cognitive and cultural foundation for understanding others and construct-ing public behavior. International grocery stores and restaurants, from Eritrean to Salvadoran, are situated throughout the city and patronized not only by immigrants but also by a diverse group of native-born Mainers who also attend city-wide cultural events and programs throughout the year. Interviewees told stories about the richness that immigrant and refugees have brought to Portland. They also pointed to the fact that they are well distributed across the city: there is no single 'ethnic' neighborhood.

Many respondents, including immigrant and refugee leaders themselves, described their positive contribution to the community

and the overall spirit of Portland. As one interviewee summed up the ethos he felt embodied in the city, 'I think as far as being ac-cepted on the street in general…it's pretty darn good. I would say the majority of people think it's pretty neat...such a mixed bag of people [are] moving in from out of state. And it's relatively cosmo-politan… For a teeny little city like this, we're pretty hip.' A majority of the refugees we interviewed concurred. One said, 'If one to ten, I will give [Portland] a ten…as a great welcoming place,' and another asserted, '[Portland has] turned out to be a hospitable place; I found that to be the truth.'

Historical and geographic factors also shaped how Danbury responded to newcomers but in ways different than in Portland. As the so-called 'Gateway to New England,' Danbury welcomed travel-lers over time but not with the regularity or diversity of people in the port city of Portland. Unlike Portland, Danbury has not long been producing global citizens which, in combination with demographic factors, likely influence tense relations with immigrants. This history is encapsulated in the downtown area which declined in the 1980s with the movement of businesses to the suburbs. As native-born residents moved their businesses out of downtown – Main Street – locations, immigrants moved in putting up signs in Portuguese or Spanish and catering to immigrants, through restaurants, travel agencies, money transfer outlets, and international groceries.

Unlike the cosmopolitan canopies under which people cluster in Portland, these changes led to a bifurcated landscape in Danbury with some native-born residents experiencing the downtown as a microcosm of the 'Hispanicized' America that Huntington (2004) warned of: an imagined space of 'invasion' by 'illegal' foreigners. They express ambivalence, if not outright disdain, for their newly rejuvenated commercial district, claiming that its ethnic businesses, with their foreign language signage, have little to offer to them. While the outskirts of Danbury are thriving, downtown revitalization, as they see it, has passed them over. A life-long resident and President of the US Citizens for Immigration Law Enforcement told us, 'You can go down Main Street, and look at the changes. An awful lot of different people walking around, rather than strictly Americans… [It's] not dangerous – just that there's just nothing there, no reason for Americans to go.' While there is not much actual danger – crime levels remain very low – fear persists, as does a sense of disloca-tion on the part of the many residents who cannot shop where they do not understand what they are buying or where the storekeepers do not speak English. While post 1965 immigrants proudly claimed Main Street as their own, and many respondents in our sample, foreign- and native-born alike, emphasized how devastated Main Street was until immigrants moved to town, the history and cultural geography of Portland and Danbury are different. While Portland has long been home to global citizens and there are many locations in the city where immigrants and native-born people mix, global citi-zens do not have a history in Danbury where native-born residents and immigrants are more spatially segregated and view each other more warily.

5.2   Urban self-presentation

In addition to their histories and cultural geographies, Portland and Danbury have different urban self-presentations that contribute to their cultural armatures and responses to recent immigrants. In Portland, a long period of stagnation, suburbanization, city center disinvestment, and job loss characterized the first half of the 1900s. Revitalization began in the early 1970s, when grassroots activists and business owners interested in historic preservation, affordable housing, and improving the built environment, along with business owners looking to infuse the city with new life, joined forces. As more housing and historic buildings were restored, Portland attracted more people, especially members of the artistic and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) communities. Large businesses also played a key role during these early years by relocating to the downtown area. The city actively promoted these efforts, making streetscape, sidewalk, lighting, and other improvements to public spaces. Projects to support arts and culture initiatives were implemented, such as performance centers, museums, and public art pieces.

Today, downtown Portland is an eclectic mix of restaurants, galleries, boutiques, and international shops and services that feed Portland's self-image as a diverse, progressive cultural center. These venues border a still active port, which hosts a mix of cargo ships and ferries as well as large tourist cruise liners and sightseeing boats. While Portland is still a work in progress, grappling with housing, homelessness, and economic sustainability, it has also become a tourist destination for international and out-of-state visitors and for people throughout the state who see it as a vibrant, cosmopolitan, and culturally diverse hub. Its location as a port city makes it more open and welcoming toward immigrants, as does its attempt to tell its story as the multi-ethnic, multicultural center of Maine.

Danbury's economic shifts and the story it tells about itself are somewhat different. Its primary selling point today is that it is a good place to live and conduct business, located relatively near New York City but still far enough away to offer the benefits of suburban life. After the hat industry declined in the late 1950s, the city worked steadily to reinvent itself as one of the nation's premier small cities, notably a multicultural one. However, this trend shifted into reverse as debates about illegal immigration escalated, especially since 2005. A small but very vocal group of residents sees legal immigrants as an asset but undocumented workers as a pressing problem. This very public struggle for Danbury's soul has overshadowed the voices of residents who still value a diverse community. It is increasingly hard for them to push back, especially because Danbury's mayor has taken such a tough stance against day laborers, gaining national attention as a strong anti-immigrant leader. For immigration opponents then, Danbury is not a multicultural paradise but an invaded territory where their old, safe, familiar way of life is fast disappearing.

5.3   The cultural consequences of demography

As we outlined earlier, the demographic histories of both cities and the nature of earlier immigrant influxes influence both cities as contexts of reception. In addition to the number and country origins of current migrants, Portland and Danbury differ with respect to whether there is a presence (seeming or actual) of an easily identifiable (racial or otherwise) 'other' around which anti-immigrant sentiment and fear can coalesce.

Since immigrants from a wide range of countries come to Portland, there has never been one large authorized group. Moreover, since 1965, the largest groups of immigrants to Portland have been refugees, leading at least some native-born residents and leaders to see them as the deserving poor rather than cultural invaders who overuse services and resources. It is a matter of newcomers' 'worthiness,' a measure based on a moral classification, not on cultural markers such as race or gender (Steensland 2006: 1316). Many of Portland's refugees are Africans, for example, but their histories of trauma – child soldiers, torture and political oppression or civil war and famine – make them deserving victims of undemocratic regimes (a second moral characterization) in the eyes of many members of the public. Geopolitical factors help differentiate these dark-skinned social service recipients from Africa from the 'welfare queens' who are disdained so pervasively in contemporary neoliberal discourses about work and poverty.

Portland's clear message of welcome, coupled with many leaders' strong humanitarian impulse, helped create a positive context of reception, allowing newcomers to feel safe and secure. Staff at the organizations we spoke with reported that their immigrant clients expressed less fear and insecurity than those in other cities, especially after 9/11, although there was some mention of anti-Islamic sentiment. For the most part, immigrants were seen as success stories. One interviewee emphasized that compared with other residents on public assistance, their organization had a much better chance of helping a refugee or immigrant start a business: 'Well, over half that come to us have run a business before in their home country…so they have that experience. They just don't know how to navigate the system here.' A coordinator at the Salvation Army argued that immigrants do not have the 'institutionalized helplessness' she sees in a lot of other clients, and said, 'They may be receiving more services, but it's not because more services are offered to them. It's that they're willing to help themselves…they're following up even if they don't understand. They're doing their best to make the effort to get the assistance they need.'

This categorization of a 'deserving' population in Portland also came across in discussions with service providers who told of cultural differences that created problems: they described trying to address these problems in helpful or instructive ways, rather than being critical or judgmental. They did not see immigrants as

inherently flawed or problematic but rather as needing guidance and education. Some clients simply did not know any better and thus should not be blamed. Another interviewee observed that immigrants from Europe had and continue to have 'access to the toolbox' of Western culture, education, and familiarity, not to mention practical, everyday skills, making their adjustment to the United States less traumatic. So when some of their clients were unfamiliar with what could be flushed down the toilet safely or where small children could play on their own in Portland, service agencies developed programs to teach them. They taught them how to live in an American-style apartment, to shop for groceries they had never seen before, and how to prepare vegetables they had never eaten. Service providers' attitudes and values caused them to respond in ways that increased social capital generation because they saw their role as educating immigrants and providing them with the connections and skills to function successfully on their own.

Danbury has also long been demographically diverse, early on as home to many new religious groups in a staunchly Congregationalist state and later to large numbers of immigrants. In 1801, it was the Danbury Baptists who wrote to Thomas Jefferson about their marginalization under state law, prompting his oft-cited remark about the need for maintaining a 'wall of separation' between church and state. During a state-wide climate of xenophobic nativism during the 1850s, the Know-Nothing Party could not gain a foothold in the city, nor could the Ku Klux Klan more than a century later, when race riots at Danbury High School threatened the community's broad-minded stance concerning minorities. But things changed after 1965, just prior to national legislative changes that would allow the influx of new immigrants. At that time, Danbury, unlike Portland, was already in recovery from its mid-century economic downturn. During 1950–1980, the city had doubled in size from 30,337 to 60,470 people, with people coming to work in the new high-tech and pharmaceutical industries. In the early 1980s, a survey revealed that 30 percent of residents had lived in the city for less than five years (Devlin 1984: 102).

These new in-migrants were largely US born and white but also included a steady influx of Portuguese immigrants. According to the US Census Bureau, the number of white residents in the city changed little over this period, remaining at 90 percent or more. Today, it stands at 75 percent, dropping as low as 65 percent if the undocumented immigrant population is included. Thus, the city today faces a strong challenge to its viable multiculturalism from racist and anti-immigrant forces who depict the large numbers of foreign-born as one unified non-white, primarily Brazilian threatening other, or, as Minuteman founder Jim Gilchrist puts it, a 'Trojan Horse' that inevitably will release chaotic forces to destroy the city and eventually the entire world (Gilchrist & Corsi 2006). That so many newcomers come from one, Portuguese-speaking place, and that their opponents compare them unfavorably with the Portuguese speakers who came from Portugal before them, makes them an easy, clearly identifiable target.

As a result, Danbury sends a mixed message to newcomers and old-timers alike. Many non-immigrants, primarily white respondents, try to stand by the city as welcoming and supportive of immigrants. But nearly as many foreign-born respondents, especially people who had been living in the country for decades, said they felt anything but welcome. The Brazilian director of a faith-based service provider said the biggest obstacle facing new arrivals to the city is overcoming 'this sense that we're always owing something to the American community, we are always behind, because we do things that are wrong in order to stay here…so we always feel it, you know, behind, below, not worthy enough.' Unlike in Portland, in Danbury immigrants are not a revitalizing resource but a threat, an impression heightened by their concentrated and visible presence downtown.

5.4 Municipal strategies

Finally, each city's formal municipal response to immigrants influences the cultural armature of the city and the ways immigrants are received. Portland has made an ongoing effort to increase and improve the services it offers immigrants. As early as 1970, the city developed programs to help newcomers, including a Multicultural and Multilingual Department in the school system, a Minority Health Division, and an Office of Immigrant and Refugees Services, as well as staff positions such as the Multicultural Affairs Officer in the City Manager's office and an Immigrant and Refugee Liaison in the Police Department. These individuals proactively applied for funding to maintain and expand their services. In addition, in the past two decades, the number of nonprofits and other groups serving immigrants and refugees has increased. Various organizations now offer ESL, translators, interpreters, and special events where people learn about the many services available to them.

Furthermore, immigrants can at least feel somewhat safe about doing so. In 2003, Portland joined the ranks of progressive US cities that prohibit police and other city employees from asking about immigration status unless they suspect criminal activity or an outstanding deportation order. Less than a year later, state legislators approved a similar state-wide measure, the first of its kind, after immigration raids stunned the city of Portland and created an atmosphere of fear among newcomers. Since then, even more protective civil rights legislation has been enacted. On July 14, 2005, Portland's City Council resolved to 'protect civil liberties and oppose ethnic and racial profiling,' cementing its status as a 'sanctuary city' that actively protects undocumented immigrants. Finally, although it has been met with what the Portland Press Herald called a 'frosty reception,' a proposal to let non-US citizens vote in municipal elections is under consideration. According to Portland's Democratic State Senator, there are a variety of legal Maine residents who are not US citizens, including doctors, refugees, students, and hockey players. The Executive Director of one of Portland's immigrant

and refugee advocacy associations confirmed the city's ethos of hospitality: 'Knowing how Mainers are very democratic and very good with their neighbours, with us immigrants, I have no doubt that people in the counties and the cities would support that [legislation].'

Portland's welcoming approach is replicated by the state to a certain degree. In 2002, the then governor, Angus King told a task force on immigration that the nation 'was built on immigration' and explained why the state should encourage immigrants to settle there. Not only is it 'morally right to provide a haven for newcomers, as the state did with French Canadians in years past,' but it is also pragmatic: 'The state's work force must grow to help Maine promote economic development.'

In Danbury, advocates for immigrants see municipal agencies as part of the problem, not the solution. A much smaller number of Danbury's municipal departments provide services to immigrants than in Portland, including ESL programs in the public schools, the Adult Education Program, and a state-of-the-art language center at the Public Library, as well as healthcare provision through the Visiting Nurses Association and the School-Based Healthcare Services. There is no office for immigrants or refugees as such nor is there multicultural programming comparable with that in Portland. In fact, there is a growing focus on city departments' cracking down on immigrants. The Unified Neighborhood Inspection Team (UNIT), which identifies housing violations such as overcrowding or too many cars at a particular residence, is one such agency, spurred on by residents inclined to make regular calls to report 'illegals' ' infractions.

Moreover, the Danbury Common Council recently entered into a partnership with the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) program under section 287(g) of the federal immigration code. Under the ICE Agreements of Cooperation in Communities to Enhance Safety and Security (ACCESS) program, two police detectives have been trained to enforce certain aspects of immigration law. When the Council approved the partnership in February 2008, Danbury's police chief Al Baker asserted, 'The focus of our participation would be on crimes committed by illegal immigrants.' But the legal director of the local chapter of the *American Civil Liberties Union* (ACLU) worries about the vagueness of this position saying, 'It's entirely possible they will have the authority to ask anybody what their immigration status is…There have been cases in other parts of the country where ICE has stopped people simply because they are foreigners.' Concerns about racial profiling, and about creating fear and panic among immigrants, are on the increase, both on the ground and in media discourse, with protests, op-eds, and on-line forums reflecting the controversy.

6   Conclusion

Portland, Maine and Danbury, Connecticut are two small post-industrial cities that portray themselves on municipal website, public documents, and in the speeches of city leaders as multicultural havens welcoming to newcomers. On the ground, the reality is quite different. While Portland harnessed its increasing diversity to revitalize its downtown and to improve its economic position, Danbury has had a much more difficult time, particularly given rising anti-immigrant sentiments, to put its words into practice. We attribute this variation to the demographic changes in each place as well as to factors related to the cultural armature of each city as described here.

Throughout its history, and because of its cultural geography, Portland has always interacted with newcomers. A group of forward-thinking urban activists saw this as key to Portland's urban redevelopment and economic revitalization. Moreover, refugees perceived as deserving and hailing from a variety of countries integrated themselves across Portland's neighborhoods, ensuring that there is no one particular immigrant area. The city received state and national funding not only to settle refugees but also to use its increasing diversity as a springboard toward redeveloping its port into a major tourist destination. The city's self-representation and ethos stressed the benefits of welcoming newcomers, which was, in turn, an integral part of its strategy to reposition itself economically.

Danbury's cultural apparatus also helps explain the city's contentious relations with newcomers. While the office parks that surround the city may be thriving, its downtown business district has become an ethnic business hub. While some see this as progress, others yearn for the downtown of yesteryear with its English-language signs and familiar products. They see this concentration of Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking immigrants, and the undocumented day laborers who wait in hopes of work at the city park each day, as a threat to American values and the city's economic base. While city leaders use Danbury's diversity to try to attract new residents, they have not used it as an economic development tool. That most of the benefits of Danbury's urban revitalization efforts accrue to high-skilled office workers means that many other residents are suffering and that immigrants are an easy, concentrated, and highly visible scapegoat for their struggles. Rescaling in Danbury has not used immigrants as an asset nor does it particularly benefit them.

Danbury's multiculturalism is also self-contained. By that, we mean that it is not connected regularly or organically to infusions of outsiders, be they foreign or local tourists as in Portland. It is also skewed, in that there are one or two focal groups that are spatially clustered (i.e. Brazilians and 'illegals'). If anything, we see a political rescaling in Danbury. That is, by becoming a key player in

the national anti-immigrant movement, Danbury's mayor has lifted the city out of its relative anonymity to prominence as a national exemplar of what can go wrong when there are too many 'illegal' immigrants. By doing so, he exacerbates what had been fairly isolated tensions, making the disconnects between the city's marketing and its realities ever wider.

This tale of two cities underscores the importance of incorporating culture and scale into discussions of space and contexts of reception. While demography explains much of what we discovered, cultural factors influence what these numbers mean and what changes they ultimately weave into the fabric of the city. The concept of cultural armature can help to conceptualize these cultural dimensions and provide tools for comparing how cities as units of analysis differently respond to immigrants. No comparison is perfect and we acknowledge other differences between Portland and Danbury related to the size of their metropolitan areas, the fraction of residents who are migrants, and the different states in which each is located that are not discussed here that may influence how each city responds to immigrants. We hope future researchers can more thoroughly take these factors into account while continuing to investigate the cultural dimensions of city's responses to immigrants,

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Notes

1. When the natural increase resulting from births is included in this data, Maine's population increased by 26,488 during this same period.
2. Danbury was voted #1 'City to Live In' in 1988 by Money Magazine, falling to #8 in 2003 on a list of 331 US metropolitan areas rated as 'America's Best Places to Live' by MSN House & Home. Until recently, Danbury also had the lowest overall crime rate and lowest property crime rate in the nation for small cites (Sperling & Sander 2004).
3. See for example, 'Danbury Mayor Acts on A Serious Problem', Associated Press, Apr 17, 2005 and Robert Miller, 'Danbury Task Force to concentrate on planning', The NewsTimes, Feb 03, 2007. In addition, we rely on personal communication with Danbury's mayor, Mark Boughton, and community leaders.
4. Over the past two years, there have been a number of highly publicized 'sweeps', by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The most recent was the arrest of day laborers who entered a van expecting to be taken to a job site and were instead taken into federal custody. The immigrants' rights community responded vigorously, dubbing the seized Ecuadorian men as the 'Danbury 11.'

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