

## The re-accomplishment of place in twentieth century Vermont and New Hampshire: history repeats itself, until it doesn't

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**Abstract** Much recent literature plumbs the question of the origins and trajectories of “place,” or the cultural development of space-specific repertoires of action and meaning. This article examines divergence in two “places” that were once quite similar but are now quite far apart, culturally and politically speaking. Vermont, once considered the “most Republican” state in the United States, is now generally considered one of its most politically and culturally liberal. New Hampshire, by contrast, has remained politically and socially quite conservative. Contrasting legacies of tourist promotion, political mobilization, and public policy help explain the divergence between states. We hypothesize that emerging stereotypes about a “place” serve to draw sympathetic residents and visitors to that place, thus reinforcing the salience of those stereotypes and contributing to their reality over time. We term this latter process *idio-cultural migration* and argue its centrality to ongoing debates about the accomplishment of place. We also elaborate on several means by which such place “reputations” are created, transmitted, and maintained.

**Keywords** Migration · Culture · American politics

In their widely cited, prize-winning article, “History repeats itself, but how? City character, urban tradition, and the accomplishment of place,” Molotch et al. (2000) explore an extremely trenchant sociological problem: How do geographical spaces become sociological places, locales with distinctive cultural, social, and political characteristics? By focusing on two locales that might well have evolved along similar lines but did not—Santa Barbara and Ventura, California—they employ a most useful

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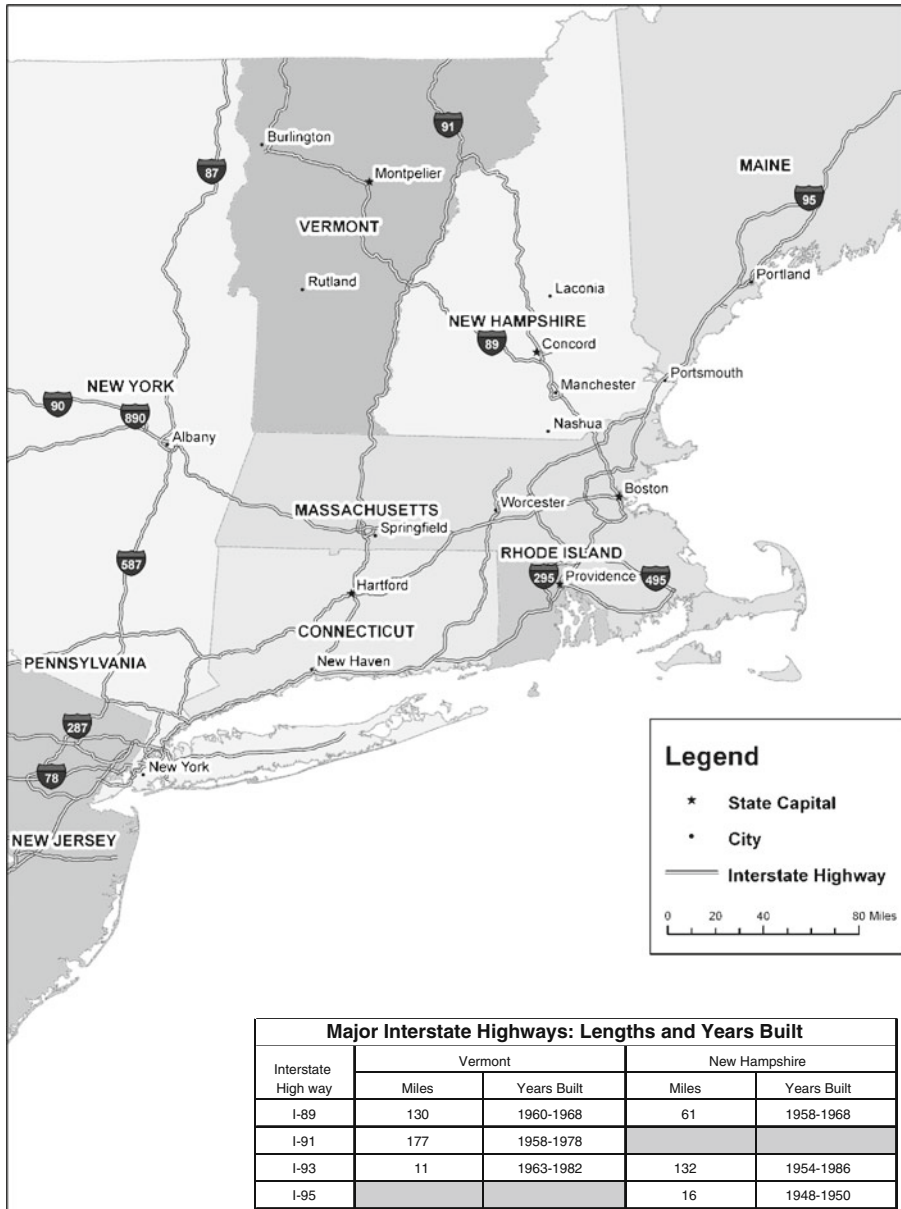
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methodological technique, “most similar cases” (Mill 1881; Skocpol 1984; Tilly 1984), to study a cutting-edge sociological problem.

In order to contribute to this scholarly tradition, we examine here both the “accomplishment of place” in twentieth century Vermont *and* the contrasting “place” trajectory of neighboring New Hampshire (see Map 1). These neighboring states had



**Map 1** Interstate highway map and transit information for Vermont, New Hampshire and surrounding states

quite similar “place” reputations throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but by the late twentieth century they had radically diverged.

We herein define the “accomplishment of place” as *the achievement of a locale’s subjective reputation as perceived by insiders (residents) and outsiders (non-residents)*. In plain English, this refers to the process whereby both in-state and out-state residents come to identify a specific place with specific values, resources, and behaviors, the emphasis being on the perception of place, as opposed to the accuracy of said perception. We stress throughout our account the many pre-existing similarities of Vermont and New Hampshire and the fact that an arbitrary state “border” has afforded the development of two distinct social spaces in ways that are difficult to explain in terms of mere “path dependency.”

Our analysis of these cases aims to contribute to the “accomplishment of place” literature in three ways: first, we extend this style of “place-based” analysis from the city to the rural and state levels (cf., Searls 2003) in recognition of the fact that the literature on space and place tends to focus primarily on cities (e.g., Ching and Creed 1997). Second, in contrast to Molotch et al. (2000), who focus on a process they call “rolling inertia,” we examine a case in which “history did [*not*] repeat itself”—Vermont made a rather abrupt about-face over the course of the twentieth century. Through detailed analysis of this counterfactual, we develop a new perspective on place-building. Third, we offer a two-sided model of the accomplishment of place that tracks not only the changing image of Vermont in the public mind but also the response of would-be participants to that change. This approach should be seen in contrast to bulk of the current literature on city “branding” and “place marketing” (e.g., Clark 2004; Gottdiener 2001; Greenberg 2008; Hannigan 1999; Harvey 2001; Judd and Fainstein 1999; Kearns and Philo 1993; Sorkin 1992), all of which presume that tourists and residents passively respond to most, if not all, efforts to lure them. One of the key processes underlying the “accomplishment of place” in our research is the way residents, politicians, bureaucrats, and entrepreneurs *actively* shaped the social character of their locales. Place, in this sense, is truly an “accomplishment,” though one often forged without consensus or coordination. These analytic and theoretical lacunae are fundamental to understanding the “accomplishment of place.”

Extensive quantitative and qualitative research has led us to conclude that a specific type of population migration was a key element in the transformative place-building process studied here. As Vermont’s place reputation developed and changed, new types of people were inspired to move there, people who saw something in the state’s local culture that resonated with their own values. By moving to the state, these new residents helped expand and entrench Vermont’s place reputation, thus reinforcing the salience of those stereotypes and contributing to their reality (cf., Merton 1968). Some degree of cohort replacement likely contributed to Vermont’s transformation—younger generations likely espoused different lifestyles and preferences than their forebears—but absent a major inter-generational shift in Vermont *but not* elsewhere in the United States, it seems hard to explain Vermont’s trajectory without reference to newcomers: people like Howard Dean, Bernie Sanders, Ben & Jerry—all archetypal Vermonters born and raised out-of-state.

We coin the term *idio-cultural migration* to refer to population migration based on place-specific cultural preferences.<sup>1</sup> In so doing, we borrow and build on the term “idio-culture” as used by Fine (1979, p. 734), who defines it as, “a system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and customs shared by members of an interacting group to which members can refer and employ as the basis of further interaction.” Idio-cultural migration refers to more than mere “lifestyle migration,” in other words, or the process of moving to a place because of the cultural amenities it offers (cf., Frey 2002). Idio-cultural migration refers to migrants’ motivation to seek and join a collective socio-cultural milieu. Fine applies idio-culture to “small groups” such as clubs and teams, but we find it equally useful in conceptualizing the experience and existence of “place” at any level—spheres of reference wherein members recognize themselves and others as part of a common enterprise with mutual meanings and experiences.

Key for our purpose is Fine’s (1979: 734) specification that,

Members recognize that they share experiences in common and these experiences can be referred to with the expectation that they will be understood by other members, and further can be employed to construct a social reality. The term, stressing the localized nature of culture, implies that it need not be part of a demographically distinct subgroup, but rather that it is a particularistic development of any group in the society.

Idio-cultural migration entails more than just “birds of a feather flocking together,” in other words; it encompasses not only homophily but the active re-negotiation of the reputation and meanings associated with place, as well as the reflexive definition of “other” neighboring places.

Conceptually speaking, our “idio-cultural” concept of intra-state migration contrasts with the view typically posed by demographers and economists, who tend to see inter-state moves as being primarily motivated by economic concerns such as jobs, wages, and housing costs (e.g., Lowery and Lyons 1989; Percy et al. 1995; Preuhs 1999), or political preferences regarding the mixture of taxes and services offered in a particular locale (cf. Tiebout 1956).

Our perspective also contrasts and makes more complex the theories of the “tourist gaze” (Urry 1990), which posit a binary opposition between “that which is conventionally encountered in everyday life” and the “extraordinary,” unusual experiences gained while traveling away from home. Contemporary idio-cultural migrants to Vermont appear to be trying to create permanent lives that deviate from the “normal” American experience, thereby blurring the distinction between work and leisure, the exotic and the everyday. “For over a century,” Harrison notes (2006, p. 11), “tourism has forced rural work and rural leisure [in Vermont] into continual contact with one another, such that the meanings, practices, and spaces associated with each category have informed one another to the point of becoming mutually constitutive. Tourism blurred the boundaries between work and leisure in rural places, making each inseparable from the other.” Urry (1990, pp. 101–102) himself concedes that a new “post-tourist” movement is developing [in England] wherein the pastoral countryside

<sup>1</sup> Molotch et al. (2000, p. 816) refer to the contribution of “selective migration” in the accomplishment of place but skirt its actual mechanics. They do note, as do we, that “demographers typically ignore” it.

beckons and the division between work and pleasure that defines tourism breaks down. One possible interpretation of this trend would be that idio-cultural migration represents a new social movement to create distinct, non-normal, perhaps even deviant, social spaces within the larger “normal” domestic social sphere.

Although idio-cultures similar to Vermont’s evolved in many places around the country in the 1960s and 1970s, Vermont seems unique in the degree to which an entire state was, and still is, seen through this lens, both nationally and locally. Binkley (2007: 2) summarizes this ethos as “getting loose,” an oppositional culture in which “the blinkered, unknowing, constraining ways of the establishment are undermined by a subterranean flow of expression and experience—a vernacular for a new hedonism, to be sure, but one fashioned on an ambitious program of ethical self-renewal and a singular commitment to the affirmation of feeling and impulse in daily life.” In the Vermont context, this “loose” culture has historically been associated with practices such as the consumption of illegal drugs, the practice of polyamory (“free love”), and far-left political activism, particularly with respect to the environment. Hiking, skiing, vegetarianism, organic farming, and “jam bands” such as *Phish* and *The Grateful Dead* are pastimes commonly associated with Vermont as well.

Nonetheless, one would be mistaken to presume that all Vermonters aspire to this “loose” ethos (Harrison 2006; Searls 2006). Nor would it be fair to presume a single, consistent idio-culture in place or time. The “idio-cultures” described herein represent malleable concatenations of cultural preferences and behaviors that are *more imaged than real*—i.e., they are based on *stereotypes* about inhabitants of a specific place that combine and confound various and often unrelated types of behavior, personal style, cultural preference, and so on (Harrison 2006; McDonald 1993). What we will often see in this depiction of place reputations is that they are best defined not in their own right but *in opposition* to other cultures (cf. Lamont and Molnar 2002). Stereotypes contribute to the accomplishment of place by creating and maintaining social boundaries—“they render intimate, and sometimes menacing, the abstraction of otherness,” writes Herzfeld (1992: 73). Regardless of their accuracy in fact, such collective stereotypes exist and, in fact, stimulate their own realization through idio-cultural migration. Nonetheless, it remains quite difficult to describe, let alone operationalize the idio-cultures of which we speak. Later, we will discuss some experimental methods for so doing, but we readily admit that none is wholly satisfactory.

Although we illustrate the onset of mid-twentieth century idio-cultural migration to Vermont in a number of different ways, survey data do not exist to test systematically the plausibility of our observations about migrants’ *motives* for moving.<sup>2</sup> If our own study achieves only one thing, it will be to alert social scientists to the need to expand and itemize this category in future studies of intra-national

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<sup>2</sup> While the Census and Current Population Survey include raw mobility data and some attitudinal data, both focus almost exclusively on economic motives for moving—housing prices, property taxes, and the like. The Census includes data on which states migrants moved from, but this too reveals little about why they chose to move. The Current Population Survey (CPS) only began asking respondents questions about inter-state migrants’ motives for moving in 1997, and the data collapse virtually all motives beyond work, family, or housing-related reasons to a residual “other reasons” category (US Census 2001) with four options: attending college; for a change of climate; health reasons; and “other reasons.” The percentage of respondents indicating this last residual category varied between 3% and 6% in the CPS national sample, 1997–2000.

migration. Lacking more nuanced data on migration-motives, we draw on tourist literature and narrative accounts of migration to each state in an effort to outline both these trends and their causes and effects. We also offer qualitative data from informal interviews conducted with residents, realtors, and scholars in both states, as well as informal analysis of on-line materials currently available to those considering a move to either state. These sources confirm our hunch that many Vermont residents moved there because they perceived it to be a place offering a unique array of non-economic benefits: from hippie enclaves to “artsy” towns and organic farms. We also find ample evidence to support the observation that both the state government and the residents of Vermont actively contributed to this image of Vermont, broadcasting its appeal nationwide. New Hampshire’s real estate and tourist industries contrast markedly with Vermont’s in this respect.

In trying to explain these divergent outcomes and the surprising shift in Vermont’s “place trajectory” more specifically, we are careful to consider a variety of alternative explanations, from demographic composition to geography to climate to economic development. While each of these factors has a role in the process, none seem to explain the outcomes alone. Nor do we see the divergence in “place” to be the simple result of pre-existing conditions in the two states.

### **Theoretical background: the accomplishment of place**

It should be noted that, although we draw on the community and urban sociology literatures extensively, our empirical objects are in fact neither cities nor communities. Vermont and New Hampshire are states (not municipalities), and rural ones at that (cf., Ching and Creed 1997; Williams 1975). One of the key dimensions of place is its flexibility with regard to scale (Gieryn 2000, p. 464). In Gieryn’s useful approach, places are constituted by three distinct features: a geographic location, material or physical form, and an “investment with meaning and value” (465). It is this last point that is perhaps most fundamental to our understanding of place. As Gieryn puts it, places are “doubly constructed”: first in terms of a physical location but also as social spaces that must be “interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined” (465).

The idea that neighborhoods are defined by sentiments, images, and reputations—that is, symbolic and cultural qualities—goes back to the core of the Chicago school’s conceptualization thereof (e.g., Park 1925, 1952). In his research on land use in downtown Boston, Firey (1945, 1947) was the first to articulate an explicitly “cultural” ecology of the city. Firey’s central point was that land use cannot be understood without taking into account the symbols and cultural values that become lodged in certain places. Firey (1945, p. 323) suggests that local history and tradition mark certain areas of a city as “culturally contingent,” thus effecting future development and locational decision-making among residents. Firey saw social actors adapting to the accumulated meaning of places, suggesting, in a Durkheimien sense, that the symbolic qualities of places should be treated as “things” that act back on inhabitants as restraints.

In *The Social Construction of Communities*, Gerald Suttles (1972) takes up Firey’s concerns, arguing that neighborhood identities emerge largely through contrast with neighboring areas. Rather than persistence or adaptation, as Firey

might have it, Suttles stresses differentiation, putting weight on the uneven qualities across adjoining locales as the source for place distinction. Suttles (1972, 1984) also suggests that cultural “outsiders” like journalists, politicians, and even novelists, can play key roles in assigning and disseminating place distinctions. We find similar instances of socially constructed images of place here, though we see much more than mere relative differentiation taking place. In our cases, for example, conflict arises over efforts to shape and define place meaning. Enclaves of dedicated social actors and organizations *aspire* to the accomplishment of place. Other recent studies have found similar trends (e.g., Aguilar-San Juan 2005; Greenberg 2000, 2008; Hiller and Rooksby 2002; Walton 2001; Wilson and Taub 2007; Zukin 1995). One contribution of our study is its focus on an unusually sweeping degree of “place” transformation occurring over an unusually long period of time.

Scholarly literature on the political economy of “place” tends to emphasize the role of capitalists and their coalitions in place-building process (e.g., Brenner 2004; Greenberg 2008; Harvey 1985; Judd and Fainstein 1999; Lefebvre 1991 [1974]; Logan and Molotch 1987; Mele 2000; Zukin 1991). Place, in this sense, is a commodity, or “brand,” and its meaning or character is carefully cultivated by business and government boosters seeking to maximize their returns on investment (e.g., Clark 2004; Greenberg 2008; Nevarez 2003). Our approach contrasts with this in two ways: first, we examine many non-economic motives and actors involved in the place-building process; second, we stress the “reception” side of the equation, focusing on how such “branding” efforts are received and reified by their intended (and unintended) audiences.

From the purview of Molotch et al. (2000), the accomplishment of place resembles a process of “rolling inertia,” one that often defies the efforts of cultural agents determined to create change—Ventura residents try to rejuvenate their ailing downtown and fail, for example. Molotch et al. (2000) give names to these place-building processes—e.g., “lashing up,”—but shed relatively little light on how “lash up” works or why things might “lash up” differently in one place or another. The Vermont case provides a useful counter-factual to this perspective, showing as it does the way entrepreneurs, tourists, migrants, and political insurgents took advantage of structural and political opportunities to refashion the social, political, and economic landscape of their “place.” Nonetheless, while we may quarrel with some of the conceptual language offered by Molotch et al. (2000), we build directly from their work and in general share their (and others’) ambition to elevate “place distinctiveness” from a residual category to a central problem of contemporary sociology.

### **Documenting and explaining continuity and change: a preliminary model of place-accomplishment**

To clarify what we observe here to be the causal steps integral to the “place transformation” of twentieth century Vermont, we offer the schematic Fig. 1: It shows a sequence of events in chronological order and the actors involved in each. It is impossible to know whether each stage was a necessary or sufficient component of the “place transformation” process. We also lack the means to verify the necessity of the exact sequence in which these events transpired. It does seem reasonable, however, to assume that each part of the sequence built on and accentuated those

before it (Abbott 2001). It seems evident, for example, that Vermont's political transformation of the 1930s through 1950s could have occurred *without* the prior "branding" of Vermont, and vice-versa. These two steps also seem interchangeable in terms of temporal sequence. However, both of these transformations occurred *before* the onset of major population growth in Vermont—Vermont's population grew a mere 8.6% between 1930 and 1960 but boomed 30.9% from 1960 to 1980 (US Census 2001)—indirect evidence that idio-cultural migration did in fact follow these two prior transformations. (It seems unlikely that 31,000 new residents—surely not all voters—would have been responsible for Vermont's vast political transformation in the 1940s and 1950s.) This observation is logically consistent with the notion that something about the state's image (and underlying reality) had to change before new migrants began moving there in search of it. In-migration surely accelerated these changes but only after the initial transformations had taken place.<sup>3</sup>

In the course of our research, we explored as many hypothetical explanations as possible before arriving at the current formulation. New Hampshire entered the twentieth century as a slightly more urban, more industrial, and more immigrant-laden society than Vermont, for example; however, we concluded that over-time changes in these variables seemed insufficient explanation of the subsequent change in their place reputations. Nationally speaking, furthermore, neither state has ever been very urban, industrial, or foreign-born, and these differences, small to begin with, have largely converged over the course of the last century.<sup>4</sup> Economic and demographic differences likely contributed to the different place environments in both states, but these differences alone hardly begin to explain the divergent place reputations under investigation here.

Since Vermont is proximate to New York City and New Hampshire to Boston (see Map 1), it also seemed plausible that different spheres of influence might have shaped the development of each state. Having reviewed the relative transportation and migration history of each state, however, we concluded that it seems less important where tourists and migrants came from than what brought them in the first place. In other words, it doesn't seem to matter whether early twentieth century tourists to Vermont came from New York or Boston; what matters is their outlook and behavior.

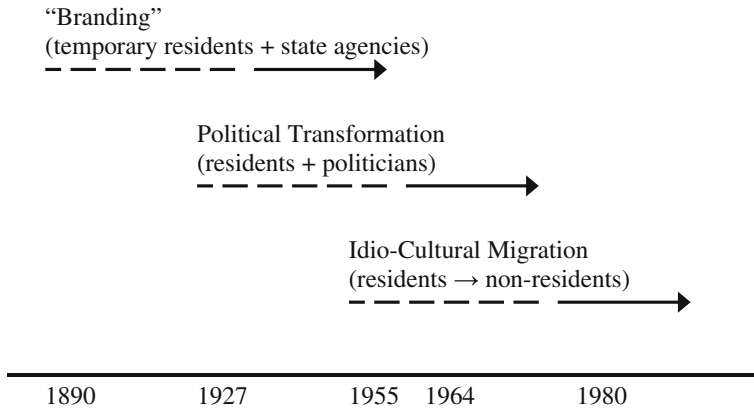
Until the mid-twentieth century, Vermont remained more difficult to reach than New Hampshire, particularly by public transportation. (Passenger railroads spanned New Hampshire well before they did Vermont.) These early differences in accessibility did influence the subsequent development of both states, but this, again, entails consideration of more than mere geography and infrastructure. State residents and legislatures played important roles in the development of their respective transportation and tourist infrastructures.

We also explored the possibility that topographical and geological differences might matter in some way—Vermont's lower, lush Green Mountains may have fostered more farming, more summer tourism, and more skiing than New

<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, one might imagine some exogenous change in out-of-state residents' preferences that suddenly makes a given place more appealing than before, though this seems unlikely without contemporaneous endogenous change in the place in question.

<sup>4</sup> Census data from 2000 show both states converging toward similar percentages of their workforce in each of three main categories—"professional, managerial, clerical, and service occupations," "manual, industrial, and craft occupations," and "farm-related occupations"—for example.





**Fig. 1** Schematic of casual sequence: VT, 1890–1980

Hampshire’s tall, rugged White Mountains. These differences, too, seem neither necessary nor sufficient to the outcome studied here.

In summary, we arrived at our particular explanation of the divergence in Vermont and New Hampshire’s place reputations only after exploring the tenability of every other explanation we could think of. None seemed to capture the unexpected and widely divergent characters of these two places as well as the model presented here.

Below, we offer narrative histories of the three types of transformation highlighted in our account: Vermont’s shift from a largely Republican, libertarian polity to one well to the “left” of the American mainstream; Vermont’s emerging reputation as a haven for intellectuals, artists, bohemians, and nature-lovers; and Vermont’s changing economy and infrastructure, from a state full of isolated family farms to one densely populated with vacation homes, recreational facilities, and college towns. We demonstrate and explain how similar transformations did not occur in neighboring New Hampshire. Every effort has been made to find comparative longitudinal data to document each trend.

### **Data: documenting political change**

Politics is perhaps the most striking realm in which Vermont has changed but New Hampshire has not. Republicans controlled all of Vermont’s statewide offices from 1854 through 1958, the longest single party control in American history (Hand 2002). Yet, as early as the 1920s, Vermont politicians broke with state tradition and started (albeit gradually) on a politically progressive path toward increased government spending and environmental protections (Bryan 1984; Judd 1979; Sherman 2000). Over the same period, New Hampshire stood fast by a libertarian agenda of limited taxation, minimal state spending, and political skepticism (Associated Press 2003; Winters 1980, 1984). We document here the scope and timing of this switch. It is important to note from the outset that Vermont’s shift from Republican to Democratic Party dominance preceded the onset of major in-migration. The Democrats were well in the ascendance before 1960, when Vermont’s population began a rapid period of growth after decades of relative stagnation.

Empirically documenting these contrasting political trajectories presents some interesting challenges. Voting in presidential and gubernatorial elections is often driven by idiosyncrasies related to the candidates themselves. New Hampshire's longstanding position as "first in the nation" for presidential primaries further complicates such data. Vermont and New Hampshire also have among the smallest Congressional delegations in Washington, with only one and two representatives serving them, respectively. National public opinion surveys abound, but such surveys typically have too few cases to conduct comparative research at the state level, particularly for 'tiny' states like Vermont and New Hampshire. No state-specific surveys have been administered with sufficient regularity to make longitudinal analysis possible.<sup>5</sup> Another feasible source for assessing political change, voter registration, is also not useful in our case, because Vermont does not register voters by party.

The results of elections for statewide office are what we find to be the most revealing information about long- and short-term political trends in both of these states. Data on party representation in the state legislatures were gathered for New Hampshire, 1937–2000 (Council on State Governments 1900–2000) and 1900–2000 for Vermont (Hand 2002; Council on State Governments 1900–2000).<sup>6</sup> We focus specifically on the lower chambers of both legislatures, both of which are among the largest in the nation. Party distribution in these lower chambers seems a subtle and incremental barometer of political culture in the two states over a fairly substantial period of time.

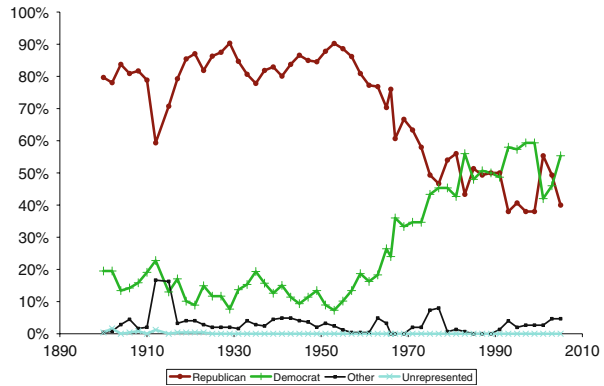
Figures 2 and 3 review the partisan composition of each state's lower chamber. Figure 2 serves to show how powerful the Republican Party was in Vermont early in the twentieth century—between 80% and 90% of the House was controlled by Republicans prior to the 1950s. Since 1956, however, Vermont Democrats made significant gains, reaching parity in the 1980s and pulling ahead for much of the 1990s. In the massive New Hampshire House of Representatives (Fig. 3), by contrast, the Democrats never achieved a competitive position, despite some gains in the 1970s. In the 1980s, Republicans retook these seats and strengthened their position, leaving them in a stronger position than they had been throughout the twentieth century. In the Vermont house, Democrats overcame a deficit of nearly 80% to reach competitiveness and eventually to gain control, while over the same period New Hampshire Democrats lost ground. This shift from Republican to Democratic Party dominance happened in a number of other Northeastern states after the Second World War—Massachusetts and Rhode Island, for example—but only in Vermont was this shift accompanied by such radical transformation of public opinion and political culture (Mayhew 1967; Mileur 1997). It is possible that Vermont's earlier brand of Republicanism already differed from that elsewhere in New England, but we have not found strong evidence of this fact. More detailed analyses, however, might turn up important, albeit subtle, variants in early New England Republicanism.

Data on the prevalence and tolerance of same-sex couples has been seen by some as a reasonable indicator of contemporary political sentiment (e.g., Florida 2002,

<sup>5</sup> New Hampshire does have a quarterly survey of public opinion administered by the University of New Hampshire, the Granite State Poll, but the survey has only been in existence for a dozen years and its raw data are only available since 2000. Despite longstanding talk of establishing a similar poll in Vermont, there appear to be no concrete plans to do so at this time.

<sup>6</sup> We analyzed gubernatorial election and party primary data but found them far too sensitive to candidate-specific perturbations to be of much use, trendwise.

**Fig. 2** Composition of Vermont house 1900–2005 (150–248 seats)



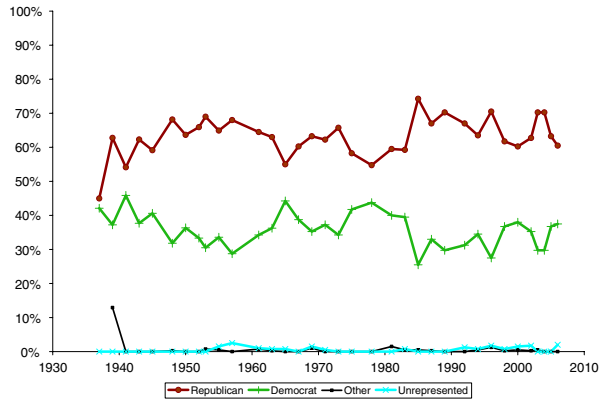
2005). Data from the 2000 Census (Simmons and O’Connell 2003) indicate that Vermont has the nation’s fifth highest number of “same-sex unmarried partner” households of all states (including the District of Columbia), whereas New Hampshire ranks a middling 27th.<sup>7</sup> However, both states’ homosexual populations appear to contain high proportions of lesbian couples by national standards. As of summer, 2009, furthermore, both states were in the vanguard of states providing means for same-sex couples to marry legally.

To fill in the absence of comparable state-level public opinion polls, political scientists in recent years have developed alternatives by pooling multiple years of national opinion surveys to generate sufficiently large state samples, as well as by constructing measures through interest group rating scores. These measures offer a somewhat less dramatic image of the political differences between New Hampshire and Vermont, but they consistently point to Vermont as significantly more liberal than New Hampshire in the near present.

Drawing on 1976–1988 data gathered by CBS/*New York Times*, Erikson et al. (1993) construct a sample sufficient for cross-sectional comparison of all fifty states. By this account, Vermont residents are about 3 percentage points more liberal and five percentage points less conservative (and thus 2% less moderate overall) than New Hampshire residents—a small if not negligible difference. Erikson et al. (1993) also regress a series of demographic, regional, and dummy variables on individual level partisanship and ideology measures to assess the “effect” of residing in a particular state. They find that New Hampshire, relative to its demography, has the most “conservatizing” effect of all states in the country *ceteris paribus* and that the effect of residing in Vermont is about 7 percentage points more “liberalizing” on partisanship and 4.3 percentage points more liberalizing on political ideology. These may appear to be small effects, but they are about equal to the effects of gender differences once other demographic factors are controlled. The story that emerges from this dataset, in short, is that over the years 1976–1988, Vermont residents were more liberal and Democratic than their New Hampshire counterparts by a small but statistically significant margin.

<sup>7</sup> These data precede the legalization of gay marriage in either state. The sexual preference of members of these households is only interpolated from demographic information given in Census returns, however; it should be read with some skepticism.

**Fig. 3** Composition of New Hampshire house 1937–2006 (399–433 seats)

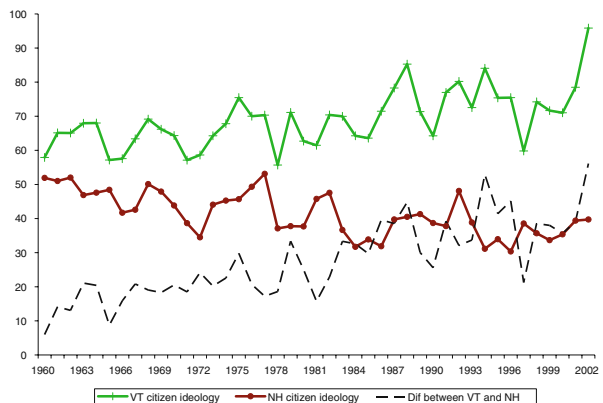


Berry et al. (1998) have generated an over-time estimate of citizen and state ideology by pooling interest group ratings of congressional incumbents and challengers and weighting these ratings by electoral support. Off years are linearly assigned and the full trends are weighted differently to reflect conceptually distinct “citizen ideology” and “state ideology.” The advantage of this measure is that it covers all years from 1960, when interest group ratings were first published, to 2002, and has been shown to be an improvement over more conventional measures of public opinion through a series of replications of prominent studies.

Figure 4 displays the citizen ideology of Vermont and New Hampshire for the years 1960–2002, extracted from the Berry et al. dataset. We have chosen to focus on their measure of “citizen ideology,” as it is a closer fit to our concern with public opinion and political culture than their measure of “state ideology,” which seeks to represent the ideology of each state government. A higher ideology score indicates greater liberalism.

The two trend lines indicate a gradual, if wavering, shift toward liberalism for Vermont and an equally wavering trend toward conservatism for New Hampshire. The dashed line captures the growing ideological gap between the states and it provides the best evidence of polarization in opinion between the states. In terms of state-by-state ranks, Vermont emerges as the most liberal state in the country by

**Fig. 4** Vermont and New Hampshire citizen ideology, 1960–2002. (Source: Berry et al. 1998)



2002, when New Hampshire ranks well below “neutral” at 37th. Note, however, that Vermont is already more liberal than New Hampshire in 1960, when Vermont’s population boom begins. Figure 4 also suggests that the overall ideological difference between Vermont and New Hampshire has approximately doubled from the 1960s to the 1990s, the result, we presume, of an influx of new ‘liberal’ voters to Vermont as a result of idio-cultural migration.

We will turn shortly to the task of explaining how and why we think this occurred. But first, what of the less tangible features of socio-cultural change?

### **Data: documenting socio-cultural change**

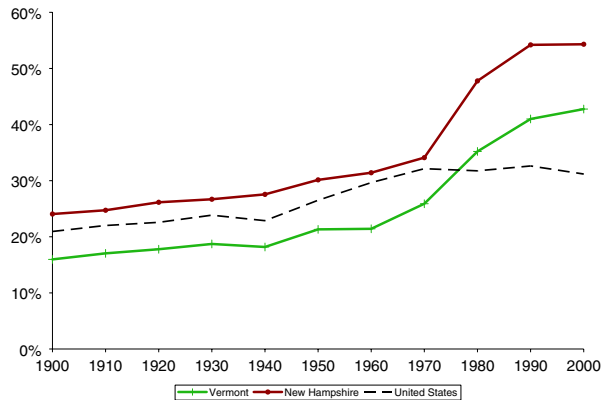
Describing the socio-cultural transformation of modern-day Vermont is as difficult as explaining it. There is no simple “metric” of socio-cultural change; we experimented with many. Given that much longitudinal data come in the form of population and economic trends, we looked first to those, hoping to find indirect evidence of cultural change. Census data on over-time trends in the percentage of the population with college degrees reveal no noticeable difference between New Hampshire and Vermont, and though both have better educated populations than the national average, growth rates are about the same (data available upon request). Household income is rather different across these two states: the 3-year-average median for 2003–2005 was \$58,233 in New Hampshire but only \$48,502 in Vermont, evidence of a fairly big gap in average prosperity.<sup>8</sup> This is consistent with the fact that an increasing proportion of New Hampshire’s population consists of affluent commuters who work in the metro-Boston area (Wangness 2007). Vermont has many affluent citizens as well, but a large percentage appear to reside there only part time; presumably, the census counts many, if not all of them in their state of primary residence. Interstate differences in these measures do not change greatly over time, however.

Our efforts to track in detail what kinds of people have been moving in and out of each state were also stymied by a lack of adequate data. In-state and out-state migration data are available, but they say little about what types of people are moving and why. Cohort-specific socio-demographic effects are also masked. Overall, census data on in-state migration since 1900 show a consistently higher percentage of new residents (i.e., residents born out of state) in New Hampshire than Vermont (Fig. 5). This should lead us to expect greater cultural change in the former than the latter. Since this is not what we observe, we conclude that this basic migration data, too, does not adequately address the phenomenon at hand.

Although census data on occupational distributions in each state since 1940 reveal Vermont’s economy to have been more agriculturally-based than New Hampshire’s, over time, the occupational structure of the two states has *converged* with respect to three major categories of employment: professional, managerial, clerical, and service occupations; manual, industrial, craft occupations; and farm-related occupations (US

<sup>8</sup> Data from US Census Bureau website, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/histinc/h08b.html> June 22, 2007. The data are derived from the 2004 to 2006 “Annual Social and Economic Supplements” of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

**Fig. 5** % of US native population born out of state, 1900–2000  
(Source: US Census)



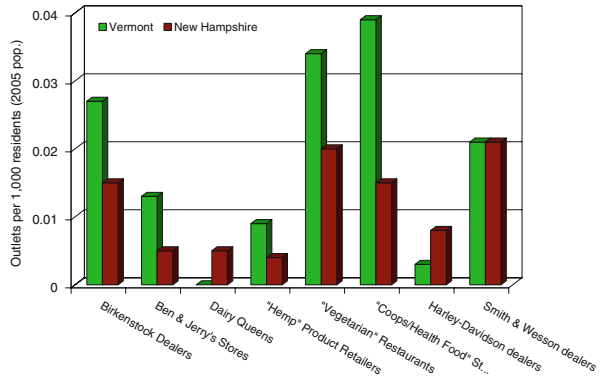
Census). We also examined historical data on the number of working farms in each state over time (Carter et al. 2006), another area in which these two states might have diverged, economically and culturally speaking. Vermont consistently has more farms than New Hampshire, but the relative change in farm-ownership is about the same in each state, dropping steadily from 1880 through 1970 and then picking up again slightly in the 1990s. On the other hand, on-line data referencing organic markets and producers of organic goods show some important contemporary differences (Fig. 6):

An on-line directory of “eco-friendly and holistic health products,” *Green-People.org*, lists 20 “Coops/health food stores” in New Hampshire and 24 in Vermont.<sup>9</sup> Adjusted for 2005 state population size, that amounts to approximately one store per 65,497 New Hampshire residents, as opposed to one per 25,960 Vermonters. The same website lists a variety of related retail outlets: it lists 26 “vegetarian restaurants” in New Hampshire and 21 in Vermont, or one per 50,382 and one per 29,669 residents respectively. It lists five stores selling eco-friendly “hemp” products in New Hampshire and six in Vermont, or one per 261,988 and one per 103,841 residents respectively. Similarly, the Organic Trade Association’s website lists 142 “retailers” of “organic goods” in New Hampshire and 141 in Vermont, another large disparity considering New Hampshire’s substantially larger population.<sup>10</sup>

Another archetypal Vermont consumer item is Ben & Jerry’s ice cream. Ben & Jerry’s first opened in 1978 in Burlington, Vermont, and made a name for itself by embracing strict environmental standards and leftist political causes. It has since come to be a national symbol of Vermont’s ‘hippie’ roots, selling flavors such as ‘Cherry Garcia,’ after the *Grateful Dead* singer Jerry Garcia, and ‘Phish Food,’ after the jam band *Phish*. As Thomas Naylor, a non-native Vermonter and leader of the “Green Mountain Independence Movement,” recently told a reporter from *Slate.com* (Levin 2009), Ben & Jerry’s is “not in the ice cream business. They [are] in the Vermont business.” Dairy Queen, by contrast, opened its first store in 1940 in Joliet, Illinois and brands itself as an American tradition—

<sup>9</sup> Site accessed June 22, 2007. 2005 state population figures are from the US Census Bureau. New Hampshire population=1,309,940, Vermont=623,050.

<sup>10</sup> <[www.theorganicpages.com](http://www.theorganicpages.com)> accessed June 22, 2007.

**Fig. 6** Various socio-cultural indicators, 2007

like apple pie, only colder. The Ben & Jerry's ice cream company reports eight Vermont stores and six in New Hampshire, a fairly large difference in per capita terms.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, there are 7 Dairy Queens in New Hampshire but *not one* in the entire state of Vermont.<sup>12</sup> This may indicate a radical difference in ice cream tastes, price-points (Ben & Jerry's is considerably more expensive than Dairy Queen), or simply a reactive marketing strategy on the part of Dairy Queen with respect to Ben Jerry's home-state advantage in Vermont. On the other hand, Ben & Jerry's *explicitly* markets itself as an eco-friendly Vermont-based business, whereas Dairy Queen, a far older company, is stereotypically associated with old-fashioned, middle-American tastes and values.

A clearer cultural indicator of Vermont/New Hampshire differences, perhaps, is the prevalence of Birkenstock sandal dealers—Birkenstocks are clunky sandals stereotypically associated with self-proclaimed “hippies.” Birkenstock USA lists 17 dealers in Vermont and 19 in New Hampshire, or one per 36,650 and one per 77,055 residents respectively.<sup>13</sup> Conversely, Vermont is home to two licensed Harley-Davidson motorcycle dealers; New Hampshire 10.<sup>14</sup>

Contrary to Vermont's “leftist,” hippie image, however, the two states have the same number of Smith & Wesson gun dealerships per capita.<sup>15</sup> Hunting is very popular in Vermont, and its gun laws are extremely lenient, including no ban on carrying concealed, loaded weapons in public. This is exactly why we stress the image versus the reality of place reputations—stereotypes about Vermont are just that, though, through idio-cultural migration, they have tended to become self-perpetuating over time.

While these comparative data on consumer outlets as markers of distinct socio-economic and socio-cultural milieu provide neither a balanced nor representative sample of lifestyle-purveying outlets, the overall sense one gleans is this: On the one

<sup>11</sup> Store locator accessed at <[www.benjerry.com](http://www.benjerry.com)> on June 22, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Store locator accessed at <[www.dairyqueen.com](http://www.dairyqueen.com)> on June 29, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Store locator accessed at <[www.birkenstockusa.com](http://www.birkenstockusa.com)> on June 22, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Store locator accessed at <[www.harley-davidson.com](http://www.harley-davidson.com)> on June 29, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Store locator accessed at <[www.smith-wesson.com](http://www.smith-wesson.com)> on June 29, 2007. This may not be representative of gun-ownership as a whole; on-line listings of gun stores are sociological quicksand, and most major gun manufacturers do not list dealer information.

hand, both states participate in various aspects of contemporary “new age” or “eco”-culture—Ben & Jerry’s, Birkenstocks, vegetarian restaurants, etc.—but Vermont clearly dominates in this respect. On the other hand, both states are also home to stereotypically “down home” traditional lifestyle outlets, such as gun shops and Harley dealers, and the percentages are even similar in the case of Smith & Wesson dealers; *but* New Hampshire clearly dominates in this respect. Overall, we submit, the culture or “feel” of these two states is different. Both are largely rural, predominantly white states, but, on balance, the aforementioned data appear to confirm our notion that Vermont and New Hampshire have rather different “place characters” today.

Informal interviews with a variety of residents, former-residents, realtors, and academics confirmed these observations about the states at present.<sup>16</sup> We spoke to a realtor in Brattleboro, VT—a town very near the New Hampshire border—who said that there is a clear difference between house-hunters looking on either side of the border. Those looking for homes in Brattleboro are often attracted by its vibrant arts scene, for example. Political differences, too, draw prospective home-buyers to Vermont, particularly policies like Vermont’s statewide regulations against billboard signage on highways and local regulations that block big-box stores and restaurant chains. Realtors also said that some Vermont home-buyers were attracted by what they saw to be an active, participatory political culture in Brattleboro, particularly its tradition of annual town meetings. One realtor proudly described how Wal-Mart was denied a permit to build in Brattleboro.

Farther west, in Bennington, Vermont, a realtor said that “quality of life” factors were the major draw for homebuyers: natural, well-preserved forest- and farmland; a quaint village center boasting a lively arts and culture scene; a few restaurants and retail shops; beautiful, historic real estate; proximity to New York and Boston; streets so safe that locals regularly leave their keys in their cars, unlocked. In contrast, a New Hampshire-based realtor mentioned that home-shoppers there tend to be looking primarily at price and taxes in considering where to buy. He mentioned the extensive efforts the town of Keene, New Hampshire was making to attract big retail “chain” stores to the area, something presumably enticing to would-be movers. Vermont, by contrast, has experienced repeated protests over efforts to build big-box stores there.

Our realtor respondents told us that some Vermont home-shoppers absolutely refuse to consider homes just across the border, in New Hampshire. These shoppers generally perceive New Hampshire to be more corporate, more commercial, and less aesthetically pleasing than Vermont.

But not everyone who moves to Vermont actually intends to move there, interestingly. Two different Vermont residents (one a former-resident) said that they were merely “passing through” when Vermont first caught their attention. While

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<sup>16</sup> These were short, informal interviews largely conducted via telephone. These results are not in any way intended to be “representative” but are merely illustrative examples of first-hand statements consistent with our own hypotheses and observations. Since the length and extent of interviews varied greatly—many were based on “cold-calls”—it is difficult to name and codify them as a whole. Quotes are not verbatim; some paraphrasing and re-construction is employed here, though nothing that would distort speakers’ intended meaning.



hitchhiking from Quebec to Cape Cod in the mid-1970s, one informant experienced a life-changing stop at a “hippie house” in Vermont. “The girls, the dope, the mountains, great music, skinny dipping in the lake.... Vermont felt clean and pure, and life felt really close,” he said, describing how he impulsively moved there and “did all that hippie stuff” for the next 5 years. It was not politics, per se, that drew him to Vermont but something more like its unique ethos, milieu, and sense of community. “VT was, for me, beautiful and refined—like gentlemen farming. NH felt a bit crude, more rugged, a little less smart, a little less intelligent.” Replicated up and down the Connecticut River, these micro-processes of distinction concatenate into the vast idio-cultural divergence we observe between the two states.

To collect more data on the image each state currently projects (as opposed to how migrants and home-shoppers perceive it at present), we also consulted several types of contemporary tourist literature from each state: each official state website, for example, and *Vermont Life* and *New Hampshire* magazines, major statewide periodicals. We also reviewed all *New York Times* articles referencing Vermont or New Hampshire between 1851 and 1980. The differences were rather striking.

The content of a leading periodical, *Vermont Life* magazine, mirrors many of the things we heard realtors and residents say about contemporary Vermont. Founded by the state government in 1946 (but privatized in 1969), “Every issue of Vermont Life magazine celebrates the unique heritage, countryside, traditions, and people of Vermont and explores issues of contemporary interest to Vermonters and visitors of the state.” *Vermont Life* bills itself as “the state’s official magazine, an insider’s guide to the secret places and special character of the region.” In addition to regular columns on dining, outdoor recreation, and weekend getaways, the Spring 2008 edition featured stories on “Vermont’s love affair with the written word” and the Green Mountain Film Festival.<sup>17</sup>

*New Hampshire Magazine* touts itself as “the essential guide to living in the Granite State.” It seems to run stories of a more pragmatic bent than those in *Vermont Life*. The April 2008 edition of *New Hampshire Magazine* features articles on “designer windows” and New Hampshire’s “top doctors,” for example. Its target audience seems to be people already committed to living in New Hampshire, as opposed to *Vermont Life*’s more tourist-oriented approach. Although we could not access back issues of each periodical to more systematically test these observations, *Vermont Life* generally seems more focused on cultural amenities, and less on pragmatic goods and services, than *New Hampshire Magazine*.<sup>18</sup>

Both state websites—*VT.gov* and *NH.gov*—provide a bevy of useful information to residents, contractors, tourists, and would-be residents.<sup>19</sup> They do it in subtly different ways, however. Both provide colorful pictures of their governors and nicely-shot, colorful landscape photos—Vermont’s of an unsown meadow, New Hampshire’s a covered-bridge—but only *VT.gov* includes sections like “Share a Vermont Moment,” a moderated forum for tourists and residents to share happy stories like, “I was fortunate enough to live in Vermont for a year from ‘06 to ‘07 ... and was overwhelmed by the beauty and peaceful lifestyle, but more importantly, by

<sup>17</sup> <[www.vermontlife.com](http://www.vermontlife.com)> accessed March 1, 2008 and April 10, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> <[www.nhmagazine.com](http://www.nhmagazine.com)> accessed April 10, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Both sites accessed April 10, 2008.

the friendliness and genuine generosity of spirit of everyone I came into contact with. Don't ever change!" After another out-of-state contributor outlines her plans to move to Vermont after retirement, she names a few of her favorite things about it: "Nothing's better than Cabot cheese, maple candy, apple cider from Cold Hollow Cider Mill in Waterbury, Magic Hat [beer], and Nectars [restaurant and bar] in Burlington." Some of these are the same items originally promoted by the state in the late nineteenth century to emphasize its pastoral charm. "[T]he people, the lifestyle, and the land.... We loved it all!!!" the contributor concludes.

*NH.gov* is generally more staid in appearance and less emphatic about the cultural amenities of the "Granite state." There is virtually no tourist information on the *NH.gov* homepage. It gives prominence of place to the most current "Homeland Security Advisory"—something *VT.gov* never mentions—and contains featured links to the *New Hampshire Business Resource Center*, a vendor-resource center ("Doing Business with NH State Government"), and information about in-state "job training grants." *VT.gov* contains none of these links on its homepage and bears a simpler, less cluttered design overall.

To the (limited) extent that these sources reveal something about the place character of states, Vermont and New Hampshire broadcast rather different images of themselves to both in-state residents and out-of-state tourists and migrants. In the terms of contemporary cultural sociology, the symbolic boundaries delineating each state are strong and evident, although not very internally consistent (cf. Herzfeld 1992; Lamont and Molnar 2002).

### **Creating opportunity structures: trajectories of continuity and change**

The cultural transformation of Vermont

As early as the 1890s, state-sponsored programs throughout Northern New England began promoting the region's rural vacationlands. However, "... it was in Vermont, New England's most rural state, that the pastoral vacation outdistanced all other kinds of tourism," writes historian Dona Brown of this period (1995, p. 143). Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Vermont Board of Agriculture waged a vigorous campaign to convince local farmers to sell "authentic" crops and made-goods to tourists. In 1893, for example, it published *Vermont: A Glimpse of its Scenery and Industries* (Spear 1893), a guidebook that appears to have been written to dispel the belief that Vermont's charm and natural beauty were no more. "The hills have lost none of their former freshness," notes the author in the introduction (Spear 1893, p. 3), "nor the valleys their peculiar charm. The water is as pure and sparkling, the air still laden with health and vigor, the winters as cold and the summers as delightful as ever..." The volume documents Vermont's beautiful landscapes, noble populace, and unsurpassed agricultural products. It also boasts of the state's burgeoning manufacturing and mining sectors. "At a time when nationally known brand names were beginning to compete with local products," writes Brown (1995: 145), "the state itself, in cooperation with producers' associations like the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Market and the Vermont Dairymen's Association, was doing its best to become a kind of brand name, a guarantee for quality and 'authenticity' of the product."

Unlike rival tourist destinations, such as Maine and New Hampshire, which emphasized their rugged terrain and hearty founders, Vermont presented a softer image of itself, one of a bucolic motherland beckoning its flock, “protective, gentle, and nurturing” (Brown 1995: 147). Vermont’s mountains were referred to in tourist literature as the “Green Hills” and its verdant fields and healthful air were extolled. Vermont farmers were also *discouraged* from boasting to tourists of the “modernization” of their farms. The Vermont Board of Agriculture went so far as to instruct local farmers about the kinds of food that summer boarders expected; not the starchy, fatty meals farmers actually ate but fresh produce, dairy, and baked goods like the tourists imagined they ate. Locals sometimes resented this overbearing, unrealistic vision of farm life, but many profited from it nonetheless.

Although this would appear to mark the beginning of Vermont’s internal place transformation, there is little evidence that this early state tourism policy was necessary or sufficient to bring about the subsequent place transformations of the twentieth century. For the time being, the state remained a rural backwater, losing more citizens than it gained (Harrison 2006). The tourist industry, too, remained relatively small despite the prescient plans of the state Board of Agriculture. Idio-cultural migration was still a long way off, as was anything resembling a political realignment.

Over time, longer stays and the purchase (as opposed to rental) of vacation homes increased outsiders’ exposure and commitment to Vermont. It also fostered chain-migration to the state. By the 1930s, notes Harrison (2006, pp. 51–52), “Vermont’s summer homes [had become] central to the reworking of rural Vermont, emerging as potent symbols and powerful agents in the transformation of Vermont property from work to leisure.” Some locals objected to this “sale” of their state, arguing that it was changing its culture and ethos forever. Nonetheless, government organizations like the Vermont State Board of Agriculture (VBSA) and the Vermont Bureau of Publicity continued to market the state to would-be purchasers of vacation homes. In fact, notes Harrison (2006: 61), beginning in the 1890s, the VBSA “published a series of annual advertising books, each of which was distributed by the thousands to potential [home] buyers inside and outside the state.” Out-of-state home buyers, they argued, would bring valuable money and human and social capital to the state, which had long suffered from a moribund economy and withering out-migration.

Vermont’s contemporary reputation as a bohemian, “earthy” paradise was also bolstered greatly in the 1930s. This owes much to the efforts of a single woman: Dorothy Canfield. Canfield epitomized a new middle-class sensibility in the early twentieth century United States. She was a long-time member of the *Book of the Month Club* selection committee and helped bring the Montessori teaching method to the United States. Although born and raised in the Midwest, she had roots in Vermont and spent much of her adult life there, where she authored numerous books about “the good life” awaiting upper-middle-class folks who moved to Vermont. In her 1932 book, *Vermont Summer Homes*, published by the Vermont Bureau of Publicity, Canfield bends over backward to assure readers that “those who earn their living by a professionally trained use of their brains”,—“those who are doctors, lawyers, musicians, writers, artists,” e.g.,—are just as welcome to summer in Vermont as those “superior interesting families with character, cultivation, good breeding and also plenty of money....” (Note: her appeal is only to summer tourists; large-scale idio-cultural migration has yet to begin in Vermont.)

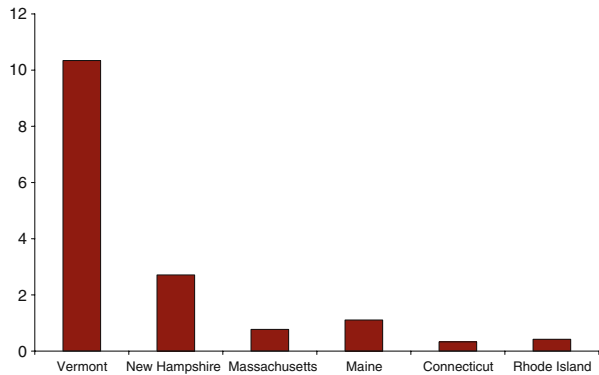
*Vermont Summer Homes* includes pictures of the farmhouses of professors, musicians, and artists who summer in Vermont and includes a quote from author Sinclair Lewis, who, in explaining his choice to buy a home in Vermont, testifies, “I like Vermont because it is quiet, because you have a population that is solid and not driven mad by the American mania which considers a town of four thousand twice as good as a town of two thousand....” Lewis, author of anti-establishmentarian classics such as *Babbitt*, *Main Street*, and *Elmer Gantry*, adds, “I can see coming to Vermont people with long vacations who will establish estates here ... doctors, writers, college professors.”

Canfield, too, pushes this theme hard, stressing the unique cultural values of Vermont’s finer summer folk: “We approve of and are proud of many of your ways that some Americans find odd—such as the fact that you prefer to buy books and spend your money on educating the children rather than to buy ultra chic clothes and expensive cars. That makes us feel natural and at home with you.... You value leisurely philosophic talk and so do we.” Such impressions of Vermont cultural life are mirrored in other publications, such as Daniel Leavens Cady’s *Rhymes of Vermont Rural Life*, the epigraph of which includes the following description of rural Vermont by the author (1919, p. 6): “Bucolic yet academic, her villages the beauty spots of New England, with entire streets of homes in every one of which dwells some person familiar with Virgil and on friendly terms with Horace. As her mountains look down upon the storms of earth, so do her robust people look down upon the frivolities of mankind....”

Despite the fact that Vermont publicists like Cady and Canfield portrayed it as a rural paradise forgotten by time, Vermont had both heavy industry—textile mills, sawmills, factories, and the negative externalities that come with it: noise, air, and water pollution (Harrison 2006; Meeks 1986; Sherman 2000; Spear 1893). Early twentieth century Vermont was far from an Edenic paradise, in other words, but its most vocal spokespeople boasted of its pastoral charm nonetheless. The same year as the publication of Dorothy Canfield’s Vermont idyll, for example, a bohemian couple from New York City, Helen and Scott Nearing, moved to Vermont and began an experience that would help launch a national cultural revolution; what many later termed the “Back to the Land” movement (Gould 2005; Trubek 2008). Before discovering Vermont, the Nearings lived as artists in New York City. Like many subsequent Vermont migrants, they coveted Vermont’s beautiful landscapes and simple live-and-let-live ideology. They moved to Vermont in 1932, and after 20 years experimenting with self-sustaining, quasi-organic agriculture in Vermont, they published what would become the “Bible” of the back-to-the-land movement: *Living The Good Life* (1954).

The Nearings themselves moved on to Maine in 1952, yet their book helped jump-start the commune movement in Vermont in the 1960s (Fairfield 1971; Frazier 2002; Nearing and Nearing 1979; Veysey 1973). Nowhere else in New England did so large a density of “communards” and environmental activists congregate, as is shown in Fig. 7. Many, if not most of these communes eventually folded or failed, but they left behind a bevy of new local institutions: food co-ops, vegetarian restaurants, organic markets, coffee shops, and the like (Sherman 2000). These local institutions and communities became “magnets” that drew further migrants to the state. They also helped “brand” Vermont as a bastion of American counter-culture.

**Fig. 7** Number of communes initiated, 1965–1975, per 100,000 residents in 1970 (Source: Miller 1999)



Another important factor shaping the gravity of Vermont’s new cultural image was the founding of a number of small “experimental” colleges there in the mid-twentieth century. The founding of colleges like Goddard (est. 1938), Bennington (1931), Marlboro (1946), and Windham (1951–1978), in addition to Vermont’s older schools—Middlebury (1800), Green Mountain (1834), and the University of Vermont (1791)—helped draw artists, radicals, writers, and students to Vermont, as well as build its reputation as a hospitable place for independent thought and leftist political activism. This bolstered the cultural life and economy of numerous Vermont towns. New Hampshire lacked (and continues to lack) comparable institutions, at least not in anything close to this density.

### Cultural continuity in New Hampshire

The case we are trying to make here is that the “place character” of twentieth century Vermont changed markedly, whereas its neighbor, New Hampshire, changed, but only in ways that maintained its original trajectory, more or less keeping pace with wider changes in American society (Peirce 1972; Lockhard 1959; Winters 1984; AP 2003). Several major features of New Hampshire’s cultural landscape helped preserve its reputation as a rugged individualist place modeled in a libertarian vein.

A systematic comparison of state guidebooks and tourist pamphlets was not possible owing to the absence of comprehensive collections of such documents, but we did find at least one New Hampshire counterpart to Dorothy Canfield’s 1932 book: A 1930s pamphlet, *Inviting You to Visit and To Live in the Monadnock Region: ‘Land of New Hampshire Charm,’* written by John Coffin and published by a group called the Monadnock Region Associates in the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> Although it shares with Canfield’s text the come-hither tone of mid-century boosterism—“The Folks of The Monadnock Region Want YOU For a Neighbor,” reads the opening page—it seems intent on appealing to a different type of consumer than Canfield’s Vermont aims for. There is a distinct emphasis on Southern New Hampshire’s accessibility to Boston, its modern conveniences (electricity, for example), and its ample incentives for businesses. “If you are a manufacturer, have you ever thought of the advantages

<sup>20</sup> No date is provided anywhere on the manuscript, though library archivists date it to this decade.

of moving your business to a small town?” reads one caption. “Or if you are retired, have you ever thought of spending your leisure years where they can be enjoyed? Or if you are a businessman, wouldn’t you prefer the easy-going, yet progressive methods of the modern small town?”

This is a stark contrast from the back-to-the-land *hauteur* of Canfield’s Vermont. Canfield discusses economics quite frequently, but only in terms of the anti-bourgeois values of Vermonters (cf. Lamont 1992). The New Hampshire pamphlet, in contrast, is at pains to flatter bourgeois values: “[B]ear in mind that the low tax rate on Monadnock Region property is not the least of its benefits,” it boasts. New Hampshire’s target audience appears not to be urban sophisticates but pragmatic business owners and retirees looking for a cheap place to live the “good” life. So concludes the Monadnock introduction: “Whatever your pursuit—industry, commerce, agriculture, or rest, live in our region and be happy!”

Overlaying this image of neo-pastoral New Hampshire is a stress on modern amenities and its proximity to major cities. “Here you find scenic splendour [sic] at every hand, backed up by modern needs. Wide-surfaced concrete roads speed you quickly back to Boston, while local firemen and state and local police have guarded your interests while you were away. Pure water, seasonal vegetables fresh from nearby gardens, modernly managed stores at your service, good schools, economical living costs and the convenience of electricity in all but three towns are other advantages of the region.”

Of course, we have no way of knowing who or how many people read these respective brochures; we do not intend to over-emphasize their causal impact on the future peopling of Vermont or New Hampshire. Nevertheless, there are other, better documented differences in the two states’ tourist industries that confirm this observation.

Two travel pieces published in 1955 in the Sunday *New York Times* by the same author, Mitchell Goodman, reflect the longstanding differences in Vermont and New Hampshire’s approaches to tourism: The New Hampshire piece (Goodman 1955a) says, “this state is, quite consciously and deliberately, in the vacation business. They make a science and an industry of it, mix well with some Yankee ingenuity, and produce a package that for neatness, compactness and high contrasts is not easily matched this side of Switzerland.” Among other things, Goodman’s New Hampshire piece extols the state’s “big-time race track” and 56 golf courses. In contrast, the Vermont piece (Goodman 1955b), published several weeks later, praises the revival of small town fairs in rural Vermont, especially that in Norwich, “where the homely virtues of rural life appear at their best.” Describing the ordinary rural folk behind the small Vermont town fair, Goodman notes, “They work out of a sense of community, for the pleasure of it; there is no money in it.” Describing the participants in the ensuing parade, Goodman writes, “They are down from the hills and the villages where tourism and television have made little impression.” He also notes, “There are no side-shows, no bathing beauties, no barkers; what there is is familiar, and enough.” This piece is accompanied by a listing of similar town fairs across the country, but the feature focuses on Vermont and clearly presents it as the epitome of a dying way of life.

Long before the automobile made Vermont accessible to motorists, New Hampshire was well-networked via railroad; it was filled with tourist-friendly

express and connector routes. In comparison, Vermont's turn of the century railway system was mostly oriented toward freight, and the state resisted highway improvements for decades (Bryan 1974; Harrison 2006). Not surprisingly, then, a large summer tourist industry sprouted in New Hampshire (but not in Vermont) to take advantage of its proximity to working and lower-middle class communities in places like Massachusetts and Quebec. A brochure issued by the Concord and Montreal Railroad (1892) proudly boasts of its regular service to the summer attractions of New Hampshire, for example, and it also lists summer resorts accessible by rail. In the rapidly changing economy of late nineteenth century New England, New Hampshire's tourist industry represented a perfect symbiosis between accessibility, affordability, and variety. In turn, this accessibility to "mainstream" summer tourists appears to have allowed New Hampshire-ites to profit from tourism without changing much else in the state. Like Maine or old Nantucket, New Hampshire could open itself to outsiders in the tourist season and then return to its old self the rest of the year. Vermont, by contrast, had to work harder to attract tourists and seemingly had to change more about itself in order to attract those who might be interested in coming.

Vermont had a small tourist industry by the 1890s, as shown above, but it did not really come into its own until the 1930s (Brown 1995; Sherman 2000). From the aforementioned comparative tourist literature, it would appear that many would-be migrants would have seen New Hampshire as over-populated with noisy attractions, urban amenities, and perhaps most importantly, unsophisticated working class vacationers from New England's nearby cities and mill towns. Vermont's "cultural distance" from the major metropolises, unlike New Hampshire's rather solicitous relationship with urban tourists, seems to have added to its appeal for an increasingly diverse array of "counter-culture" types—artists, professors, and back-to-the-landers.

Absent New Hampshire's early advantages—a thriving tourist industry, minor industrial cities, and convenient transportation to the rest of the East Coast—Vermont remained in many ways an avatar of an earlier age. As late as the 1950s, Vermont was a very rural state peopled largely by struggling farmers, loggers, and craftsmen (Judd 1979). Nonetheless, great effort was spent in highlighting and broadcasting those qualities that people like the Nearings and Dorothy Canfield were looking for: pristine farmhouses; small, quaint towns; and, most importantly, a perceived escape from the bourgeois materialism of twentieth century America.

An interesting example of this is the birth of the skiing industry in Vermont. The first ski trails cut in Vermont were executed and paid for by a Depression-era federal conservancy program, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). While we discuss the political ramifications of this program below, we note here that the nascent ski industry was another boon to Vermont's status and reputation as a vacation destination. Vermont's sloping mountains, charming hill towns, and relative lack of industrial or commercial sprawl, made it home to a new multi-million dollar tourist industry (Vermont Development Commission 1948). The state government itself invested early and often in promoting this sector of the state's growing economy. By the 1960s and 1970s, after new highways were built making Vermont more accessible to weekend travelers, Vermont dominated the Northeastern ski industry. Naturally, skiing did not bring the same kind of tourists to Vermont as the back-to-

the-land movement; it did, however, bring many thousands of thrill-seeking, outdoorsy types.

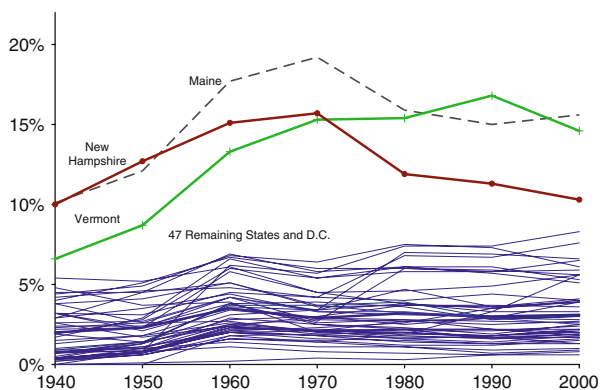
Clearly, there is need for more detailed, more systematic historical data on New England tourism. From what is available, data on “vacation home” ownership in the 50 states is perhaps most relevant. It shows Vermont surpassing New Hampshire by 1970 in terms of percentage of in-state housing classified as “vacation homes” (Fig. 8). By 1980, Vermont had even matched Maine’s perpetually high rate of second-home ownership. It is not clear how exactly “vacation homes” are classified in these data, nor how often and by whom they were used, but they do at least allude to Vermont’s surging popularity as a vacation destination, especially vis à vis New Hampshire.

### The political and economic transformation of Vermont

While we described above the transformation in Vermont’s reputation and allure for specific kinds of tourists, second-home owners, and back-to-the-landers, we have yet to explain how this converged with wider political and economic changes in the state. We focus here on the political and economic transformation of Vermont, as well as countervailing trends in New Hampshire.

An initial disruption in Vermont’s political tradition occurred in 1927, when a November rain storm left millions of dollars in flood damages. Vermont’s Congressional representatives pleaded for federal flood relief by arguing that Vermont had never before asked for such help and was extremely “loath” to ask for it now (Hand 2002: 122–3). With help from native-Vermonter Calvin Coolidge’s presidential administration and the Federal Bureau of Public Roads, Vermont began an unprecedented spending spree. Governor John E. Weeks was heralded for his flood reconstruction work. “Within a short time,” writes historian Samuel Hand (2002: 123), “it became impossible to distinguish highway reconstruction from the federal bureau’s highway construction plans. Recovery encompassed a broad plan for Vermont’s future.” Highway building quickly became a controversial issue dividing pro- and anti-development factions, but the slow, deliberate expansion of Vermont’s infrastructure proceeded apace. Highway building and forest clearing provided ready jobs and revenue for a state sorely lacking each. At the same time,

**Fig. 8** Vacation homes as % of state housing stock, 1940–2000 (Source: US Census 2004)





the state legislature began putting in place new laws to limit the deterioration of the state's natural resources and pastoral charm (Harrison 2006).

In New Hampshire, by contrast, “big-city” ideologues, industrialists, and politicians from places like Manchester, Concord, and Portsmouth kept Republican Party politics on the straight and narrow; union-busting and fiscal conservatism remained hallmark issues, for example (Veblen 1975; Winters 1984). Government-funded infrastructure and jobs programs were seen as anathema to the spirit of New Hampshire libertarianism.

The Great Depression was a period in which the political differences between Vermont and New Hampshire grew. Vermont originally turned down federal money offered by the Hoover administration via the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (Judd 1979, p. 32), but it gradually found new, politically palatable ways to turn federal grants into successful state employment programs. Vermont's infrastructure and environmental agencies grew apace. The mainstay of Vermont's New Deal was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), as mentioned above. The economic benefits that the new and rapidly growing ski industry brought to the state pushed another wedge into Vermont's long tradition of opposition to government spending.

“With rare exceptions, Vermont's critics of boondoggling, bureaucracy and paternalism in the Administration made a special exception of the CCC and went out of their way to praise it. The CCC was ideally suited to a state with three-fifths of its land area in forests. The CCC camps were popular also because Vermonters knew that they had received more than their share. For this they could thank their energetic Commissioner of Forestry...” (Judd 1979, p. 37). Conservation was proving itself a lucrative mainstay of the Vermont economy, another long-standing feature of its place reputation.

One unusual outcome of Vermont's New Deal-era transformation was collaboration between state Democrats and Republicans. Unlike New Hampshire Republicans, who kept their distance from the Democratic Roosevelt administration, Vermont Republicans found ways to collaborate with Democrat insiders within the FDR administration (Judd 1979, p. 36). This seems to have helped the state's long-dormant Democratic party reorganize and reform their appeal to voters.

### **Seminal shift: the post-World World II political transformation of Vermont**

Vermont did not truly begin its political “left turn” (cf. Ferguson and Rogers 1986) until the early 1950s, when an insurgent Democratic Party moved to unseat Republican hegemony in the state legislature. While this shift partly mirrors a nationwide realignment in the electoral position of the Democratic and Republican parties, we also find factors specific to Vermont at play here.

Although cohort replacement or a major ideological shift might be posited as explanations for an endogenous shift in party affiliation, histories of this period seem to indicate instead a change in party voting as the result of aggressive campaigning (Bryan 1974, 1984; Hand 2002; Sherman 2000). Ideological differences between local Democratic and Republican candidates are not said to have been great by historians of the era (Hand 2002; Sherman 2000; Winters 1980), for example. Note, too, that this transformation *preceded* the general upswing in state population in general and the specific convergence of hippies in particular.

Beginning in the late 1940s and culminating in the mid-1950s, Vermont Democrats began contesting traditionally Republican seats. The Vermont legislature was still pre-dominantly Republican, but the Republicans were gradually losing ground. Republican incumbents sometimes took re-election for granted, leaving them vulnerable to aggressive challenges. Having dominated state politics for the past century, the party itself was poorly mobilized to fight hotly contested campaigns. It is hard to know exactly why Vermont Democrats began taking advantage of these weaknesses at this particular time, but it would appear related to the long-run success of the national Democratic Party since 1932, as well as the return of many ambitious young veterans from World War II and Korea. It may also be that the preceding changes in Vermont's social and cultural landscape, coupled with the gradual appearance of new tourists and college faculty, were shifting the state's political base or politicians' perception of that base. Further study is clearly merited, but it appears that the primary effect was a stable voting pool being courted by a vibrant and aggressive new cohort of Democratic Party candidates.

In 1958, Vermont elected its first Democratic congressional representative since 1853, a victory that was predicated on two factors (Sherman 2000: 39–40): first, disarray in the Republican Party—five Republican candidates “slugged it out in their primary”; and second, Democratic Party strategy that contested *every* seat in the state. The Democrats thereby sent party organizers to aggressively court voters in even the most hopeless races. These strategies seem to be key to the Democrats wider success in this period. Between 1950 and 1960, participation in the state Republican Party had languished while Democrats built strongholds in various pockets of the state, particularly in the burgeoning city of Burlington (Conroy 1990; Hand 2002; Sherman 2000; Soifer 1991).

By 1962, Vermont elected its first Democratic governor since 1854 (when a Democrat held a single term in office after nearly 20 years of Whig party rule). In 1964, both state and federal courts overturned Vermont's traditional one-town/one-vote policy, thereby boosting Burlington's political influence in the state. After reapportionment, Vermont Democrats gained another advantage over Republicans. Home to a large population of college students and the state's only metropolitan core, Burlington had become home to many leftist voters. Over time, it would become an epicenter of left-wing activism in the state, as well as the nation (Conroy 1990; Soifer 1991). Thereafter, Vermont repeatedly made the national news with passage of (relatively) radical environmental and zoning laws.

By contrast, New Hampshire Republicans, like Massachusetts and Rhode Island Democrats, seem to have insulated themselves from counter-party insurgence by maintaining lock-tight urban party machines and attack-dog media (Veblen 1975). A key component of New Hampshire's political “stasis,” for example, was the *Manchester Union Leader*; one of the most politically conservative newspapers in the United States. The *Union Leader*, New Hampshire's major daily, was owned and edited for more than 30 years by William Loeb III, a staunch conservative who played an active role in promoting a right-of-center trajectory in New Hampshire politics from the 1950s into the 1970s. Loeb used the *Manchester Union Leader* to bash and belittle “liberal” candidates locally and nationally, including Republicans deemed by Loeb to be soft on Communism or unwilling to sign a straight-out “no new taxes” pledge (Veblen 1975). Well-documented is Loeb's avid desire to not only

steward New Hampshire politics but to broadcast its staunch conservatism to the rest of the nation. In a feature story in the *New York Times Magazine* (Kovach 1971), for example, Loeb is quoted saying, “It has always been my hope we could make New Hampshire an example to other states, and in many ways we are.”

Loeb and his newspaper clearly helped “brand” New Hampshire as an ultra-conservative place inhospitable to the very types of people attracted to Vermont: In October 1969, he had the *Union Leader* print the following above its masthead in response to a proposed peace march that day (Kovach 1971)—“ATTENTION ALL PEACE MARCHERS: Hippies, Yippies, Beatniks, Peaceniks, yellow-bellies, traitors, Commies, and their agents and dupes—HELP KEEP OUR CITY CLEAN!... *Just By Staying Out of It!*—The Editors.” Loeb, his newspaper, and his strident editorials became so influential that one gubernatorial aide professed (Kovach 1971): “The result is that a campaign on the state level never revolves around services, but always taxes.... A campaigner spends all his time putting out brush fires started by Loeb and never has time to speak to the issues.” Similarly, a 1974 *New York Times* story (“What’s Doing in New Hampshire” 1974) reports, “Any candidate for state office who dares to come out in favor of a state sales or income tax is a dead duck.” This is not to say that all New Hampshire residents agreed with Loeb but to point out the degree to which his opinions shaped the state’s political discourse and national reputation. The *Times Magazine* piece (Kovach 1971) adds, “The forces that would normally offer liberal opposition to a man like Loeb have been absent or muted in New Hampshire.”

Vermont had no equivalently influential newspaper, though Burlington was rapidly becoming a center for radical political and cultural activity (Conroy 1990; Soifer 1991). Nonetheless, Vermont did get its fair share of national publicity, which bolstered its reputation as a haven for specific types of people. On Christmas Day, 1976, for example, the *New York Times* ran coverage of Vermont’s governor’s decision to pardon 71 people convicted of drug charges in St. Albans, Vermont (“Vermont Governor Will Pardon 71” 1976). Interestingly, the story both undermines and upholds the stereotype of Vermont as a nexus for hippies and drug-users in reporting that St. Albans had hired an undercover narcotics agent in 1973, “*when the town was overrun with hippies.*” In 1968, furthermore, the state became one of only two in the nation—the other was Hawaii—to limit all commercial road-side signage (“Victory for Vermont” 1968). This bill was covered on the national newswires and helped broadcast Vermont’s reputation as a “green” state. Act 250, passed in 1970, was another highly-publicized, path-breaking law, this one designed to subject all new land developments to strict environmental standards and review. “Vermont probably has the strictest controls on development in the country,” the article notes (Knight 1979). “New Hampshire, by contrast, has had almost no controls on development and has watched with a mixture of delight and dismay as a boom in residential and industrial growth has transformed its southern counties....”<sup>21</sup>

Not all Vermonters were supportive of such regulations, it should be observed. In 1978, for example, a popular Vermont tourist resort, *Steamtown*, explained that it

<sup>21</sup> A similar bill was proposed in New Hampshire, it should be noted, but defeated in the state legislature; the New Hampshire Supreme Court similarly overturned several anti-growth ordinances adopted by New Hampshire towns.

was moving out of state in part because of the state government's anti-billboard law. "The state has to decide whether it wants greenery or money," a spokesman for *Steamtown* told the AP news service ("Steamtown May Move" 1978). In 1973, the *New York Times* Sunday Travel Section also ran a front-page piece, "Skiers and Cows: Is There Room for Both in Vermont?" which covered opposition from Vermont's ski tourists and ski resort operators to the state's strict new environmental regulations (Witchel 1973). Although emphasizing political discord within the state, these articles helped broadcast to the nation an image of Vermont as a bastion of environmentalism and anti-growth activism.

Vermont's transformation was continuously contested by residents who did not share this new vision of Vermont. When the "hippies" first arrived in Vermont in the 1960s, for example, they were viciously, and sometimes violently, opposed by tradition-minded locals (Bryan 1974; Frazier 2002). Since then, liberal-minded policies, such as the legalization of same-sex marriages and the redistribution of school funding, have been hotly contested (Sherman 2000). Over time, a certain *mélange* of cultures has taken place—in one account (Frazier 2002: 183), "[T]he freaks started drinking alcohol, the rednecks started smoking weed, and the next thing you know, they were sitting elbow to elbow up at ... the bar." A new place-specific culture, a synthesis of new and old, was achieved.

Similarly, after weathering the 1960s and 1970s relatively unchanged, New Hampshire started to become less resolutely Republican. Nevertheless, it does seem to have at least retained its *reputation* as a conservative state: In the fall of 2003, for example, a national libertarian organization, The Free State Project, announced the results of a poll it had held to identify the most libertarian-friendly state in the union (Associated Press 2003). Thousands of libertarians participated in the poll—its goal, in fact, was to pick a target state for a proposed idio-cultural migration of thousands of libertarians, who would then work together to solidify their influence within that state.<sup>22</sup> When the results were tallied, Wyoming was runner-up; Montana, Idaho, and Alaska next; but all were at least 10% behind New Hampshire. In the press coverage of the event, Elizabeth McKinstry, Michigan resident and Vice President of The Free State Project, extols New Hampshire's libertarian credentials (AP 2003). New Hampshire, in her words, "boasts the lowest state and local tax burden in the continental U.S., the leanest state government in the country ... a citizen legislature, a healthy job market, and perhaps most important, local support for our movement."

### **Discussion: analyzing opportunities for the accomplishment of place**

A seminal problem in the foregoing narrative centers on the question of how opportunities for the accomplishment of place come about. We cannot generalize completely but do note that in our cases, political change accompanied economic and socio-cultural change rather symbiotically. Otherwise put, we could not explain this example of the "accomplishment of place" without considering political, economic, cultural, and demographic factors in tandem. The rise of eco-tourism, for

<sup>22</sup> As of April, 2008, the Free State Project reported having obtained letters of commitment from 1,033 would-be migrants. < [www.freestateproject.org/intro/first1000](http://www.freestateproject.org/intro/first1000) > accessed April 24, 2008.

example, absent a Democratic party insurgency, might have left Vermont a remnant of its current self—popular with tourists but otherwise unchanged (cf. Wyoming).<sup>23</sup> At the same time, a Democratic Party surge without a new crop of residents and tourists might have changed the politics of the state without transforming its economic or cultural character. The in-migration of new residents was a crucial last step, a process built around Vermont’s increasingly well-publicized reputation for a unique type of “place” identity.

There is much we do not know about what actually took place in twentieth century Vermont and New Hampshire. It is our claim that branding, followed by idio-cultural migration, bent Vermont one way, New Hampshire another. Idio-cultural migration was also fostered by the availability of social spaces like abandoned farmsteads and new college towns where new communities could coalesce and form. These proto-communities afforded newcomers some degree of isolation from locals, who were not always welcoming of strangers, urbanites, intellectuals, and hippies. Vermont’s small, experimental colleges, in particular, seemed to have helped grow new cultural ecologies within the state—New Hampshire developed nothing comparable in terms of the number or character of small college towns, nor did northern New York, nor Maine. Note, too, that western Massachusetts, which shares many of the cultural and political characteristics of contemporary Vermont, does host quite a few colleges and universities. Thus, the erection of colleges in small towns may foster the kind of isolated, multi-faceted, experimental communities that foster idio-cultural migration, and thereby the accomplishment of place.

We readily acknowledge that successful branding or idio-cultural migration may not be typical, or even common. Furthermore, our cases are small polities at or beyond the hinterlands of metropolitan America, lacking the demographic diversity common in many high-growth regions. It would be impossible to predict from our limited study what conditions are necessary or sufficient for transformations of this kind. Nonetheless, we have at least shown how Vermont historically achieved a reputation as an ideal destination for certain types of migrants and tourists; and how New Hampshire evolved along dramatically different lines.

From our perspective, a crucial step in this process of place formation appears to be “*transmission effort*,” or active support for the promotion and circulation of positive affect for a cultural object or practice (cf. Kaufman and Patterson 2005). The efflorescence of late twentieth century Vermont revolved around high-profile promotional campaigns. Well-publicized, landmark legislative efforts also helped “transmit” Vermont’s reputation to the rest of the nation.

*Iconic residents* appear to be another important component of the accomplishment of place. Ben, Jerry, Howard Dean, and Bernie Sanders all “became” Vermonters, just like Vermont became “Vermont.” Such celebrity residents amplify and reify place-related stereotypes. Pragmatically speaking, specific regions and cities might thus consider adopting iconic residents like rock stars, authors, merchants, and politicians to help broadcast, if not embolden, their place-reputations extra-locally (cf., Florida 2002, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting that many of America’s other prominent skiing states are quite conservative, politically speaking—Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado, for example.

Similarly, the presence of active *discourse* about a place, such as that published by *Vermont Life*, Dorothy Canfield, and the *Nearings*, not only helps promulgate place reputation but also solidifies its perceived existence as such (cf., Ferguson 1998).

Negative “transmission,” or boundary maintenance, appears to be an equally powerful force in *preventing* change. In New Hampshire, for example, the presence of an arch-conservative newspaper with statewide circulation helped keep local politicians on the straight and narrow. Of late, the erosion of the *Union Leader*’s strident hard-right stance may have helped foster a more moderate political climate in the state; or at least the perception thereof (Wangsness 2007).

Cultural exclusion, as refracted through the lens of status competition, is a seemingly common motivation for the efforts at place-building seen here (cf. Bourdieu [1986]; DiMaggio 1982; Lamont 1992; Kaufman 2002; McPherson and Ranger-Moore 1991; Suttles 1972). Early twentieth century Vermonters “snubbed” other, more “modern” New England states in seeking to differentiate their state as distinctive. Mid-century Vermonters strove to make the state a national example of new liberal social and political principles. Some New Hampshire-ites, like William Loeb, “snubbed” back, encouraging further entrenchment of the state as a sort of anti-Vermont. We should seek a better understanding of such instances of collective differentiation, intentional, imagined, and otherwise.

## Conclusion

We began this analysis with a look at both Vermont and New Hampshire at the end of the nineteenth century, when both states were, by a bevy of measures, nearly identical in character and reputation. Both were vastly rural, mountainous states with a modicum of heavy industry, New Hampshire being moderately more industrialized and ethnically diverse (but not by national, or even regional standards). In material terms, New Hampshire entered the twentieth century with better developed roads and railroads; a bigger, denser population; more factories and fewer ailing farms. New Hampshire had more vacation resorts, but Vermont took a more determined stance toward cultivating and promoting its vacation attractions. Several Vermont state agencies targeted urban intellectuals with promotional materials hyping Vermont as a place to vacation and (ideally) own a second home. Otherwise, very little changed in both states prior to the late 1920s.

It was during the Coolidge administration that Vermont first began welcoming federal funding for roads and disaster relief. (Coolidge, an ardent Republican, was a native Vermonter.) In the New Deal years that followed, Vermont took an active part in federal transportation, forestry, and relief programs. New Hampshire did not. Meanwhile, growing enclaves of urban intellectuals began summering in Vermont, and a few even established small, private colleges there as well. Farms could be had cheap, and the locals were amenable, if ornery, about making a buck off of them.

These conditions in pre-World War II Vermont were merely priming the pump for the landmark changes of the 1950s and 60s. The Democratic Party began a decades-long quest to overturn Republican hegemony in the state legislature. By the mid-1960s, Democrats had moderate control over state politics and began

breaking ground in Congress. In New Hampshire, the Republican Party stood as firm as ever. An attention-starved newspaper owner, William Loeb III, repeatedly declared New Hampshire the nation's last bastion of freedom.

A second telling transformation was that by which Vermont's small stream of incoming artists, college professors, and back-to-the-landers became a torrent of skiers, hippies, and activists. By the mid-1960s, when the Democrats firmly took control of the state legislature, Vermont already had a national reputation as a tiny counter-cultural enclave. Over the next decade, people like Bernie Sanders and Howard Dean moved there, as did Ben & Jerry, and writers, and ballerinas, and artists, and musicians.

Change continues—New Hampshire appears to be “liberalizing” slightly, though not so much in Vermont's hippie footprint. Ben & Jerry's, so long Vermont's signature “brand,” was bought in 2000 by European mega-corporation Unilever Plc (Gallagher 2000).

If historians sometimes over-estimate the degree of change operating in a given context, sociologists might be said to be biased in the opposite direction, toward processes related to stasis, tradition, “isomorphism,” and the like. Some of our core theories of social development focus almost exclusively on the weight of *inertia* on spatio-temporal processes, as do Molotch et al. (2000). The foregoing account, by contrast, highlights the active, relational character of place-building, at least in the twentieth century American context (cf., Abbott 2001; Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Tilly 2005).

We find here that the pace of social change, or social differentiation more specifically, is far from monotonic. Nor do we find support for theories of critical junctures, “turning points,” or path-dependency. The changes observed here happened slowly, erratically, and without a clear sense of the ultimate outcome—the total transformation of Vermont's aura of “place.”

Nonetheless, we do not claim our foregoing analysis of two tiny American states as the basis for a general theory of social change. Rather, we see a few promising avenues for future research. One looks to update an emerging tradition of so-called “border studies” (e.g., Lipset 1990; Mancke 2005; Sahlins 1989). In the Vermont/New Hampshire case, as in others, political boundaries really do matter, culturally, structurally, relationally, and otherwise. Socio-cultural divergence is often built around such pre-existing, though occasionally contested, legal divides—states, townships, etc. (Kaufman 2009). The routine study of boundary-formation obviously has its limits, but the question of how, exactly, said borders become reified in interpersonal behavior, socio-cultural trends, and public opinion prevails.

The wide and growing literature on the accomplishment of place—a literature that owes much credit to the pioneering work of Molotch et al. (2000)—stresses the key roles collective fictions play in community development (cf., Castells 1997; Clark 2004; Florida 2002; Harvey 1985; Sassen 2000; Tilly 2002). Our research supports this proposition. “Our” places became “places” in part because of the imagination and initiative of often very small numbers of actors: a few developers; a cadre of politicians; an author or two. College towns served as “cultural magnets” for innovative, alternative, and artsy types. In Vermont, one city in particular became a mecca for East Coasters who aspired to play music, make ice cream, and live idealized, if not truly “experimental” lives. In a sense then, idealistic projects of

communal self-invention are a very real possibility for very ordinary people, albeit with sundry limitations.

Ultimately, place transformation appears to be, at least in part, the outcome of an increasingly common contemporary process: the migration of people to and from places for cultural, as opposed to (or as well as) merely economic reasons (cf., Frey 2002; Florida 2005). Often, this is both a cause and an effect of endogenous socio-economic, socio-cultural, and socio-political transformations. A key enabler of this process in Vermont, it deserves repeating, was a burgeoning economy and the attractiveness of its physical space. The exact mix of preferences utilized by migrants in choosing where to live surely varies from one context and time and individual to another. This is a key sociological question worth much further study, particularly given the rapid mobility of people, jobs, information, and resources in the world today.

Unique, perhaps, to the late twentieth century is the *geographic* convergence of political preferences and lifestyle choices seen here. It would appear rare for contemporary Americans to move for political reasons alone, as evidenced by the *Free State Project's* failure (thus far) to colonize New Hampshire with committed libertarians. It is not rare, however, for people to move to a state where the available lifestyle opportunities and cultural ambience resemble their own (Florida 2005; Frey 2002). What is hard to predict is how exactly these forces converge to create and transform “places.” We advocate for an idio-cultural perspective in future studies of place, one that incorporates discourse, activism, migration, and “branding” in its lexicon.

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