Of Puzzles and Serendipity:
Doing Research with Cross-National Comparisons and Mixed Methods

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I sat in my advisor's office, feeling more and more foolish. I had been talking for about five minutes, trying to outline a dissertation project, while she tapped a stack of yellow "While you were out" message slips against her chair. With my vast knowledge of U.S. society—I had now lived in the United States for six months—I was convinced that the process of immigrant integration in the United States differed significantly from that in Canada. I was having trouble, however, explaining what the difference was, much less how I was going to study it.

I had lived in Canada for fourteen years before moving to Massachusetts for graduate school, and I believed the Canadian cliché contrasting Canada's multicultural mosaic with the melting pot to the south. According to Canadian conventional wisdom, immigrants in Canada could be themselves—a unique tile in a vast mosaic—and still be Canadian; in the United States assimilatory pressures forced immigrants to pledge exclusive loyalty to an American identity and way of life. I suspected that the Canadian government's support for official multiculturalism affected immigrants' integration, especially their incorporation into the political system. I thought it would make them more likely to feel included, and thus participate politically, although I was well aware that the opposite argument could be made: by promoting diversity and pluralism, official multiculturalism might divide Canadian residents and ghettoize newcomers, thereby marginalizing immigrants from politics.

According to the literature, my assumption about a significant U.S.-Canada difference was wrong. As a political science undergraduate I had reviewed research on naturalization, the process by which immigrants' acquire citizenship. While variation in

citizenship acquisition in Europe was explained by contrasting different state structures and national ideologies, research on the United States and Canada suggested that the two countries were interchangeable: both are traditional immigrant-receiving societies with liberal welfare states and low barriers to political participation. Given few structural barriers, differences in immigrants' acquisition of citizenship must stem from immigrants' attributes—differences in skills, resources and interests—not from differences in the context of reception. As one long-time observer of American immigration puts it, "the settlement, adaptation, and progress, or lack of it, of immigrants is largely, in the U.S. context, up to them" (Glazer 1998:60).

Most North American naturalization research consequently replicates standard voting models in political science, which are overwhelmingly statistical. Variables such as immigrants' length of residence, income and level of education are regressed on an individual's propensity to acquire citizenship. These studies are helpful in identifying individual-level variation in naturalization, but I found the exclusive focus on newcomers' attributes problematic. This approach invites the seductive conclusion that if some immigrants, or some immigrant groups, do not integrate into the political system, there must be something wrong with them, rather than with the reception they receive. I turned to sociology for my graduate training, drawn to sociologists' attention to structure and institutions. I thought that interpersonal ties, immigrant organizations and the symbolism of public policies such as official multiculturalism must surely affect political incorporation.

My advisor had the uncanny ability of getting to the crux of a research problem within seconds. I wanted her as a mentor precisely for this talent, but she did not suffer

fools gladly. I became increasingly nervous as I ended my little monologue. She put the message slips down and, having listened to my description of the mosaic/melting pot distinction and my thoughts on the naturalization literature's shortcomings, she asked a single question: "What is the puzzle?" I didn't have an answer. I left her office as soon as I could, convinced that my career as a political sociologist was over before it had begun.

While not particularly beneficial for my self-esteem, this meeting was critical to the success of my dissertation. It forced me to think about what, exactly, I wanted to study. What was the outcome that I wanted to explain? What were the hypothesized dynamics, the *mechanisms*, by which macro-level differences in Canadian and American society and public policy, as epitomized in the mosaic/melting pot distinction, influenced individual immigrants' political behaviors? The creation of a solid research design, and the answers I found, depended on the integration of quantitative analysis and qualitative interview data, as well as the careful use of multiple comparisons.

Finding a Puzzle

My advisor's challenge—What is the puzzle?—demanded a clear statement of the research problem. As a new graduate student, I viewed social scientific research as a quest for answers. I had not realized that an equally difficult task was finding, and asking, the right question. Before I could develop an argument about Canadian and American societal differences, I needed to establish that there was some U.S.-Canada difference worth explaining. In the language of hypothesis-testing, I needed a dependent variable. This sounds obvious now, but specifying the research question became a project in itself.

Was there any difference in political incorporation in the two countries? A recent book had questioned the mosaic/melting pot duality by showing little difference in Canadians' and Americans' attitudes to diversity and cultural retention (Reitz and Breton 1994). The authors were cautious in their conclusions since no sustained U.S.-Canada comparison had yet been completed, but by cobbling together results from a variety of surveys and opinion polls, they suggested that Canada-U.S. distinctions were overblown. Their thesis did not auger well for my project.

My first step was to define 'political incorporation.' I developed a rich conceptual understanding of political incorporation, delving into a variety of theoretical literatures, but I kept getting stuck when it came to identifying observable, empirical indicators of my phenomenon. What could I measure to probe for a Canada-U.S. difference in political incorporation? More problematic: What could I measure that was *comparable* in the two countries?

I started with naturalization.[1] Immigrants acquire citizenship for a myriad of reasons, including instrumental concerns such as wanting to sponsor a relative to the United States or wanting a Canadian passport for travel. At the same time, citizenship is a prerequisite for political acts such as voting and running for office, and it serves as a symbol of political membership. I assumed that measuring and comparing naturalization would be simple: a person either was or was not an American or Canadian citizen. I soon

[1] I also considered voting as an outcome measure, but I found that voting surveys included too few immigrants to allow for any sustained analysis, especially when the category of 'immigrant' was broken down by country of origin. In addition, most surveys are conducted in a single receiving society. It is rare to find a survey that spans political borders or contains questions with wording similar to surveys done in another country. I had more success with a second outcome measure, immigrants' election to national office. I found a pattern similar to the naturalization data.

learned that gathering and comparing statistical data was much messier than a neat column of numbers lets on.

Working from the assumption that the agencies in charge of naturalization, the (then) U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), would have good data on immigrants' acquisition of citizenship, I poured over their publications and inquired about public use datasets. I could measure naturalization as an absolute number per year, as a proportion of the total immigrant population (a level) or as a rate capturing the time elapsed between migration and naturalization. The INS regularly published the number of naturalizations each year, but it did not put this number in the context of the number of immigrants eligible for naturalization. The INS figures consequently had limited value: if the number of naturalizations in one decade exceeds that of a previous decade, but the number of immigrants increases more rapidly, one could say that political incorporation slowed, despite the greater number of new Americans. It made more sense to talk about the level of naturalization—the total number of naturalized immigrants divided by all immigrants eligible for naturalization—but neither INS nor CIC could furnish this information.[2]

Luckily census enumerations in both countries ask residents where they were born, whether they are citizens, and how they acquired citizenship—by birth or by naturalization. Using these three pieces of information, I could calculate the total foreign-born population and the population of naturalized citizens, producing an estimate of each country's level of naturalization. Unfortunately, it is hard to separate those eligible for citizenship from all the foreign-born enumerated. In the United States, census

[2] The INS and CIC compile data on inflows of legal migration, but they do not keep track of those who leave or pass away and consequently they do not publish figures for the stock of legal immigrants in the country at any one time.

forms do not ask about legal status, so the category of foreign-born includes undocumented and temporary migrants. This caused comparability problems since the United States has a bigger undocumented immigrant population than Canada. Calculating a rate of naturalization offered an alternative measure, but the INS and CIC rarely publish these data and when they did, the calculation was done differently.

And so it went. What I thought would be a simple exercise in gathering some readily available numbers turned into a research project by itself. I kept confronting comparability issues. How do you standardize level of education across two countries (and multiple states and provinces)? How do you compare immigrants' ability to speak English when the Canadian and U.S. Census questions have slightly different wording? I eventually opted to use census data despite their limitations because they were the most reliable and extensive and they also included information on important socio-demographic characteristics such as level of education and length of residence.

Resolving problems of comparability as best as I could, I was thrilled—and relieved—when my final table of citizenship levels magically transformed into a striking bar graph. The level of naturalization in the United States and Canada rose and fell in tandem throughout most of the 20th century, but after 1970, the patterns diverged. In 1970, 64 percent of the foreign born in the United States were Americans, a figure close to the 60 percent of naturalized immigrants in Canada. By the 2000 U.S. Census, the level of naturalization had fallen to 40 percent, but north of the border, 72 percent of the foreign born living in Canada held Canadian citizenship. I had a puzzle!

Or so I thought.

Constructing a Quasi-Experiment

Happily sharing my puzzle with all and sundry, I was quickly confronted by doubters. Sure, maybe aggregate citizenship levels differed, but maybe getting citizenship was just easier in Canada. Were the benefits of Canadian citizenship more attractive? Perhaps the naturalization gap was merely a function of differences in the migrant streams to the two countries. I did not just need to find a puzzle, but I had to convince people that it was a true research problem, a surprising difference that could not be easily explained by commonsense.

Those who questioned the significance of the North American naturalization gap frequently pointed out that immigration to Canada and the United States differed in important ways. In the United States about two thirds to three quarters of legal newcomers arrive through family sponsorship. In Canada, the percentage is smaller, about a third to a half, while a substantial proportion of migrants instead enter as "independent immigrants," selected on factors such as education, language skills and age. The origins of immigrants also vary. The bulk of migration to the United States comes from Mexico and Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America, South America and the Caribbean. In contrast, Asia is the source of a majority of contemporary migration to Canada. Skeptics objected that the divergence of American and Canadian naturalization stemmed from differences in immigration, not from the two societies' reception of immigrants. I responded by identifying a "quasi-experiment," choosing an immigrant group whose origins and characteristics were nearly identical in the United States and Canada.

Many introductory research methods courses, including one I took as an M.A. candidate, introduce students to social science research by holding up experimental design as the golden yardstick. Students are told that a well-designed experiment can isolate causal forces in a way that observational data cannot. Most observational data suffer from selection bias: if you compare the educational outcomes of children in public and private schools, you cannot necessarily conclude that one type of school is better than another. An important difference exists between families that send their children to private rather than public schools, and this difference cannot be completely captured through statistical controls of income, religious background and parents' education. Thus, if you do find a statistically significant difference in public and private students' SAT scores, you cannot be sure that this is because of the school, or because of the factors that led parents to enroll the children in one system or another. In contrast, experimenters randomly assign participants to a 'treatment' or a 'control' group. Since placement in one or the other group occurs by chance and is not related to any particular trait, differences in outcome can be attributed to the treatment, not selection biases.[3]

It is usually impractical or unethical to do random assignment in social science. We cannot arbitrarily place people in schools regardless of their wishes. Students of immigration face a similar problem. Ideally, if we want to know whether the context of reception in one immigrant-receiving society facilitates naturalization more than in another, we should randomly place foreigners in one country or another and compare

[3] I leave aside the question of whether experiments actually help determine the *mechanisms* of causality. Even if we could conduct an experiment on public versus private school education, random assignment would only tell us that the absence or presence of a certain factor leads to a specific outcome (e.g., low teacher-student ratios produce better test scores), but it would not necessarily tell us *how* this happened (e.g., by providing each student with more time with the teacher and more personalized instruction, or by creating fewer distractions from other students allowing them to better concentrate on the material).

outcomes. But we cannot travel the world sending some individuals to certain countries and forcing others to stay where they are. We can, however, try to minimize selection biases by comparing immigrant groups with very similar origins and patterns of migration to two different countries.

Serendipity led me to the Portuguese. A summer research job early in my Ph.D. introduced me to the glories of salted cod, Holy Ghost festivals and the spirit of migration that many Portuguese trace back to Henry the Navigator and Vasco da Gama. I knew little about Portugal prior to my dissertation and embarrassingly had never heard of the Azores, Portuguese islands home to the majority of Portuguese immigrants in North America. In Massachusetts, I lived in an area with a heavy concentration of Portuguese-Americans, so I struck up conversations at the corner grocery store that sold *linguica*, Portuguese sausage, and at a local tailor shop where I would get a skirt hemmed or a zipper repaired. When I said that I came from Canada, people invariably mentioned that a Portuguese-born cousin, niece or brother lived in the Toronto area.

Using my new familiarity with census data, I created a statistical portrait of Portuguese-born individuals in Ontario and Massachusetts. The two groups appeared strikingly similar. The Portuguese became my quasi-experiment. Indeed, later when I visited Toronto, one Portuguese-Canadian man told of being selected for agricultural work by Canadian immigration officials the same week that his brother stepped on a plane destined for a job in New England.

Given the substantial similarities between these Portuguese communities, we should find little variation in citizenship levels if the Canada-U.S. naturalization gap is purely a function of immigration differences. I used the power of statistics to model the

probability that a Portuguese immigrant was a naturalized citizen in Ontario and Massachusetts. I included in my model variables identified by prior research as consequential to explaining naturalization, such as length of residence, English ability and amount of schooling. Even after introducing these statistical controls, the odds that the average Portuguese immigrant in Ontario was a naturalized citizen were significantly higher, a three out of five chance, than a similarly situated compatriot in Massachusetts, whose odds were just two out of five. The puzzle remained.

Dealing with the skeptics took a significant amount of time, but it paid off in an article published in *International Migration Review* (Bloemraad 2002). The article shows that citizenship regulations in Canada and the United States are remarkably similar, so European research that identifies legal differences as a source of citizenship variation does not apply in North America. Further, the benefits of citizenship are higher in the United States than in Canada. American citizens enjoy broader opportunities to sponsor relatives into the country than permanent residents, but in Canada citizenship provides no sponsorship benefits. Higher citizenship levels in Canada cannot be attributed to the benefits received. Finally, the article breaks down aggregate naturalization data by country of origin, revealing that in every case a greater proportion of immigrants in Canada hold citizenship than compared to those in the United States. I had a solid, intriguing puzzle. Resolving it would prompt a series of comparisons and take me from statistics to qualitative analysis.

Using Comparative Logic to Deal with the "Small N" Problem

During my time at Harvard, the Sociology faculty included Theda Skocpol and Stanley Lieberson, two leading scholars of social science methodology who hold

radically different approaches to comparative research. Skocpol helped instigate a revival in comparative-historical studies by insisting that a small number of case studies, carefully compared for their differences and similarities, can produce causal theories (Skocpol 1979; Skocpol 1984; Skocpol and Somers 1980). Critics such as Lieberson question these "small N" studies as requiring deterministic theories in a world which, according to Lieberson, can be better understood with probabilistic causality (Lieberson 1991). Further, given the myriad of possible explanations—or independent variables—at play, a researcher cannot dismiss all alternative hypotheses if the number of cases is smaller than the number of potential explanations. Studies with large numbers of cases—that is, with a "big N"—should be preferred. Case-oriented researchers respond that by following sequences of behaviors and events through process tracing, comparative-historical research gets much closer to a causal story than the correlation analysis conducted in "big N" comparative studies.

In the spirit of true open-mindedness, or indecisiveness, I saw merit in both sets of arguments. My overarching project was a small N comparison of just two countries: the United States and Canada. I could have increased the number of cases and made my project a traditional statistical analysis, but the data requirements were insurmountable—countries just did not have similar data on immigrants and their political behaviors. More fundamentally, I agreed with the critics of variable-oriented comparisons that causal mechanisms could be better uncovered, and described in richer detail, through in-depth comparison than with statistical correlation. If differences in the social and political contexts of Canada and the United States influenced immigrants, the effect would occur

through a complex conjunction of causal dynamics, not due to the additive effects of variables understood to be independent of each other.

At the same time, I kept seeing one glaring weakness of my U.S.-Canada comparison, a weakness regularly identified by the critics of small N studies. While the United States and Canada are quite similar relative to most countries in the world, they differ in a variety of ways. The United States is founded on a republican Presidential system; Canada has a parliamentary constitutional monarchy. The United States must contend with a legacy of slavery, while Canada has repeatedly overcome secession threats by its French-speaking minority. The United States is a country almost ten times more populous than Canada, and it is a world superpower. The list could go on. If I identified a reason for the divergent pattern of political incorporation over the past thirty years, how could I be sure that it was the right one, rather than a product of one of the other myriad Canada-U.S. differences?

The short answer was that I could not be sure, but as I audited a course on research methods with Lieberson and read more about research design, I began to consider the power of multiple comparisons. Could I extend the logic of my argument to another comparison, *within* the overarching U.S.-Canada study? By this time I had begun to develop an explanation centered on the importance of governmental assistance in fostering immigrant communities' political participation. Many of the local advocacy organizations and social service providers, which often spoke up in the media on behalf of immigrants and which occasionally organized naturalization drives or voter registration campaigns, relied heavily on government grants and contracts to stay alive. In Canada, governments provide more money to immigrants through settlement

assistance and multiculturalism programs than newcomers receive in the United States. Was there a way 'test' this argument using another comparison?

I found that there was, thanks to an inspired idea from a fellow graduate student. Discussing my "small N" problem in the research methods seminar, a classmate noted that refugees in the United States also receive significant government assistance, unlike migrants who come as workers or through family reunification. According to the logic of my argument, I should see less variation between refugee populations in Canada and the United States, more variation between non-refugee immigrants in the two countries, and significant differences in political incorporation between refugees and non-refugees, holding everything else constant, *within* the United States. This suggestion led me to expand the U.S.-Canada comparison beyond the Portuguese to include Vietnamese communities in the Boston and Toronto areas. The Vietnamese also constituted something of a quasi-experiment. Vietnamese populations in the two metropolitan areas differ more than the Portuguese, but the resettlement decisions made for many refugees in Thai, Indonesian or Filipino refugee camps still felt like the random assignment of the lab experimenter. Using multiple comparisons, I would leverage my observations to convince skeptics of my story… if it held up during fieldwork.

Mixed Methods: Combining Statistics and In-Depth Interviews

Various mainstream research method textbooks, if they mention mixed methods at all, outline a division of labor between quantitative and qualitative-oriented social science. In-depth interviews and ethnography, we are told, help generate ideas and serve as fertile ground for the creation of new theories. For these ideas and theories to gain

further credibility, however, they must be tested using rigorous statistical methods that evaluate their generalizability.

My research did not follow this conventional wisdom. Quantitative data and statistical modeling set the groundwork for the project. I needed numbers to establish that I had a puzzle: that citizenship levels varied on either side of the 49th parallel and, later, that representation by the foreign-born in national legislative office is more prevalent today in Canada than the United States. I employed sophisticated statistical modeling to eliminate alternative hypotheses, such as the notion that Canada-U.S. citizenship differences stemmed from immigrants' attributes rather than features of the receiving societies. Quantification, for me, set the stage. However, it seemed ill-equipped to explain why the players did what they did.

I consequently turned to in-depth interviewing to uncover the mechanisms structuring political incorporation. In all, I conducted almost 150 interviews with ordinary immigrants and refugees, community leaders, government officials and others involved in newcomer settlement. I speak neither Portuguese nor Vietnamese, so at times I turned to interpreters to help me understand migrants' narratives of political activity. This was not ideal—I literally lost some of the richness of their stories in translation—but the loss was similar in the United States and Canada, thereby avoiding bias in my overall comparison of the two countries.

I would start my interviews by asking how my respondent came to North America. This open-ended question usually led to a story, their migration story, which encouraged people to talk freely. Many of those I interviewed were nervous, never having been asked questions for a research project before, and some were intimidated,

uncomfortable with my status as a university student when they themselves had not completed elementary school in their homeland. More than once, after the interview was finished, a person would ask worriedly, "Did I pass?"

Since everyone is an expert on their own journey to the United States or Canada, asking about their experiences usually broke the ice. I would follow with questions about their early experiences finding work or going to school in North America, experiences with discrimination, their sense of identity and awareness of multiculturalism, and I would ask a series of questions about political incorporation: whether they had naturalized, whether they voted, what type of civic groups they belonged to, and so on.

Beyond my linguistic limitations, I faced two additional challenges. One was emotional: for a number of respondents, recounting their past lives, their trip to North America and their sense of what they gained—and lost—in migrating evoked tears. Ilda told of how a trip to the blackboard in eighth grade, where she did long division as she had been taught in Portugal rather than the "American way," led to her humiliation by the teacher and her decision to leave school. Thus ended her dream to become a nurse. The first time a man cried during an interview, when he told of leaving Vietnam and his family one night during a dash to a boat on a dark beach, had me feeling helpless. My cultural background left me ill prepared to see a man cry. Although I only listened to the stories, and I could not hope to fully understand them in an experiential sense, I would come home exhausted from my interviews. Asking questions, and listening carefully and with empathy, is much more difficult than textbooks let on.

The second challenge was trying to link individuals' personal stories to the larger institutional factors that I suspected could explain societal differences in political

incorporation. I first had to move away from survey-style interviewing. When I asked whether a person was a citizen, or had voted, I would usually get a monosyllabic "yes" or "no" answer. Since my sample was far from a random probability sample, these answers did not get me far. I could not use my respondents' answers to generate descriptive statistics, such as "40 percent of the Vietnamese vote", since they were not representative of all Vietnamese or all Portuguese-origin individuals in the Toronto and Boston areas. What I could do, and which emulated the process tracing technique I found so powerful, was to ask for a chronology of the naturalization and voting process. When did you first hear about citizenship? From whom? Where? When did you, personally, first get interested in voting? What happened? Did anyone help you file for citizenship? Who? Was this person affiliated with any organization? Did someone else help? In what way?

Using these types of questions, I had respondents reconstruct the thoughts and events that led up a successful citizenship application, or their first experience voting, or the respondent's most recent electoral campaign. Most striking was the extent to which these narratives of political incorporation were *social* processes: immigrants received assistance from friends and family, from employers and co-workers, from teachers at school and fellow students. Community organizations played a significant role. Immigrants with limited English language skills often received help from a local social service agency with co-ethnic staff, or from the agency that first helped them resettle, even though naturalization came many years later. Political incorporation was clearly not the atomized, individual process implicit in many statistical models of naturalization and voting.[4]

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[4] Of course, not all the literature takes this tact. The qualitative naturalization study by Alvarez (1987) first alerted me to the role of non-profit organizations in citizenship acquisition. I also found useful the social

I then took process tracing to the next level. While personal ties clearly facilitated political incorporation, the institutional location of various "helpers" was noteworthy. A number of these individuals worked for non-profit organizations or government agencies. I visited most of the major community organizations and agencies, interviewed key informants in these organizations and, where possible, collected copies of annual reports and financial statements. The financial statements allowed me to trace funding streams and identify the key financial backers. In almost all cases, government played a significant role. Given what I knew about greater government funding for immigrants in Canada, and relatively more support for refugees in the United States as compared to other newcomers, I speculated that the organizational capacity of a migrant community—that is, the number and diversity of its community organizations—should vary with public financial support. This was indeed the case (Bloemraad forthcoming).

By tracing immigrants' stories of their political incorporation upward, to the assistance provided by community organizations, and government funding downward, to the financial backing given to these organizations, I could link micro-level dynamics with the larger structural argument about institutional differences. I call this process of political incorporation "structured mobilization": immigrants acquire citizenship, learn about politics and, in numerous cases, participate due to localized social relations and personal mobilization efforts. These efforts lie nested in, and are structured by, prevailing governmental attitudes and the level of public intervention afforded to the newcomer community.

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and institutional approaches of Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) and Sidney Verba and colleagues (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995), both of which are statistical.

In-depth interviewing also offered an advantage over standard survey questions by allowing me to probe respondents' feelings about their new home and their sense of citizenship. To incorporate feelings and beliefs in quantitative studies, a researcher must classify responses into a relatively small number of mutually exclusive categories, thereby loosing much of the richness, and contradictoriness, of people's emotions. Ann, for example, repeatedly said that she loved Canada and that she felt at home in her new country. Asked why she had applied for Canadian citizenship only three years after arriving, she told me, "Because I love my country! This I look at like my country. I feel it's my country." She had arrived in Canada as an adult from Vietnam with few job market skills, but she took courses at a local community college and eventually became the owner of a successful beauty salon. She claimed to have experienced no discrimination in Toronto, be it at school, work or in public places.[5] Yet when I asked how she would identify herself, whether she felt Canadian, she looked surprised and answered, "I still Vietnamese. …I never think I'm Canadian, right? Because I live here, I from Vietnam, I still Vietnamese. Maybe my son will think differently… because he born here. But for me, I think I still Vietnamese." Ann was not the only one who claimed strong attachment to her new country, but who found it incomprehensible to say that she was just Canadian, or even Vietnamese-Canadian.

These responses forced me to rethink my simplistic assumptions about the Canadian mosaic versus the American melting pot. Immigrants and refugees in Canada usually felt accepted in their new home, but this does not necessarily translate into a clear

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[5] Since I am of European origin, it is quite likely that my respondents underreported instances of racial or ethnic discrimination. Beyond such interviewer effects, however, the Vietnamese appear to report far fewer experiences with discrimination than other Asian groups (Lien et al. 2001). It is unclear whether this is because the Vietnamese experience fewer problems or, more likely, because they are more reluctant to report problems.

preference for a hyphenated Canadian identity. Some could not imagine themselves as Canadian while others bristled at being anything other than "only" Canadian; they believe that hyphenation ghettoizes minorities by underscoring their otherness. In the United States, some immigrants who had migrated decades earlier, like Ilda, recounted stories of unforgiving Americanization, but many recent newcomers experienced American society as tolerant and even welcoming of diversity and hyphenation. Through the eyes of many of my respondents, Americans accepted multiculturalism. As Reitz and Breton (Reitz and Breton 1994) had argued, the mosaic/melting pot distinction was clearly overblown.

Yet official multiculturalism in Canada does matter. I found that the political expression of multiculturalism, especially as a discourse that legitimizes immigrants' place in the country, sends a strong message to immigrants that they are rightful citizens. Participation in the political system—both a right and a responsibility—is normalized. Government programs that include, or explicitly serve, immigrants reinforce this sentiment. Ann, for example, took part in a new mothers program hosted in a municipal community center soon after arriving in Toronto. Sensitive to local demographics, the program was offered in a variety of languages, including Vietnamese. The more universal nature of social welfare programs in Canada also fosters a sense of engagement with government. Government programs matter, thus participating in the selection of government matters. In the United States, social benefits are more prone to be stigmatized, and access to government largesse is often overlaid with the politics of race (Lieberman 1998; Quadagno 1994). Multiculturalism also revolves more around race, largely defined as constituted by native-born minorities rather than immigrant newcomers. Migrants in the United States are grateful for the rule of law and economic

opportunity, but they do not feel the same sense of engagement or invitation to participate in a common political space (Bloemraad forthcoming). I could not have reached these conclusions without having conducted in-depth interviews.

Concluding Thoughts:

I regularly show the graph of divergent citizenship levels when I give talks about my research. It is a striking visual representation of my research question and it immediately invites others to speculate as to what is going on. Having others puzzle with you engages your audience in your research enterprise. Not everyone will agree with your conclusions, but most will be sufficiently curious to listen and become absorbed in your work. Not all research requires a neat puzzle, but a crisply worded question certainly helps the researcher, and her audience.

My dissertation research also taught me not to see research design as a dry methodological enterprise, but rather as a creative venture. We are all limited in what we can do—how many countries we can study, how many groups we can include, whether we can find the right data for our topic. But every project contains multiple observations, as ethnographic field notes, interview responses, or cases considered. Creative comparisons can leverage the available data by testing the logical implications of an emerging or hypothesized relationship. Maximizing such comparisons increases your confidence in your conclusions.

I also found mixing methods to be particularly helpful in building my argument. Some are suspicious of mixed methods—I was told by one potential colleague while on the job market that those who do quantitative and qualitative research tend to do neither very well—but I find my results much more convincing after I triangulate data sources

and data types. In my case, statistics described the generalized nature of the problem and helped cast doubt on alternative hypotheses. Qualitative interviews and documentary data uncovered the mechanisms linking the structuring forces of governmental policy to the individual actions and decisions of immigrants and refugees. Without one or the other, the story would have been incomplete.

Finally, I learned to be thankful for serendipity, such as the well-placed suggestion of a colleague and the discovery of an immigrant group about which you know little. And even, ego considerations aside, to be thankful for the hard questions of a dissertation advisor that force you to rethink your entire project and to get serious about research design.

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