

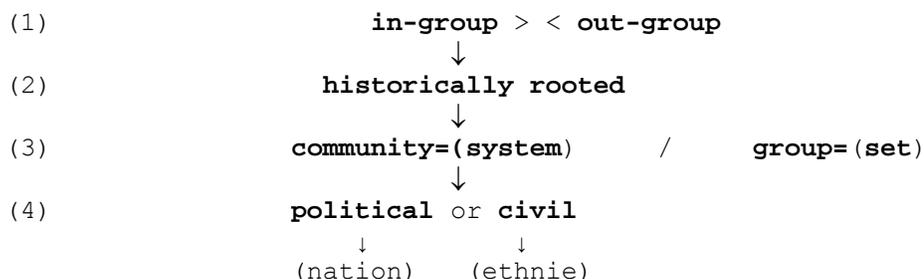
The single case study (one group or community in one country) is still frequently used. Thirty five percent (35%) of 20 articles published in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* in 2003-04 were of that type and 25% of those published in 2005-06 (N=17), but the majority of the articles covered more than one group or community in more than one country. When we do or read a case study the terminological confusion is little more than a nuisance because when normally grasp what an author or a respondent mean; we can reach the concept behind the term that is used. But, in the case of comparative studies, especially studies involving many cases, the confused remains confused, improperly confused.

The terminological confusion

As already noted, we often deal with fuzzy concepts, chameleon concepts that take their changing meanings from time frame and environment, concepts that are not insulated from the common language, hence often unsuited to comparisons involving different states and cultures. A Swiss scholar will typically reject the notions of either 'ethnic' or 'national' applied to Swiss language minorities; a Canadianist and an Africanist may not have the same understanding of the tribal. Personally, I have not been consistent: sometimes I have used the concept of ethnicity to include religion and sometimes not, sometimes to include race and sometimes not. I am guilty, as are many others.

What is to be done? Should we now dispense with the terms *Ethnic and national*? That proposal, even if justified, would have no chance of success. Ambiguous as they are, *ethnic* and *nation* are now firmly embedded in the research enterprise and in our library retrieval systems². I suggest, however, that, while continuing to use our familiar terms, we define them in relation to the neutral concepts of Figure 1, a figure that can also be used as a simple checklist of what one should and may have omitted to consider.

Figure 1. From in-group to ethnicity and nationality



The dualities of Figure 1 could often be transformed to advantage into continuums that would enable one to measure, for example, the degree of mobilisation of a group into a community and, vice versa, the degree of demobilisation of a community into a group.

Level 1 of Figure 1 locates the notions of **in-** and **out-**groups that we have necessarily in mind when we deal with what we loosely call

ethnies and nation. The **in>out** distinction is universal; we cannot understand society without it. All languages distinguish between the 'we' and the 'they' (Laponce, 2000). Most of those 'we' and 'they' are actual or imaginary groupings that take shape, disappear, and may reappear to disappear again over successive generations. But some are long lasting communal groups, they are embedded in the long term, in what is rendered in French by 'la longue durée' (level 2). Here lies the stuff of which ethnicity and nationality are made. Putting the out-group into the picture, an out-group that will often but need not be the politically group dominant, requires the often challenging identification and ranking of the relative importance of boundary markers (such as religion and nationality in the Northern Irish case).

There is general agreement that ethnies and nations have or are perceived to have deep roots into the past; perceived to have travelled through history before their members were born; they are inherited communities. Using the language of mathematics at level 3, we can say that they are 'systems' rather than 'sets'. They are not simple collections of items (here individuals) that happen to fall within more or less artificial categorical boundaries; they are composed of people linked to one another in a functional way by what they do or by what they perceive or believe. In that sense an ethnic *community* is **not** an ethnic *group*. The difference between the two will often be the difference between the present and the past, the awake and the dormant or the dead, the difference between 'what I feel my community to be' and either 'where I happen to come from' or 'the way others see me'². To repeat: **a set is not a system, a group is not a community**. We often fail to make the distinction even when we are well aware that we should, as admitted by Gurr concerning his *Minorities at Risk project (MAR)* when he justifies using census data statistics to measure the size of his minorities because of the difficulty of obtaining information on actual collective identity (MAR, 2005, defining a minority at risk, p.2). Searching under the lamppost because it is better lit is not without its occasional rewards, but is bound to be inefficient.

Level 4 distinguishes, on the one hand, **communities** that are sufficiently **political** to be called '**nations**' (either nations nested within a state and satisfied with that nesting, or nations that are independent or wish to become independent); and, on the other hand, **civil communities** to whom I reserve the term **ethnic** for their being state-nested and for not questioning that nesting even if their ethnic allegiance is stronger than their identification with the state³.

A **political community** ranges from being a sovereign nation (as the members states of the EU) to having autonomy (as a Swiss canton) to wanting either autonomy or independence (as in the case of many Quebecois) to having a specific slot in the state structure through a political party (as among Swedish Fins) or reserved seats in Parliament (as Maoris in New Zealand). By contrast, **civil communities** are social systems devoid or almost devoid of political functions but having varied degrees of institutional completeness in the civil domain: from education, in the case of Alberta francophones, to full economic, social, religious, and cultural governance in the case of Hutterites.

A group, political or civil, is defined solely by objective markers (language, religion, history, etc..) rather than by subjective

identification of its members, hence not well suited to comparative analysis of ethnies and nations.

To illustrate the level 3 as well as the level 4 distinctions, consider, for example, the very different 'ethnic' and 'national' pictures of Canada we obtain for the early 1990s, by using either the national census or an academic identity survey such as that of Berry and Kalin (1993). The census of 1991 tells us that Canada is roughly 30% British, 20% French and 50% 'multi' (for the sake of comparison between census and survey, I do not count here the 3% to 5% Aborigines who were not included in the survey). The census figures refer to the national origin of the respondents or their ancestors⁴. For some, this origin is still a source of collective identity⁵, but for others it is akin to an old family photo album that one leaves in a cupboard and open rarely if at all⁷. By comparison the survey of preferred ethnic and national identification done by Kalin and Berry gives us a markedly different and clearer picture obtained from the answers to the question⁵:

"People may describe themselves in a variety of ways. If you had to make a choice, do you think of yourself as":

- . Canadian
- . French Canadian
- . Other hyphenated Canadian (the respondent could record any combination of his or her choice)
- . A provincial identity (Quebec, Ontario Newfoundland, etc...)
- . A foreign country

The differences between census and survey are staggering. To enhance the comparison let us retain only the scores of more than 5%. From census to survey the *Canadians* rise from nil to 65%, the *Hyphenated multi* drop from 50% to 7%, and the *French-Canadians* who decline from 20% to less than 5% are replaced, in part, by *Québécois* who score 15%. The census relies on ancestral origin to describe Canadian *subgroups* while the survey describes present day sense of belonging to what can be assumed to be a *community*. The first measure is done from the outside, the second is subjective. The researcher or policy maker dealing with Canada has thus a choice. If one wants to picture Canada as a multi-*cultural* society, one will use the census data; if one wants to picture the country as a multi-*national* polity, one will use the survey. Which choice is correct depends on one's hypothesis. But, as already noted, if one makes comparisons involving a large number of groups and communities, one will typically be drawn to using census types of measures for lack of reliable surveys being available, hence be drawn to treating groups as if they were communities, a sin which is the equivalent of putting, in the same analytical basket of conviviality, the eaters and their forks.

I do not deny the usefulness of the census type of data, even when one's interest is in communities rather than groups, in order to measure the potential size of a civil or political community; but, most of the time, when doing comparative analysis, we need to compare present identification and not only past or potential belonging. Consider how often we mix, in our use of large data sets of minorities, the actual

and the potential, the past and the present, the group and the community, the sociologically meaningful and the bureaucratically convenient. Such mixing will usually render a comparison impossible to interpret. The mashing of variables (*puree de facteurs*) produces aggregates unfit to be compared.

MAR, which is, as already indicated, focused on groups rather than communities, decided recently to separate 'French Canadians in Quebec' from 'French Canadians outside Quebec'. That was a step in the right direction but it still falls short of the distinction that would enable us to allocate Canadian francophones to their appropriate 'civil' or 'political' communities. In most other cases, MAR has only one entry for those who are assimilated and those who are not, for example in the case of Kurds in Turkey⁷. Thus, comparing Kurds and Quebecois on the factors recorded by MAR becomes problematic. Consider another example taken still from the MAR code book (I concentrate my illustrations on MAR because I think it is the best large data set available to study minorities): in the case of Switzerland, the only language minority to be considered at risk is the Jurassian, and no language is considered at risk in Belgium. Using the variable 'minority language' across 284 groups covering 122 countries, even using a much smaller selection, becomes very iffy if one is not familiar with each of the communities and states included in the comparison. Hence the recommendation to respect the two following prescriptions of comparative analysis:

- a) not to treat sets (groups) as if they were systems (communities)⁸
- b) to distinguish, among systems, civil from political communities

My reading of the last 20 articles of NEP already mentioned left me regretting that both the a) and b) recommendations had not been met to my satisfaction in nearly 50% of the cases.

Short of researching the subjects treated by these articles, an enterprise beyond my competence, I cannot tell whether the flaws that I perceived as an interested reader are due or not to non-availability of proper data. I assume that the shortcomings of the censuses and the paucity of in-depth surveys are the major causes of the problem.

To illustrate this state of affairs, let us return to the Canadian census, Canada being one of the few countries offering a very good coverage of its ethnic and national cleavages, very good for a census but still far short of what is needed for the academic analysis of ethnies and nations.

The census of 2001, taken here as an example, has a detailed coverage of language through questions concerning the language or languages learned in childhood, the language or languages known well enough to carry out a conversation, the language or languages used habitually home and at work; but it lacks measures of the importance of these languages to the respondent. Ethnicity is identified by the origins of one's ancestors. The ethnic, national, or racial sense of belonging of the individuals surveyed are not asked.

The only Canadian surveys having the rough regularity of a census are the National Election Studies that have covered nearly all elections since the 1950s. That of 2006, taken here as an example⁹, is strangely

weak on language (only mother tongue and language of the home). The question on 'ethnicity' asks the person interviewed for his or her ethnic belonging but adds subsequent questions about ancestry before coming to North America at the exclusion of 'Canadian' which was the first answer preferred by 38%. The question concerning religious denominational affiliation is supplemented by a question concerning the interpretation of the Bible as the word of God and a question asking the importance of religion in one's life. Additionally, the survey offers answers to questions testing the attitude toward minorities, immigrants, and Quebec separation. The survey questions, better than those of the census, distinguish, sparingly, group and community and record attitudes to out-groups as well as measure strength of affiliation; but, except in the case of religion, it does not help to distinguish markedly the various categories of Figure 1. For that distinction, we need surveys of the Kalin-Berry type, surveys that are few in number and rarely state-wide. And even in that last case they will typically lack the number of respondents needed to study small groups and communities¹⁰. The Gurr problem is, at present, often insurmountable. To build any large data set covering many countries, relying on censuses is the only realistic option; but that means, in effect, not being able to infer from group to community. To study the latter comparatively across states we are thus, typically, restricted to considering only a few countries at a time, those known sufficiently well to avoid sinning too much against the distinctions of Figure 1. Globalisation is so much in our thoughts and minds that it will be difficult to resist the temptation to go global when trying to reach the theoretical and the prescriptive by means of the comparative.

The frequency of multiple identities.

Another argument in favour of the 'few countries at a time' comes from the frequency of multiple ethnic or national identities. Jean Tournon (1989, 2005), among others, has pointed out that an individual's ethnic or national identity is subject to negotiation and change. The in-group is not always confronted to the same out-group, and both types change over time. Among students I interviewed in the early 1990s (Laponce, 1992) in Canada, the USA, and France, the percentage of answers to the question 'what term best describes your ethnic identity?' revealed notable differences in the frequency of multiple answers: 10% in Quebec, 25% in France, 44% in both English Canada and the United States. Some of these identities were local, some national, some international. The statistics given here (the subjects were not a representative sample) are given here to illustrate the type of variation that is likely to complicate comparative research if we lack the specifics of the relevant in-and out-groups).

Separated, nested, and overlapping identities

Consider a group of individuals who have dual identities, whether ethnic or national or a combination of both. If we choose to treat them simply as dual identifiers, we risk giving a wrong interpretation of the duality and risk complicating the comparison with other types of multiple identifiers. One needs to make at least three distinctions according to whether the two identities are:

- a) separate from each other, as would be two different monetary currencies, for example American and Israeli.
- b) set the one inside the other, such Israeli or American being nested the one within the other.
- c) partly but only partly overlapping so that in some contexts the relation resembles that of separation (a), while in other cases it resembles the embedded case described in (b).

It is easier, conceptually, to handle the (b) case, especially, as already noted, if one assumes that the ethnic is subordinated to and set within the national. It is so in a large number of cases but not in all. Some of the new immigrants to France, England, Germany, Canada, and the United States see their ethnic self as subordinate to the nation state of which they have become citizens; but others, particularly so among Moslems and Jews now, Catholics in the past, see or saw their state citizenship embedded within and subordinate to an international cultural or religious community.

Relating the political and the civic, the national and the ethnic to other identities

A final difficulty comes from the paucity of measures concerning the relative importance we attach to our 'ethnicity' or 'nationality' compared to other characteristics of self and social surroundings, such as profession, age, sex, friends and family. We lack large scale studies measuring the importance one attaches to one's national or ethnic identity compared to other identities which vary across time and space (see the models of Rummens (2003, 2004) and more generally the special issue of *Intersections of Diversity* (2003).

How important is it to be a Canadian or a Québécois compared to being a woman, a doctor, a young adult, or a member of a given social system? Locating the ethnic and the national in the hierarchy of importance we attach to our many roles and identities is particularly useful to comparative analysis. Preliminary surveys that Gingras and Laponce did at UBC and Ottawa (Gingras and Laponce, 2001; Laponce, 1999, 2004, 2005), extended later on by Gingras to France, Switzerland, and Belgium, show two regularities: A) minorities tend to attach more importance to their minority markers than the dominant group attaches to its own markers B) Family and Friends are always located at or near the top of the hierarchy of importance.

The first regularity leads one to expect variations across time communities and countries in the hierarchy of individual and collective identities. The second regularity gives us a kind of universal benchmark to which the 'ethnic' and the 'national' can be measured for the height of their loyalty boundaries.¹¹

A simple model, represented by Figure 2, can be used to represent visually the relation between the importance the individual attaches to

various roles and identities and the way the latter are treated (satisfactorily or not). The Figure distinguishes a) a quadrant defined by high importance and high satisfaction (a social integration area) where we find friends and family, and b) a quadrant defined by high importance and low satisfaction (an area of social stress). Such matrix facilitates the comparison across groups, communities, and states. In what quadrant will national and ethnic identities appear? In the integration quadrant? How close to the family? In the stress quadrant? How close or far from other social roles and identities?

In the case of Ottawa students used to test the model (Gingras and Laponce, 1994) only two items -family and friends- scored, on the average, in the integration quotient for both francophones and anglophones. Only one item scored in the stress quotient, the item 'language' for francophones but not for anglophones. All other items including 'ethnie', 'nationality', 'religion', 'political party', 'age group' were, on the average, located in the area of relative indifference (straddling the mid-point on either the scale of importance or that of satisfaction). These examples illustrate the importance of having control groups and benchmarks to set the nations and ethnies we study within their social context, and not assuming that what is of particular interesting to the researchers is of equal importance to the subjects concerned within the total landscape of self.

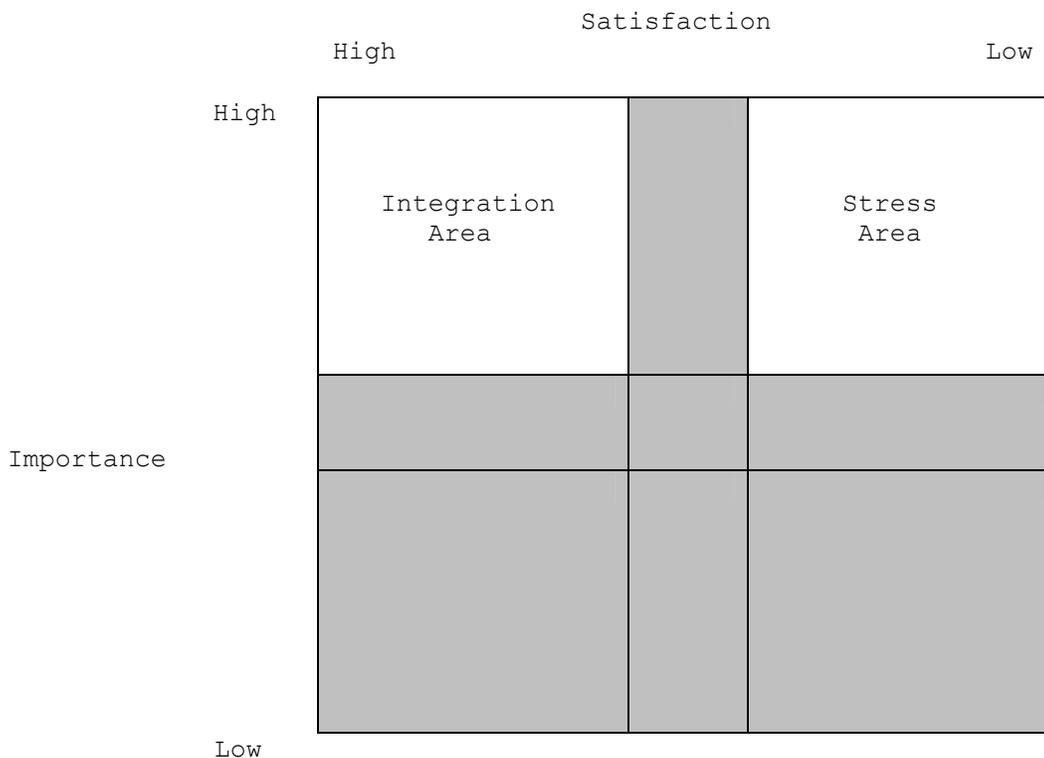
Conclusion

Since comparing is the key to understanding and theorising, it follows that the comparative enterprise on ethnies and nations is more likely to be successful on data sets involving few groups, few communities and few states. These purposely-limited comparisons should lead to limited and medium range explanations that can eventually be subjected to comparisons leading to grander theories¹².

In the immediate future, I guess that the comparison of few cases at a time, even if less exciting than the handling of a vast amount of states and communities, even if producing summaries of lesser beauty for their lack of simple mathematical expressions, will be more rewarding to prediction and to prescription, to theory building and to public policy.

Figure 2

Spatial model linking importance and satisfaction to be used to relate ethnicity and nationality to other roles or identities



- The shaded areas cover central answers on either of the two dimensions as well as the lower quadrants of 'high satisfaction but low importance' and 'low satisfaction and low importance'.

Notes

1. For an introduction to the vast literature on ethnicity and nationalism see the relevant entries in Hawkesworth and Kogan's *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics* (2004), notably the chapters by Mason and Galbreath on *Ethnicity and Politics*, by Marger on *Ethnic Policy* and by Smith on *Nationalism*.

2. The number of entries listed by the *Social Science Citation Index* under 'ethni*' increased as follows for the decades 1970-79, 1980-89, 1990-2000: (N)= 2,209 3,745 12,572. For the period 2000-05 the (N) was 13,802. I cannot turn these figures into percentages not knowing the overall number of entries in the SSCI for each period considered, but clearly the increase is quite spectacular.

3. Jedwab (2004) avoids that mistake when he analyses the sense of belonging to Canada by various ethnic and cultural groups and finds that most groups, French excepted, have as strong a sense of belonging to Canada as those classified as 'English' and a stronger sense than those classified as 'Canadian'.

3. Jean Tournon (2005) offers a different perspective when he identifies ethnicity and ethnicism as political constructs.

4. The absence of an item labelled 'Canadian' led an increasing number of respondents to enter 'Canadian' as a write-in. Eventually the census offered 'Canadian' as a printed alternative in the census of 2001. See note 9 below>

5. Bob Hunter, the founder of Green Peace, is said to be proud of his Indian Kwakiutl ancestry although he is only 1/32th aboriginal (*Economist*, May 14, 05 p. 89).

6. When relating the state to regional identities one can force the respondent to give a single choice, as do Kalin and Berry, or offer the possibility of an equal ranking as does Moreno (2004:38-39) when he compares ethnic and national identities in Spain's 17 regions.

7. The mixing of group and community leads to the evaluation of Turkey's Kurds to vary from 7% to 24% (Laciner and Bal, 2004).

8. Consider for example the good attempt of Ishaihama (2003) to measure the effect of globalisation on ethnic tensions in 35 countries of MAR. The findings are rendered problematic because of the choice and the mix of groups and communities. Argentina is represented only by its Jewish minority while Jews appear in no other country, Kurds are represented by Turkey and Iran but not by Iraq, while Russia scores 11 minorities. Of course, choices have to be made. My point here is simply that if a few cases can be checked relatively easily by author and reader, the checking becomes problematic if not impossible when the number of cases is too large.

9. Out of the total population the scores are given below and compared to those of the Canadian election survey of 2000 (Blais, 2000, 2006) on the personal question "To what ethnic or cultural group do you belong":

	census	survey 2000	survey 2006
	"To which ethnic or cultural group(s) does this person's ancestors belong"	"To what ethnic or cultural group do you belong"	
. Canadian	38%	25%	16%
. English	20%	22%	25%
. Scottish	14%	4%	3%
. Irish	13%	3%	4%
. French	15%	16%	14%

The score of 'Canadian' is markedly different here from that of the Kalin-Berry survey (see page 4). The questions differed of course, notably in the fact the Kalin/Berry do not use the words 'ethnic' or 'cultural', words that are likely to orient the mind to one's origins.

Osgood's semantic differential (Osgood, 1957) could be used to find out whether it is so. In the 2006 survey, 6% of respondents volunteered One of the following answers: quebecois, French Canadian or Francophone.

10. To be able to analyse the vote of people identifying themselves as Jews in Canada (Laponce, 1988; Laponce and Sekkon, 1995) I had to merge 170 CIPQ surveys covering the years 1945-1977 obtaining thus a total of 163,295 respondents, of whom 2312 indicated that they were Jewish by religion and stated a party preference.

11. We have many conflicting theories that are rarely more than research hypotheses. We have theories dividing primordialists and constructionists that belong to the group of rhetorical questions such as 'do rulers matter?', or 'does regime matter?', questions that are a trap if we attempt to answer them by a simple yes or no. Of course an internal or international regime affects the evolution of a political or social system, of course leaders matter, of course nations and ethnic communities have both primordial and constructed origins. In all those cases the question is not to be answered by either-or, but by how much. We have psychological theories of a Freudian type that link the need for belonging to nations and ethnies to the wish for some kind of immortality or at least some post-mortem survival. We have theories positing that national solidarity is positively related to increased wealth (Deutsch, 1964; for discussion see Shulman, 2003). We have globalisation theory that predicts the intensification of ethnic tensions and globalisation theory that predicts the reverse (see Ischiyama, 2004). We theorise that cultural distance aggravates tensions and conflicts (Huntington, 1993) as well as theories stating the opposite (Appadurai, 1998). We have various forms of 'chaos' theories borrowed from international relations that attribute the severity of internal conflicts to the weakness of the state (Job, 1992; Luke and Rothchild, 1998; Laitin 2004, among others).

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