

The Limits of de Tocqueville: How Government Facilitates Organisational Capacity in Newcomer Communities

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I argue that state intervention can foster immigrants' and refugees' ability to establish and to sustain community organisations. Drawing on 147 qualitative interviews and documentary information from the Portuguese and Vietnamese communities in metropolitan Boston and Toronto, I show how settlement and multiculturalism policies provide material and symbolic resources that immigrants can use to build a large and diverse organisational infrastructure. These findings challenge arguments inspired by de Tocqueville's image of self-sufficient and self-started civic associations. Instead, my evidence suggests that migrants benefit from government involvement. One important implication is that, by facilitating community building, host societies can encourage migrants' participatory citizenship in their new home.

Keywords: Immigrant Organisations; Civic Engagement; Participatory Citizenship; Portuguese; Vietnamese

Introduction

Organisations play a key role in political incorporation. Whether we consider immigrants or the native-born, organisations act as a representative voice on behalf of a group (Minkoff 1994; Walker 1991), they mobilise individuals for collective action (McAdam 1982; McAdam *et al.* 1996) and, through participation in organisational activities and decision-making, they teach people skills necessary for political participation, thereby acting as 'crucibles of democracy' (Salamon 1999; Van Til 2000; Verba *et al.* 1995). It can be hypothesised that immigrants, in particular, benefit from mobilisation around organisational membership. New to a country, usually speaking a different language, immigrants come together in religious

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congregations, ethnic business associations, social clubs and cultural organisations. Politicians can seek out such groups as an easy and efficient means to reach large numbers of voters (Marwell 2004; Parenti 1967). Of course, community leaders must activate the political potential of ethnic organisations (Martiniello 1993), and mainstream political actors need to encourage immigrant organisations to take a political role (Jones-Correa 1998), but, all things being equal, communities with greater organisational capacity should be more politically active.

Motivated by an interest in organisations as vehicles of political incorporation, this article investigates what promotes organisational capacity in immigrant communities. I focus on the influence of government support on immigrant organising: do supportive government policies crowd out local organisations, or do such policies facilitate the establishment and persistence of community organisations?

A number of the articles in this special issue of *JEMS* share an interest in determining how the state—or the political opportunity structure more generally—affects immigrant organising. As Moya (this issue) notes, the importance of the state appears to have increased over the twentieth century. In part this is due to increased intervention by sending governments, but it also stems from the expansion of the welfare state in immigrant-receiving societies. Based on research by scholars of politics and social movements, we would expect that political support for immigrant organising should facilitate such activity. Yet Caponio's research in Italy (this issue) suggests that the primary beneficiaries of government support are Italian, rather than immigrant, organisations. Hooghe (this issue) argues that, although Flanders offers a theoretically open political opportunity structure to ethnic mobilisation, there has been limited practical action. Both authors raise the spectre that government policies aimed at helping migrants might instead hurt them by crowding out indigenous organising.

This concern—that the state 'crowds-out' civil society—has a long and distinguished lineage in American scholarship on state–society relations (Habermas 1989; Joyce and Schambra 1996; Olasky 1992). Many who espouse this view take inspiration in the nineteenth-century writings of Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville. Comparing Americans' robust democracy and love of liberty with his own country's heavy reliance on the state, de Tocqueville concludes,

If men living in democratic countries had no right and no inclination to associate for political purposes, their independence would be in great jeopardy. . . . The task of the governing power will . . . perpetually increase, and its very efforts will extend it every day. The more it stands in the place of associations, the more will individuals, losing the notion of combining together, require assistance (de Tocqueville 1945: 200).

According to Joyce and Schambra (1996) the threat to immigrant groups is particularly acute since the nationalising project behind bureaucratic state expansion attacks ethnic ties. The thrust of these arguments is that state intervention acts in opposition to grassroots organising and, since democratic citizenship depends on a

robust associational life, interventionist government policies consequently work to undermine citizen participation.

I take issue with this argument. I contend that government support, including funding, technical assistance and normative encouragement, plays an important role in building immigrant communities' organisational capacity. Other factors also influence organisational growth—especially the resources migrants bring with them and migrants' interest in establishing formal institutions—but I focus on government policy since its impact is the subject of greater controversy. Few scholars dispute that, all things equal, communities with greater resources and more interest in building formal organisations will be more apt to do so. It has been hard, however, to test the effect of state policies (or political opportunity structures more generally) because of the confounding influences of the attributes of the immigrants themselves. I hope to overcome this problem by comparing two communities, Portuguese immigrants and Vietnamese refugees, living in major cities of two countries, metropolitan Boston in the United States and Toronto, Canada.

Portuguese and Vietnamese migration to the US and Canada are very similar. The majority of Portuguese are economic migrants from the Azores who came to North America between the mid-1950s and late 1970s. Many possess limited formal schooling but have high levels of participation in the labour market. The Vietnamese, largely a refugee population, began arriving in the mid-1970s up to the present. A minority of the community is highly educated, but many come from modest fishing and farming backgrounds. Both Portuguese and Vietnamese had negative political experiences in their home countries. Because the reasons for migrating and the characteristics of the migrants are so alike within each group, regardless of whether they went to Canada or the United States, we can be more confident that organisational differences reflect real differences in the institutional environments of the receiving countries.

In what follows, I first outline the differences in government support for immigrants and refugees in Canada and the United States. In Canada, immigrant and refugee groups receive government assistance for basic integration and settlement, and ethnic associations are promoted through programmes such as the federal government's official policy of multiculturalism. The Canadian government thus offers migrant organisations both financial and symbolic support. In the United States, the state favours more distant, neutral relations with immigrants, ethnic organisations and community advocates. Only legally recognised refugees and asylees can access government-funded programmes for resettlement. While the United States holds a strong ideology as a country of immigrants, its policy on community building has been largely *laissez-faire*. I illustrate how government programmes can act as a catalyst in developing organisations by profiling two important Vietnamese organisations.

In the second half of the paper I examine whether the effect of state support can be seen beyond the specific cases. My data include 147 interviews with ordinary

immigrants, community leaders and government officials, as well as documentary materials from government and community organisations. Holding the characteristics of migrants constant—as I try to do by focusing on the same two groups in both countries—we can derive a number of hypotheses. First, if government support matters, we should see greater organisational development, on average, in Canada than in the United States. Second, we would also expect more organisational capacity among refugees in the United States than among US immigrant populations formed through family reunification or work visas. I conclude by considering how we should make theoretical sense of the apparent differences in research findings between the European and North American environments.

The Establishment and Growth of Immigrant Organisations

Students of immigration have devoted relatively little attention to organisational development in immigrant and refugee communities, despite their importance for political incorporation, community advocacy and service delivery. In part, this lack reflects the priorities of many newly-arrived migrants. Faced with the challenges of finding employment, learning a new language and adjusting to a foreign socio-cultural environment, creation of formal organisations often sits low on a list of adaptation concerns. Research on the social organisation of the Vietnamese thus concentrates on the role of the family in Vietnamese life (Caplan *et al.* 1989; Chan and Dorais 1998; Kibria 1993; Woon 1986), the impact of informal social networks for psychological support, material assistance and educational success (Buchignani 1988; Zhou and Bankston III 1998) and the establishment of religious institutions (Bankston III and Zhou 2000; Dorais 1991; Pfeifer 1999). In the Portuguese case, scholars also concentrate on the family (Noivo 1997) and religious organising (Cabral 1989).

Importantly, adaptation concerns offer a means by which interventionist governments can foster the development of immigrant and refugee organisations. As Cordero-Guzmán (this issue) points out, two of the primary functions of community-based organisations are the provision of migration assistance and social services. If a liberal welfare state believes it should fund such activities, and if it is willing to contract this work to private organisations, the state can transfer important resources to migrant communities. Pointing to refugee communities in the United States, Smith and Lipsky (1993) suggest that government contracting helps develop organisational capacity where it is limited or does not exist. Even among the native-born, public funding helps groups as diverse as community development corporations (Gronbjerg 1993), civic associations (Skocpol *et al.* 2001), social service agencies (Gronbjerg 1993; Smith and Lipsky 1993) and advocacy organisations (Pal 1993). In this section I describe the support given to newcomers by Canadian and American governments, and I illustrate how symbolic and material resources help to establish and perpetuate immigrant organisations.

Government Intervention in Canada: Settlement Programmes and Multiculturalism

Prior to the 1950s, Canadian immigration officials focused on recruiting, processing and screening would-be immigrants, but they offered limited support to immigrants once they arrived. An interest in settlement services followed the establishment of a new Department of Citizenship and Immigration in 1950. Initial funding was limited, but the department was able to field 'liaison' officers in key reception areas, oversee a relatively large language-training programme, and offer small grants to non-profit voluntary organisations working with immigrants and ethnic minorities. By 1963 there were 99 immigration officers across Canada wholly engaged in placement and settlement work and 77 government employees working part-time on newcomer integration (Hawkins 1988: 443).

Settlement programmes underwent rapid expansion in the late 1960s following a philosophical shift in political circles: the state would not only oversee immigration flows, but become an active player in the settlement process (Lanphier and Lukomskyj 1994). Following government re-organisation in 1966, the Citizenship Branch of the Secretary of State became responsible for social, cultural and political integration, while the Department of Manpower and Immigration (later the Department of Employment and Immigration) took over economic integration. By the early 1970s, it was estimated that about half of all newly-arriving immigrant workers visited one of 360 Canada Manpower Centres for job counselling and training (Hawkins 1988: 339).¹ Manpower and Immigration also set up a small Settlement Branch in 1973. This branch provided fee-for-services grants to voluntary agencies under the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (Hawkins 1991: 82). Settlement services were further expanded in the 1980s, but then faced cutbacks in the 1990s as the desire to rein in deficits led to cuts in social programmes, including those directed to immigrants. Nonetheless, the Canadian federal government offers a wider array of settlement services to a larger group of people than its neighbour to the south.

Federal settlement services are supplemented by programmes at the provincial and municipal level. Under the Canadian constitution, the federal government has primary control over immigration policy, but most facets of newcomer settlement—language training and education, economic and social welfare—fall under the purview of the provinces. Provinces receiving large numbers of immigrant newcomers, such as Ontario and Quebec, consequently set up their own integration services. Combined with similar efforts in some cities, newcomers to Canada may be presented with up to three tiers of settlement assistance in addition to private initiatives.²

The growth and expansion of newcomer settlement services parallel the rise of official multiculturalism. Canadian multiculturalism, which is part government programme and part national ideology, was first announced in the House of Commons in 1971. Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau committed his government to supporting ethnic organisations, helping to eliminate cultural barriers to

participation in Canadian society, promoting dialogue between all Canadian cultural groups, and assisting immigrants to learn one of Canada's two official languages (House of Commons 1971: 8546). The pursuit of these objectives would involve government because: 'We are free to be ourselves. But this cannot be left to chance. It must be fostered and pursued actively' (House of Commons 1971: 8547). The Prime Minister assigned primary responsibility for multiculturalism to the Citizenship Branch of the Secretary of State and the programme was given funding of \$5 million (CAD) in 1972—an amount that would double the following year, and then fall later in the decade (Hawkins 1991: 219–21). These monies—separate from existing settlement services—financed local ethnic associations, promoted immigrant cultural activities and supported programmes where the children of immigrants could learn their parents' language.

As the face of immigration to Canada changed in the 1980s and 1990s, multiculturalism's focus shifted from cultural retention to attacking barriers of racism and discrimination; the state's integrationist thrust remained, however (Canada 1984; Fleras and Elliott 1992). The multiculturalism programme reached a political and bureaucratic *apogée* in 1988 when the *Multiculturalism Act* was passed in the House of Commons and a new government ministry, Citizenship and Multiculturalism, was established. In the 1990s, a rhetoric of citizenship somewhat displaced multiculturalism, and the programme was demoted to being a small part of the Ministry of Canadian Heritage. In the late 1990s, the federal government disbursed about \$16 million (CAD) for multiculturalism initiatives.³

Laissez-Faire US Policy and Refugee Resettlement

The former US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) offered newly-arriving immigrants no programmes comparable to those in Canada.⁴ The location of the INS in the Department of Justice focused the agency's priorities around enforcement and administration, rather than settlement and integration. Prior to the outbreak of World War II, the INS was in the Department of Labor, but under the President's 1940 Reorganisation Plan, the agency was transferred to Justice. The move reflected a changing perception of immigration as a national security, rather than economic, issue. By the beginning of the present century, the INS had become the largest law enforcement agency in the federal government.

The US Immigration and Nationality Act appears to allow for some positive intervention, especially around citizenship promotion, but in practice INS did not engage in such activities (North 1985, 1987). Doris Meissner, a former INS Commissioner, writes that 'the dominant culture of the agency . . . [is] rooted in a view of immigration as a source of security and law enforcement vulnerability more than of continuing nation building' (2001: 2). Under the terms set by Congress, the INS did not have legal authority as a grant-making agency.⁵ In order to provide public monies to community groups, Congress would have had to approve a legislative change giving the INS authority to disburse funds, or grants would have

had to be funnelled through other structures of the Department of Justice. Immigrants who migrate under employment preferences or family reunification find little support from the American federal government.⁶

The treatment of legally recognised refugees is quite different. The State Department, through its Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (formerly the Bureau of Refugee Programs), provides funds to non-profit organisations that engage in refugee reception efforts overseas and, under the Reception and Placement Program, to groups that provide initial settlement services once refugees arrive in the United States. The Office for Refugee Resettlement (ORR), housed in the federal Department of Health and Human Services, manages longer-term integration efforts. ORR disburses public funds to organisations and state agencies in order to provide social assistance and settlement assistance to refugees, including transitional cash and medical assistance, and services such as language training and employment counselling.

In the particular case of Vietnamese refugees, US government support began in April 1975, when President Ford used \$98 million (USD) sourced from the Agency for International Development (US AID) to pay the Defence Department to transport and house the first wave of Vietnamese refugees (Hein 1993: 22). The President then created an Interagency Task Force for Indochina Refugees (IATF) to operate four camps that housed the new arrivals and to work with non-profit organisations to resettle the refugees. Soon after, Congress passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975. This Act made refugees eligible for social welfare benefits under criteria more generous than those accorded American citizens: refugees had to meet economic eligibility criteria, but they were exempted from family composition requirements.

The arrival of a second wave of South-East Asian refugees, known as the 'boat people' exodus, highlighted the lack of a clear policy for identifying, admitting and integrating refugees. The subsequent US Refugee Act of 1980 sought to define who qualified for refugee status and it codified the obligations of the federal government to these individuals. A special programme separate from public welfare, Refugee Cash Assistance, made the federal government responsible for supporting refugees. Other programmes offered further settlement services, such as job training and language classes. In its 2000 annual report to Congress, ORR reports that \$426 million (USD) went to assist refugees and specially designated Cuban and Haitian entrants.

ORR also initiated projects to help refugee communities establish their own organisations, called Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs). Initially the federal government contracted with nine American non-profit organisations (VOLAGs) to do resettlement, and it also worked with some local agencies and existing Asian-American organisations. Over time, however, the government encouraged the creation of Vietnamese MAAs to provide culturally and linguistically sensitive services and to help create an ethnic advocacy structure. As early as 1976, the IATF established an Indochinese Mutual Assistance Division to promote MAAs as advisory bodies in the resettlement effort (Hein 1993: 70). In 1980 the federal Office of Refugee

Resettlement (ORR) began a formal policy of funding MAAs, and in 1982 the Office launched the MAA Incentive Grant Initiative to encourage state and local governments to support MAAs. Under the programme, states would receive resettlement monies on the condition that they allocate a portion of their refugee social service budgets to MAAs rather than to traditional resettlement agencies. Only refugees are eligible for these incentive schemes.

Tracing the Effect of Government Support on Ethnic Organisations

Settlement and multicultural policies can provide material and symbolic support to ethnic organisations (Bloemraad 2003). Most obviously, grants of public monies can help establish and sustain community-based groups. Government officials can also give technical assistance, providing immigrant leaders with information on how to incorporate or register as a charitable organisation, guidance in writing up a constitution or by-laws, and the names of other groups or people who can provide further assistance or funding. Such assistance is particularly valuable for migrants since they often possess limited resources and, compared to the native-born, they are relatively unfamiliar with how people organise for collective ends in the host society.

Less concretely, but equally importantly, government policies influence the symbolic standing of immigrant and refugee communities. These symbolic effects can increase newcomers' interest in creating ethnic organisations and can alter other actors' evaluation of newcomers. For example, non-governmental foundations might change eligibility criteria to encourage funding applications from immigrant or refugee groups if the government emphasises such groups' public importance. To show how government support can help communities build organisational capacity, I spotlight two organisations, the Vietnamese American Civic Association and the Vietnamese Association of Toronto.

The Vietnamese American Civic Association

Government assistance for refugee resettlement helped in founding and expanding the Vietnamese American Civic Association in Boston. This support was a reversal of an earlier policy that explicitly discouraged Vietnamese community-building. In a bid to avoid 'another Miami'—where Cubans had settled in such numbers that they significantly affected the political, economic and social environment of the city—federal officials initially discouraged indigenous leadership in the refugee camps and sought to disperse Vietnamese throughout the US (Kelly 1977; Rumbaut 1995). The dispersal policy proved ineffective as the refugees quickly engaged in secondary migration and started to build large communities (Zhou and Bankston III 1998).

As the failure of the dispersal policy became evident, federal officials realised the importance of promoting Mutual Assistance Associations to serve and speak for the rapidly-expanding Vietnamese communities. Boston's Vietnamese American Civic Association (VACA) is one such MAA. It arose out of a confluence of three forces:

a response by the Vietnamese community to hate crimes perpetuated against Vietnamese in the city of Boston, a desire by certain Vietnamese-Americans to assume responsibility for resettlement activities, and a drive by the federal government to promote ethnic-specific community organisations.

Acts of violence against Vietnamese drove a group of Vietnamese-Americans to begin advocating on the community's behalf. In 1980 a Vietnamese student in Boston was stabbed and a second wounded by white youths, while in 1983, after repeatedly harassing a household of recent refugees, a 19-year-old Marine attacked the residents, killing one and injuring three others (Frisby 1983). Reported incidents of anti-Asian violence, probably only a fraction of the actual number, rose steadily in Boston over the early 1980s: 17 in 1982, 31 in 1983, 43 in 1984 (Higgins 1983; Palmer 1985). The attacks galvanised the Vietnamese to develop, in 1984, a semi-formal structure that could advocate for the community and interact with important public actors such as the Boston police department, the Mayor's Office, the state legislature and the media.

As incidents of violence subsided, a number of community members suggested that the embryonic organisation should take over some of the resettlement activities that were being managed by mainstream American agencies. As one person active in this effort remembers:

When we first came to Boston, after our processing for social security, food stamps, welfare, the [resettlement] agency gets one volunteer to work with our group. You know, helping me to apply for school, get some English. . . . And that could be the factor in my decision to work for the community. I mean, the mainstream may provide the support for the Vietnamese . . . but why the Vietnamese cannot be the ones to help their community?

In 1986 the Vietnamese American Civic Association became incorporated as a non-profit organisation and hired a director and two part-time staff members. VACA's mission statement—to 'promote family self-sufficiency and well-being, and community empowerment'—reflects the twin motivations of its founding, service and advocacy.

Government played a key role in the transformation from a group of concerned individuals to an established community organisation. Initial funding for VACA came from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, disbursed through the Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants (ORI). The state Office of Refugees and Immigrants was established to meet federal requirements for refugee resettlement, providing an additional technical resource for the fledgling organisation and its leaders. Many directors of ORI have been Vietnamese and VACA has a good relationship with state bureaucrats.

VACA began by offering language instruction, interpretation and translation services to community members. Since then, the organisation has expanded its activities to include youth and health programmes, citizenship classes and other services to facilitate integration into American economy and society. A decade after its incorporation, VACA had revenues of over half a million dollars, and by 1999 the

figure topped a million. Some of this income is from private foundations or philanthropic organisations such as the United Way, as well as fees for services. The bulk, however, remains government funding, constituting two-thirds to three-quarters of all revenues in the latter half of the 1990s, figures very similar to what Cordero-Guzmán (this issue) found for the median immigrant community-based organisation in New York City. Given limited resources within the ethnic community, VACA, like many immigrant-serving non-profits, must rely heavily on public funds.

The Vietnamese Association of Toronto

Government can not only promote the establishment of immigrant and refugee organisations, but it can also influence the transformation and expansion of existing groups. The Vietnamese Association of Toronto (VAT) began as a purely social group, but collaboration between its members and Canadian governments transformed it into the largest Vietnamese social service and settlement agency in Toronto. Known initially as the Fraternal Association of Overseas Vietnamese, VAT began in 1972 as an informal group of university students and recent graduates. Before 1975, about 70 individuals of Vietnamese background lived in the Toronto area (Vietnamese Association of Toronto 1979). The group's purpose was modest: it would organise a Têt celebration for the Lunar New Year and let members socialise with the few other Vietnamese living in Toronto.

The Fraternal Association first worked with the Canadian federal government following the fall of Saigon in 1975. After the Communist takeover, hundreds of refugees fled to Canada, many arriving in Toronto. Members of the Association greeted displaced compatriots at the airport, acted as interpreters and provided assistance. In response to encouragement from the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism, the President of the Association applied for and received a one-time grant of \$3,000 CAD to help defray the organisation's expenses (Wilson 1997). The group's activities remained, however, entirely voluntary and largely informal.

The transformation of the organisation occurred with the 'boat people' crisis of the late 1970s. Increasingly large flows of refugees were leaving Vietnam, and a host of institutions including governments, churches and other voluntary agencies began to contact the Fraternal Association's members for advice and help with resettlement efforts. In 1978 the group changed its name to Vietnamese Association of Toronto. The following year it registered as a charitable (non-profit) organisation and conducted a survey and needs assessment of the Toronto Vietnamese population with a grant from the provincial Ministry of Culture and Recreation (Vietnamese Association of Toronto 1979). Government representatives contacted the Association through the federal Settlement Division of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, and at the provincial level through the Ontario Welcome House. With support from Immigration Canada, the Association sought and received funding from the federal government to help with resettlement efforts. The provincial government gave the association free space in a provincial government building as

part of a partnership with an inter-faith council for refugee resettlement. With funding and formalisation of service provision, two paid positions were established, one as co-ordinator of the Association and the other as a full-time settlement worker.

The organisation continued to grow through the 1980s and 1990s, encouraged by federal and provincial governments.⁷ In 1985 a provincial Community Facilities Improvement Program Grant facilitated the purchase of a small two-storey building with two meeting rooms and several offices to serve as a permanent home for the Association. VAT's revenues, \$120,000 (CAD) in 1984, reached almost \$920,000 in 1997. Governments provide between two-thirds and three-quarters of VAT's budget; foundation grants, fundraising activities and membership fees make up the remainder of the Association's income. Only once, in 1990, did government funding account for less than half of all revenues. Today VAT continues to pursue the cultural and social activities that led to its initial founding, but a majority of its activities centres on settlement work, such as running English as Second Language courses and offering job placement and employment counselling.

The Impact of State Support on Organisational Capacity: Three Hypotheses

Contrary to the contention that state intervention crowds out local community building, the examples of the Vietnamese American Civic Association in Boston and the Vietnamese Association of Toronto suggest that government can promote organisational growth. However, individual cases do not necessarily reflect patterns at the community level. Does the presence or absence of government support affect a group's overall organisational capacity?

Given the different levels of support for immigrants and refugees in Canada and the United States, if government intervention facilitates organisation-building, then (all things being equal):

- the organisational capacity of the Toronto Portuguese community should be greater than in Boston;
- the organisational capacity of the Vietnamese community should be comparable in Toronto and Boston;
- the organisational capacity of the Boston Portuguese community should be less than that of the Boston Vietnamese.

Counting Organisations

To assess these hypotheses, I enumerated all organisations located in the geographic heart of the Portuguese and Vietnamese communities in metropolitan Boston and Toronto. I focus on organisations highlighted by Breton (1964) as central to building an institutionally complete ethnic community: churches, social service organisations and the ethnic media. In addition, I include political and advocacy organisations that speak out on behalf of the community, and in the Portuguese case I include social clubs organised on regional lines. The tally of these organisations is based on

community directories, interviews with immigrants and community leaders, and informal resource lists compiled by social service agencies or municipal offices.⁸

I group the organisations into seven categories: advocacy, church and temple, social, media, political, professional, and social service. In cases where an organisation filled several roles, I coded the group according to its primary purpose as reflected in its mission statement or predominant activities. The *advocacy* category includes groups that are organised on ethno-specific lines and which speak out on a specific set of issues. *Religious* organisations include Catholic churches offering mass in the language of the immigrant group and also, for the Vietnamese community, the number of temples.⁹ The latter include a few associations that do not possess a formal site of worship, but which organise regular religious rites in a private residence. *Social* organisations include fraternal associations and Portuguese social clubs. *Media* include local organisations providing print, radio or television programming in Portuguese or Vietnamese. It excludes imported media, such as the Portuguese international television station, available via satellite in both countries, and Vietnamese newspapers published in California that circulate in Boston and Toronto. *Political* groups, unlike the non-partisan advocacy organisations, are organised around an explicitly political aim, including home-country politics, or promote political participation in the host country.¹⁰ *Professional* associations are ethno-specific groups organised around particular occupations, including business ownership. Finally, the *social service* category includes all groups that offer settlement support or other services that help immigrants adjust to life in the host country. These groups can be multi-ethnic, but they must have at least one staff person dedicated to the Portuguese or Vietnamese community and substantial outreach to immigrants.

Reliance on a simple count of organisations has limitations. Such an enumeration does not reflect the relative size—in resources or membership—of the organisations. Comparison of organisational density can nonetheless serve as an important indicator of potential social and political mobilisation (Kaufman 1999; Minkoff 1994), warranting the use of this measure to evaluate the influence of government support on organisational capacity.

Comparing Communities

We would expect organisational capacity to be roughly correlated with the size of the ethnic community: those groups with more people probably have a greater number of organisations since there are more individuals to establish them and more resources to support them. However, the nature of the relationship is not clear. It might be linear—a community with twice as many people would have twice as many organisations—but it is more likely to be curvilinear. The number of organisations in any community should increase with the number of people, but at some point organisations expand their membership or clientele rather than generate new

organisations. In either case, we must take into account the relative size of the four communities.

Across the two cities, the size of the four communities is similar *within* ethnic groups and roughly proportional *across* groups. I compare ethnic groups rather than the number of immigrants for two reasons. First, community organisations serve and are run by both immigrants and native-born individuals. Second, a substantial proportion (10–30 per cent) of those born in Vietnam are of Chinese ethnicity. Many of these individuals, if they belong to or use an ethno-specific organisation, tend to associate with Chinese organisations and do not participate in Vietnamese organisational life. In Toronto (population 2.4 million) we find just over 25,000 Vietnamese compared to just under 22,000 in metropolitan Boston (population 3.4 million).¹¹ For those of Portuguese ethnicity, we count about 87,200 individuals in Toronto and 78,500 in metro Boston.

If government intervention does *not* have the proposed effect on organisational capacity, we would expect the number of organisations to approximate the population ratios. The number of organisations in the Portuguese and Vietnamese communities would, according to the null hypothesis, be roughly equal in Toronto and Boston, while the number of Portuguese organisations in Boston should be at least three times that of the Vietnamese. Deviation from the population ratios—that is, seeing significant cross-national difference among Portuguese and greater organisational capacity among Vietnamese in Boston as compared to Portuguese—would support the proposition that government facilitates organisational development.

Findings

Table 1 compares the number of organisations in each of the seven organisational categories outlined above, as well as the overall number of organisations, for the Portuguese and Vietnamese communities of Boston and Toronto. Overall, the findings are consistent with the government-support hypotheses: the Portuguese in

Table 1. Portuguese and Vietnamese community organisations in Boston and Toronto

Organisation type	Portuguese		Vietnamese	
	Boston	Toronto	Boston	Toronto
Advocacy		7	3	3
Catholic churches	1	4	3	1
Temples			4	5
Social	8	37		
Media	2	28	4	6
Political		2	5	4
Professional	1	4	1	2
Social service	4	16	12	19
Total	16	98	32	40

Toronto have many more organisations in a broader array of categories than those in Boston, the Vietnamese in Boston have a greater density and diversity of organisations than the Portuguese in the same city, and the Vietnamese communities are quite similar in organisational infrastructure. Within organisational categories, however, there are some surprises, so I consider each comparison in turn.

Organisational Capacity in the Portuguese Communities of Toronto and Boston

Overall, there are many more organisations serving the Portuguese in Toronto than in Boston. We find no 1:1 correlation as we might expect given the similar number of ethnic Portuguese in the two cities. These results lend support to the contention that government assistance promotes organisational capacity among immigrants in Canada to a greater extent than in the United States.

The picture becomes more nuanced when we consider various categories of organisations. Among religious bodies, professional associations, social clubs and social-service providers, we find a 4:1 ratio of organisations between Toronto and Boston. These numbers appear to reflect the ethnic populations of the urban inner core, rather than the metropolitan area. There are about 45,000 individuals of Portuguese ethnicity in the former city of Toronto (population 646,480), compared to 13,500 individuals in the central core of the Boston metropolitan area.¹² We might expect that ethno-specific Catholic churches would be among those organisations most dependent on a local population and least likely to be influenced by government support, although in Toronto some Portuguese churches have received limited government funds for settlement, and the Archdiocese might be influenced by Canadian policies of multiculturalism in ensuring Portuguese-language mass. The same would be true for social clubs and professional associations. The relatively modest 4:1 ratio for social-service organisations is somewhat surprising given the stronger support in Canada for immigrant settlement. However, the relatively large Canadian welfare state might make the government less reliant on ethnic associations, preferring instead established public agencies. In contrast, governments in the United States tend to contract with non-profit organisations for service provision, providing an extra boost to ethnic social-service agencies (Marwell 2004; Salamon 1999; Smith and Lipsky 1993).

The striking differences in organisational capacity are found in the advocacy, political and media categories. There are seven groups in Toronto directly engaged in advocacy, from gay and lesbian issues to an association of seniors that speaks out on elder abuse. Not all of the groups are equally active, but they represent more latent political potential than in Boston, where there is no group primarily dedicated to advocacy. Many of the Toronto groups have limited resources, but small grants, often from government, keep them going, helping to pay for newsletters or other materials needed to stay in touch with members and organise activities. For example, funding from the provincial and federal governments helped establish a local advocacy organisation, the Portuguese Interagency Network (PIN). PIN has been active in

preparing needs assessments of the community in order to better lobby government for services. It has appeared before local and provincial government committees to speak on behalf of the Portuguese, and it served as the home for the organising effort that led to the formation of the Portuguese Canadian National Congress. A number of scholars have noted how, at the federal level, the Canadian government appears to fund its own critics through programmes such as multiculturalism (Biles 1997; Pal 1993). The results presented here indicate that the effect of government support on advocacy organisations also appears at the local level. This dynamic might also explain why there are two Portuguese political organisations in Toronto, but none in Boston.

More surprising is the relatively greater number of media organisations in Toronto. All of the above groups are voluntary or non-profit organisations. These organisations are likely to be the most affected by government support since many are resource-poor and could benefit from funding and technical assistance. It is thus noteworthy that one of the biggest imbalances in organisational ratios is found in the media category, almost all of which are run as for-profit ventures. Whereas there are 28 different newspapers, radio stations or TV programmes for Portuguese-Canadians in Toronto, there are only two in Boston. Part of the difference reflects the two areas' relative importance as foci for the larger provincial or state Portuguese community. In Ontario, Toronto is a centre for Portuguese activities but, in Massachusetts, larger and older Portuguese communities in New Bedford and Fall River, towns in the south-east corner of the state, produce newspapers and some radio programming that are consumed in the Boston area.

However, government support for immigrant communities, notably through greater regulatory support for multicultural radio and television programming in Canada, plays a role in the cross-national difference. In Toronto two TV stations are dedicated to the city's linguistic minorities and various radio stations offer a multicultural selection of programming, including music, call-in shows and some news commentary. The Portuguese are usually granted a few hours per day or per week on these multi-ethnic channels. It is worth noting that the Toronto ethnic media has been a particularly fertile ground for the formation of community advocates and politicians. One former member of municipal government had a regular radio show before being elected, a former school trustee currently works as a newspaper journalist and at least two elected school board members have worked on Portuguese-language television.

Without a clear policy in favour of multicultural broadcasting, ethnic communities in the United States are usually dependent on local authorities. City governments in metropolitan Boston require cable companies to provide community television channels in return for distribution contracts. A few Portuguese-Americans have accessed these local stations to produce a popular weekly call-in show and to broadcast community events. However, access is not guaranteed and community members complain that distribution of the shows tends to be very localised because of complicated cable agreements.

In sum, not only is the overall number of organisations in Toronto larger than in Boston, but the diversity of those organisations—ranging from voluntary advocacy associations and formalised social-service agencies to for-profit media—is richer, enhancing the community's organisational capacity.

Organisational Capacity in the Vietnamese Communities of Toronto and Boston

The organisational landscape is very different when we compare the Vietnamese in Toronto and Boston. Given a population ratio of roughly 1:1 and similar government support in both countries, we would expect few differences in organisational capacity. In fact, the total number of organisations in the two communities is roughly similar: 32 in Boston, 40 in Toronto. There is also broad parity across organisational types, with few striking differences between categories. Numbers of advocacy associations, political organisations, professional groups and temples are almost identical. In Boston we find three Catholic churches offering regular mass in Vietnamese compared to only one church in Toronto. The discrepancy is not surprising, however, because the proportion of Catholics among Vietnamese-Americans is higher than in Canada. Catholics comprised a large proportion of the Vietnamese who fled immediately after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Since the United States welcomed many more individuals from this first wave than Canada, their proportion in the overall refugee pool is probably larger than north of the border.

The difference in media organisations is much less remarkable for the Vietnamese than it was for the Portuguese. Both Vietnamese communities have developed local ethnic media, although both also rely on newspapers produced in southern California, the area of largest Vietnamese concentration in North America. The effect of multicultural programming is still somewhat in evidence in Toronto. Vietnamese-Canadians boast regular television programming on the multicultural channels, although community members complain that the larger, more established ethnic groups have monopolised the best times.

The only other slight discrepancy appears in the number of social-service and settlement organisations in the two communities. The difference seems mostly driven by multi-ethnic agencies in Toronto that have recently added Vietnamese staff and programmes as the number of Vietnamese in downtown Toronto grows. In Boston, the settlement infrastructure preceding the arrival of the Vietnamese was much weaker. With the notable exception of experienced and specialised refugee resettlement agencies such as the International Institute of Boston, Catholic Charities and Jewish Vocation Services, we find few examples of established organisations expanding to serve the Vietnamese. Vietnamese-Canadians appear to be integrated into a general newcomer infrastructure while Vietnamese-Americans are channelled through an organisational universe specific to refugee resettlement or geared to minority services.

Organisational Capacity in Boston: The Portuguese and Vietnamese Compared

Without government support, we would expect the Portuguese population in Boston to support many more organisations than the Vietnamese. Portuguese migration has a much longer history and has been fed by larger waves of immigrants. The community has had more time to establish a strong organisational infrastructure and can call on significant resources, both material and human, from first- and second-generation individuals. However, after discounting Vietnamese temples and Portuguese social clubs—types of organisation that have no equivalent in the other community—the Vietnamese appear to have more than three times the number of organisations than the Portuguese: 28 to 8. The 3 to 1 ratio is apparent in almost every organisation category: advocacy, media, politics, social service and even in the number of Catholic churches providing Vietnamese-language mass. The difference might in part be caused by the more recent nature of Vietnamese migration. We could expect a community like the Vietnamese, many of whom moved to Boston in the last 20 years, to have a greater need for settlement and social services than an older immigrant group such as the Portuguese.

However, relative newness does not necessarily explain the difference in media offerings, political groups or Catholic churches. I would suggest that the normative support accorded to refugees in the United States acts in a way similar to multiculturalism in Canada, altering the perception of mainstream actors such as the Boston Archdiocese toward accommodation of newcomers. Also, refugee settlement monies have acted as seed funds that produce spill-over effects. For example, the Vietnamese Seniors of Metropolitan Boston grew out of informal meetings that were held at the Vietnamese American Civic Association, one of the mutual assistance associations established with help from the federal government (With 1996). Vietnamese-Americans have benefited from such support while Portuguese-Americans have not.

Concluding Thoughts

According to much of the neo-Tocquevillian thinking on associationalism and civic participation, symbiotic relations between government and community organisations are not supposed to occur. Instead, state intervention should crowd out local organising. Joyce and Schambra believe that the zenith of this process was reached under President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society project: '[T]he Great Society probably came as close as any other effort in the twentieth century to capturing progressivism's ideal: public policy securely in the hands of an elite cadre of professionals, dispensing programs through vast, gleaming, rational bureaucracies' (Joyce and Schambra 1996: 20). Such statism stands in contrast with ordinary people's 'yearning for the intimate, face-to-face, participatory community to be found in small groups, family, neighborhood, church, and ethnic and voluntary associations' (Joyce and Schambra 1996: 20). Local immigrant organisations will be especially hard hit, Joyce and Schambra argue, since the liberal progressive vision of a

national community—embodied in a strong federal government—seeks to undermine parochial ethnic ties.

Yet the evidence presented here shows that immigrant organisations benefit from government intervention. To argue that the state plays a critical role in immigrant community building is not to undermine the real, independent successes of newcomer communities in developing their own organisational infrastructure. Yet an exclusive focus on how newcomers help themselves fails to consider how other societal actors also shape community building. Indeed, immigrant communities might benefit from government more than mainstream organisations: whereas just over a third of the budget for the average American non-profit human services agency depends on government funding (Salamon 1999: 114–16), organisations serving immigrant and refugee clients such as the Vietnamese American Civic Association and the Vietnamese Association of Toronto receive more than two-thirds of their revenues from government sources.

How do we reconcile the evidence presented here—supporting the view of a symbiotic relationship between the state and community organisations—with the somewhat different results reported elsewhere in this special issue? First, the most appropriate unit of analysis for research on political opportunity structures might be the nation-state rather than regional or local government. Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas (2001) find that membership in voluntary associations varies cross-nationally by state structure, political institutions and national culture. While cities or regions might espouse different policies, intra-country differences could well pale when compared with cross-national variations. We would need to compare migrant organising in at least two cities in each of a number of countries to test the relative importance of intra- and inter-state difference. None of the articles in this special issue, mine included, employs such a research design. However, recent work by Ruud Koopmans (2004) appears to support the view that a political opportunity approach is most pronounced at the cross-national level. Although not focused on organisations, Koopmans looks at newspaper reports of migrant mobilisation and finds that, while cities in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom differ in the extent to which migrants are involved in public debates, the cities of each country still cluster together so that the overwhelming pattern is one of greater migrant mobilisation in the UK, moderate mobilisation in the Netherlands and relatively limited mobilisation in Germany. We can of course learn something by comparing cities and regions, but I would posit that nation-specific discourses on immigrant integration, and the ‘borrowing’ of policies across jurisdictions within the same country, mean that intra-state differences are less pronounced than inter-state variation.

Second, we might be dealing with a curvilinear relationship between state intervention and community organising. It is possible that at some point government intervention crowds out grassroots efforts, but it is clear that the United States is not close to such a high level of state involvement. According to scholars such as Esping-Andersen (1990), Canada and the United States are both liberal welfare states less

characterised by the conservatism and socialism seen on the European continent. Canada is more socialist than the United States—as reflected in its more generous settlement policies—but it shares more attributes with its neighbour than with most European countries. It is possible that patterns in North America and Europe will be different, given different welfare states and different ideologies regarding the reception of immigrants. Since both Canada and the United States are traditional migrant-receiving societies, both promote a discourse of migrant incorporation, linked to easy citizenship acquisition. It is possible that in such a political and cultural opportunity structure, migrants will assert themselves more and can better withstand crowding-out effects.

Finally, there might be a question of time. Many of the individuals running the large immigrant organisations that benefit the most from government funding are the children of immigrants or are individuals who came at a young age. As Chung describes in her paper in this issue of *JEMS*, 1.5- and second-generation individuals are better placed to maximise policy, coalition and funding networks given their greater linguistic and social integration in the host country.

Future research will need to see whether state support benefits all groups equally, or if it is particularly helpful for resource-poor communities such as the Portuguese and Vietnamese. We also need to investigate why organisations matter. Why would a community necessarily be better off with a greater number or more diverse set of local institutions? Moya (this issue) wonders why scholars care more about political or advocacy organisations while immigrants themselves appear more interested in social and recreational groups. Although it is beyond the scope of the discussion here, I would suggest that a rich organisational infrastructure—including a diversity of organisational types—improves the chances of immigrants' participatory citizenship. The higher level of government support in Canada has probably led to higher levels of citizenship acquisition and political participation by newcomers there than in the United States (Bloemraad 2002, 2003).

Ironically, the group in this study that has benefited the least from government largesse—the Portuguese in metropolitan Boston—owes the existence of the community's central service provider and advocate, the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers, to the very Great Society initiatives that Joyce and Schambra (1996) criticise. The Portuguese, with no established settlement programmes on which to draw, benefited from government urban renewal and community development schemes administered through the Model Cities programme of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Dreyer 1978; Ito-Alder 1980). It is perhaps no coincidence that, as such programmes faded away, or became re-directed to racial minorities, the Portuguese community largely failed to develop its organisational capacity further. For immigrant communities—and perhaps also for the general population—a helping hand might be necessary for full participation in a polity's civic and political life.

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Notes

- [1] Most money went to programmes aimed at working-age males—it was felt that successful integration began with reliable employment for the family breadwinner.
- [2] Not all provincial governments offer extensive newcomer services. Ontario and Quebec have been the most active.
- [3] Interview with Canadian Heritage official, 9 January 2001.
- [4] The INS ceased to exist on 1 March 2003. Its various functions were broken apart and absorbed into the new US Department for Homeland Security. The data and findings reported here pre-date this change.
- [5] Interviews with INS officials, 6 November 2001 and 2 May 2002.
- [6] We can ask whether other US programmes might fulfil the function of Canadian immigrant settlement policy or official multiculturalism. Space limitations prevent a thorough discussion, but programmes aimed at racial minorities have served as a resource for 1.5- and second-generation Vietnamese-Americans. However, these programmes do not serve exactly the same function as in Canada since they are usually not created with immigrants in mind.
- [7] I am indebted to Warwick Wilson (1997) for having gathered budget information on VAT for the 1984–97 period.
- [8] Unlike in many European countries, where organisations must register with local or regional officials, there is no central database of organisations in North America.
- [9] The vast majority of Portuguese are Catholics. Over 95 per cent of adult Portuguese immigrants in Ontario reported Roman Catholicism as their religion on the 1991 Canadian Census. The US Census does not ask a question about religion, but there is no reason to suspect any significant difference among the Portuguese there. Among Vietnamese, approximately 10–20 per cent of those in North America are Catholic. Most of the remainder are Buddhist or practise no particular religion beyond private ancestor worship. In all four communities there is an extremely small minority of adherents of Protestant Christian churches. These churches are not included in the analysis.
- [10] I have excluded from this category, and from the fraternal/social category, regiment-specific veterans' associations that are found in the Vietnamese community. It was almost impossible to get an accurate count of these groups since most are quite informal and also somewhat secretive. See, for example, Pfeifer (1999) for similar problems gaining access to these groups.
- [11] The new city of Toronto, which came into being on 1 January 1998, includes the former municipalities of Toronto, York, East York, North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke. The figures are from the 1996 Canadian and 2000 American Censuses. In Canada, the number is based on single responses to the ethnic ancestry question: 'To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person's ancestors belong?' (Both Portuguese and Vietnamese are given as

possible answers.) In the US, the number of Portuguese comes from single responses to the ancestry question, 'What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?' while the Vietnamese figure is from the detailed race question (single responses), counting those who checked the box 'Vietnamese' to the question 'What is this person's race?'

- [12] This combines the Portuguese populations in the cities of Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Cambridge, Medford and Somerville.

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