**Raiders of the Lost Archive**

**Tales of Discovery, Data and Really Cool Social Science**

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|  | Somalia | Nigeria | Catalonia | Estonia | France |
| Initially, what is the topic/question you were interested in examining for the research project that you were going into the field to collect data on? | Why do colonial languages persist as official in Africa; what are the cultural consequences of abandoning indigenous languages as official | What are the differential consequences for political behavior of religious conversion | Under what conditions do indigenous cultural revivals succeed | What are the political strategies of minorities in the face of national movements led by majorities | Do Muslim immigrants face higher barriers to integration in Europe than Christians; and if so, why |
| What did people tell you when you were going into the field? | You’ll never get a job writing about Somalia | You’ve got tenure; why are you doing this? | Juan Linz: interesting ideas, but you ought to learn something about Spain (which I can teach you in the next two hours on the phone (it was midnight when he called) | Estonian experts told me that to even hypothesize that Russians could become “Estonians” showed utter ignorance of Russian culture. | Gilles Kepel and all other profs at Sciences-Po: your research strategy of comparing Serer/Joola Christians and Muslims in France is irrelevant; the only issue on religion has to do with Algerians |
| How were you going to go about collecting relevant research material and from where? | “Field experiments” 30 years before the term was invented | Weekly trips to an Anglican Church and a Muslim Mosque each week and observe | Attending classes in Catalan for migrant and public officials and other observational exercises to learn the challenges of a linguistic revival | I organized with RA’s comparable surveys, ethnographic observations, and an experiment in 4 Union Republics of the FSU. | A survey of 2nd generation Serer/Joola immigrants; game theory experiments where native French played trust and other games randomly with Serer/Joola Muslims and Christians |
| What did you find upon arrival? First thoughts? Second thoughts? Last thoughts? | I was a peace corps volunteer in Somalia—we were all kicked out due to Soviet influence -- and was happy to reconnect with friends, though I was kicked out individually a week later | I found a guardian angel on my first day in the country who became my mentor throughout my 18 months in country. Pure luck. | Watching Catalans performing the “Sardana” changed the course of my career from Gramsci to Schelling | Last thoughts: I still haven’t learned Russian declensions | Social order was rock solid amid complete government collapse. |
| What troubles/opportunities did you encounter along the way? Which ones were one off and which ones recurred? | Getting kicked out was traumatic; though I found a great research site in NE Kenya | Bringing a family (with two young kids and my wife) was a logistical nightmare, but enable me to experience living in the country (schools, pediatricians; food) | I felt guilty calling living in Barcelona (e.g. the opera; taking my son to Barça games) and calling this part of fieldwork |  | Finding Serer/Joola immigrants (1st and 2nd gen) was like needles in a haystack. This was recurrent for survey, for experiments, and for open ended interviews. |
| What was the most comical thing you encountered in the field? | In a conversation with a cab driver (in Somali), he called me an idiot for not speaking Italian | Getting fooled on the price of onions |  | Listening to the radio on my final bus trip out of the country, I was perplexed as to why OJ’s wife would have killed him |  |
| How (if at all) did the project change after you started collecting your data? |  | Two observations: Christian and Muslim Yorubas were not divided politically; and I couldn’t find any differences in political behavior. Those questions made me rethink my project. | I needed to explain why a thoroughly bourgeois society would put such effort in promoting a language with no economic value or enhanced ability to communicate with anyone |  |  |
| What advice (if any) turned out to be right on the money? What was completely off? | Best advice: don’t go home if the PAP collapses as completely stupid  Worst advice: condition your research on its job market prospects | | | | |
| What would you advise others who engage in data collection efforts? | Two contradictory pieces of advice: (1) Apply the techniques and protocols that the discipline demands; and (2) Fishing is not a crime | | | | |