

*For my Santa and Saba, and Ruthie and Yakov
Thank you for filling my head with stories of an empire.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is long, but it needs to be, please bear with me. The people thanked, in name and otherwise, made this work possible and held me together as I wrote this dissertation. The journey of writing this dissertation did not start in 2017, as such, neither will the tales of acknowledgement.

In chronological order, Clare McGovern, Richard Johnston, Antje Ellermann, and Orit Kedar helped me build a foundational understanding of the discipline. Clare (deservingly) gave me the worst grade I ever received on a paper and then took hours of her time to explain why I was wrong and how to improve my understanding and analysis. She taught the first political science class I took as a first-year undergraduate student. Two years later, when a professor in the theatre department said, “If you can’t picture doing this for the rest of your life, do literally anything else”, her lessons stayed in my mind and gave me an exit option that I *could* picture myself doing for the rest of my life. Dick always answered my mid-lecture questions that led to a million and one tangents over the years; he brought parties into my life and continues to provide a necessary behavioural antidote to my structuralist ways. Antje supervised a keen undergraduate student’s *unofficial* thesis and encouraged curiosity and analytical inquiry. I went through much methodological confusion during graduate school but little substantive confusion, largely due to the courses I took with her over the years at UBC. Finally, of all those who helped me, mentored me, and supported me on my way to graduate school, Orit remains especially selfless and generous. I will likely never know why she agreed to hire an undergraduate from half the world away who merely read and loved her book, but I will always remain indebted to her for the chance she took on me. She taught me the mechanics of doing research, working with data, and how to read academic work critically. She mentored me through graduate school applications, worked through writing my first academic paper, and generally showed me “the strings” of the profession. I wish to thank her for everything, but especially for giving me the confidence to start a PhD.

Moving on to Penn, specifically the unexpected joy that Julie Lynch brought into my life. As many students and mentees of Julie, of which there are many, will tell you, “Julie Lynch taught me how to think”. When it came to me, Julie also attempted to teach me how to write, have a work-life balance, and generally flourish in academia while maintaining integrity. The thing about Julie that makes her such an amazing advisor is that along with a sharp mind, Julie is incredibly intuitive. She knows not every student is the same; everyone seeks different outcomes from graduate school; everyone has different abilities and capabilities; everyone experiences different life events along their graduate school journey. From our first meeting in 2017, she knew the type of work I would one day do before I knew myself, yet she never pushed me. She waited for me to get there on my own because I think she knew that I needed to.

Julie gave me space to think when I needed it; she gave me support when I needed it; in fact, by now, she has mastered the art of what I call the “realistic pep-talk”. I am forever grateful for her ponderings and probes, which allowed me to explore the questions I wanted to, in the way I wanted to. Her ability to carefully dissect work across subfields and her constant support of not only my work but also me—as a person—allowed me to write this dissertation. Over the years, I needed to prioritize and organize what I wanted to do and what I *could* feasibly do (well). It was Julie who taught me how to do that. Thanks to Julie’s unwavering support, I started *and finished* this dissertation.

Julie understands that life does not stop during graduate school, for anyone, but she also understands that many graduate students do not have linear lives. It is this curvature that often gives students like me the inspiration and motivation to ask certain questions. She understands that sometimes the people who have the most to say come from the most unexpected of places, and just need a little (or a lot) of help in finding a way to say it. After I fell, Julie made sure I had the tools and support to do what I loved, and she helped me find a way to do it the best way possible. When I could

not see, when I could not type, when I could not speak fluently, when I could not believe in myself, Julie did. She never told me it would be easy, but rather that I could do it. Julie accepted and commented on drafts with deadlines that had long passed, accepted last-minute meetings, and ensured that even when no one understood what I wanted to say about a few small countries in the middle of Europe—I had the tools to say it. Over the last six years, I watched Julie fill many roles—researcher, writer, teacher, mentor, administrator, and more. She always has more on her plate than she should because she not only cares about the topics and people she studies, but she also helps others study the people, places, and things *they* care about, and she helps them do it well.

It is rare to have your academic role model in your department, let alone your committee; I won the lottery with Dawn.¹ Without Dawn Teele, this dissertation would be theory-less and data-less; it would be a whole lot of nothing. Dawn not only paved the way for me research-wise by making perhaps the largest contribution to the study of democratization in recent years—a contribution that gave me a starting block to dive off—but she also paved it professionally by diligently advising me through the tedious “how-to” process of historical research. While having one of the most articulate and brilliant minds I have come across over the years, it was Dawn’s generosity that made this project possible and allowed me to finish my dissertation in a timely manner. She herself funded well over half of the digitization efforts this project required and advised me on how to approach fieldwork before I stepped foot in an archive. Dawn’s own work, tenacity, and drive to provide simple and clear answers to complicated questions, I believe, helped shape this work more than she realizes. Dawn once told me I should pick a work I admired, study it carefully, and model my own after it. What Dawn did not realize when she told me this in 2022 was that I had read a draft of her book during my first year of grad school (2017-2018) and was already attempting to model my work after hers. While

¹ Dawn served as co-chair with Julie until she moved institutions in 2021.

she listed the names of some of the most prominent young political scientists doing historical research, she neglected to recognize the pivotal role *her own* work played in shaping not only my dissertation research but also my general desire to carry out and produce historically accurate, mixed-method research. In the years I have known Dawn, there has not been a single conversation with her where I did not leave curious, motivated, and learning something new. I am grateful for her and her efforts in helping me overcome hurdles and clearing a path forward for me, and my research. Dawn's commitment to this project made every part, from the empirics, theory, and conceptualizations, possible. Yet, it is her determination and advice in paving a path forward for young women in academia that I, and so many others, are indebted to her for.

Rudy Sil rounds out my all-star committee. In academia, there are so many smart and accomplished people, but there are far fewer *kind* people. Rudy is all three and more. Right after I added Rudy to my committee, as a sort of thank-you, I guess, I sent him an email, asking him extremely specific questions about 19th-century worker funds. I had just started reading the literature on early forms of labour unions and social insurance. I was beyond confused—there was so much jargon. I needed help. *That same day*, Rudy answered my email with such care that I not only had answers to every question I posed, but he also included suggestions for my next steps. I convinced Rudy to join my committee by telling him I would have two chapters on the Czech crown lands in the Austrian half of the Empire to explore how party systems consolidated in places with strong and ethnically homogenous labour movements after the collapse of Empires. Neither of the two chapters was written, but Rudy stayed on my committee; he stayed active—more than intended—and his ability to send me back to the drawing board several times helped improve the theoretical bedrock of this work.

Finally, it is a Rudy anecdote that shines a light on how much I changed from the beginning of graduate school to its end and shows the methodological journey I was on as I tried to figure out

how to answer the questions I wanted to ask. I met Rudy on my prospective student day in 2017. I was young and smug. I thought I knew everything—what I would study and how I would study it. The thing about graduate school is that it teaches you how little you know; it humbles you. On my prospective student day in 2017, I declared to Rudy that I simply did not want to do fieldwork and that I did not *need* to do fieldwork. Rudy politely stated that if that is how I felt, then maybe Penn was not for me because comparativists at Penn do fieldwork. Well, I was wrong—to answer the questions I wanted to ask, I *needed* to do fieldwork, but Rudy was also wrong—Penn *was* for me because it was one of the only places where I could have written this dissertation.

Penn introduced me to faculty such as Michael Jones Correa, Guy Grossman, Matthew Levendusky, and Daniel Hopkins, who, at one point or another, cleared their schedules to sit with me, read with me, and just talk about research that *I*, not them, found interesting. In particular, I want to thank Daniel Hopkins, who understood very early on what I was interested in explaining and worked with me in the early grad school years to try and develop it. In the end, I took a very different approach, but Dan's support and ability to see that I needed more time to work on my dissertation remain among the many gifts I received from faculty in graduate school. I would also like to thank the administrative staff of the Political Science department, especially Jennifer Bottomley and Nathalie Lacarriere; they both answered endless emails, moved my classes to rooms with appropriate lighting, and helped me understand and get through the many administrative issues that come with being a dual citizen, yet international student, in the United States.

While at Penn, I was lucky to overlap with Patricia Posey and Isabel Perrera. Watching them accomplish their goals was not only inspirational but it was also helpful. Anyone who goes through a PhD program will tell you that mentorship from older graduate students makes or breaks your experience. Patricia and Isabel made graduate school as easy as it could be. They guided me through

coursework, comprehensive exams, the prospectus writing process, and all the moves and tribulations that came with fieldwork and the dissertation writing process. Thank you for all the phone calls, accountability writing sessions that lasted too late into the night, and for sharing your secrets and insights with me.

While friendship and mentorship from students further ahead in the program are important, it is ultimately the friendships you make with your cohort that carry you through problem sets, to finding your research niche, through fieldwork, several international moves, and dissertation defence. Thank you to my cohort mates Sabrina Arias, Casey Mahoney, Santiago Cunial, Claire Ma, and Kim Cardenas, who read far too many conference abstracts, shared far too many beers, and graciously listened to far too many of my impassioned rants.

During my time in graduate school, I had the privilege of visiting several institutions as I figured out how to ask and study the questions I cared about. Thank you to Maggie Penn, Jessica Sun, and Leeat Yariv for triggering and entertaining my intellectual curiosity (and confusion), early in graduate school. This dissertation has no formal theory, but I hope your mentorship, specifically the care you took to explain things to me for hours if not days, shines through the narrative. I remain convinced that a natural marriage is one between formal theory and process tracing—both are concerned with questions of *how*—this insight was made possible through your careful explanations and exceptionally clear teaching.

The thing about graduate school that no one tells you is that there is no “good time” to go. No matter *when* you decide to spend six years of your life on one thing, the decision will churn out personal consequences. Luckily, I managed to mitigate some of fieldwork’s effects on a young woman’s life by moving closer to my field site. Thank you to Jonathan Hopkin, who made my move to London possible, and to him and Waltraud Schelkle for integrating me into the community that

first showed me that it is, in fact, possible to be happy in graduate school. The time I spent at the European Institute (LSE) was amongst the most productive and fulfilling periods of the last six years. In addition to the faculty, I must also thank Haile Zola, Karin Vaagland, Chris Bick, Tommaso Crescioli and Virginia Crespi de Valldaura for welcoming me into their cohort and lives.

My time at Oxford was made possible thanks to the support of Jane Gingrich, Ben Ansell, and Alexander Kuo. Despite deep engagement from all three, Jane's role in making this dissertation happen deserves its own mention and accolades. Jane was the *first* faculty member to give me feedback on the ensuing chapters in 2021. She would become the first in a long line of people to read texts full of typos, half-flushed ideas, and chapters that ask more questions than they answer. (I hope that is no longer the case.) Jane's ability to hit the nail on the head and highlight the exact cause of reader confusion and author error is incredible. You can see Jane processing and thinking deeply about every sentence you utter, and her ability to answer (and if not, aid) graduate students while always remaining kind—yet critical—is nothing short of inspirational. Over the last year, I also got to know Lenka Buščíková, who quickly turned into an additional source of support as the year wore on. My academic community in the London area was only as warm as it has been the last few years because Tugba Bozcaga, Marnie Howlett, Jorge Mangonnet, Vicente Valentim, Melis Laebens, and Marta Antonetti were there to welcome me, help me, and encourage me. Every one of them infused my life with creativity and laughter.

In addition to the faculty already mentioned, several faculty members aided me in making sense of incoherent thoughts, mounds of data (with about half of it non-randomly “missing”) and correcting factual and logical errors made during the analyzing and writing process. Several also showed interest in my work and sat with me for hours just to discuss it; for both, I am grateful. The generosity of Jeff Kopstein, Øyvind Skorge, Jason Wittenberg, Edina Szöcsik, Volha Charnysh,

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There is a reason this dissertation was not written before 2023, and it is *not* because I was the only person who could do it. The languages one would need to know to write this are, well, many, of which I speak, well, zero. In addition to recent advances made to translating technologies like DeepL, I found historians who cared enough about democracy in their homes, or lack thereof, to try and help me, a social scientist, understand its origins. I would like to thank the late Geró András, who unfortunately never got to see the finished product but answered every single one of my (many) emails within 24 hours and helped me with sources, translations, and finding said sources. I would also like to thank Demeter Gábor, Ballabás Dániel, Pap József and Pál Judit, who generously shared data they collected with me and who thoroughly answered questions about said data. I would also like to thank Thomas Lorman for his in-depth comments about the Hungarian cases, and historians Borries Kuzmany, Jeremy King, Birgitta Bader-Zaar, Robert Nemes, Tara Zahra and Pieter Judson for writing their books, giving me a hobby, and making it easy for me, a social scientist to turn her hobby—

reading Habsburg history—into her job.² Finally, I *beg* Hungarian scholars to stop apologizing for their perfect English; the burden should be on me as a woman who studies Hungary without speaking Hungarian. (I am working on it!)

How *did* I do it? Well, I had Zita and the rest of the Ferenczi family. After I fell and recovered, I was forced to make decisions regarding how I was going to spend my limited time left in grad school. I did not have time to learn Hungarian and finish a dissertation. Zita was my roommate while I was working at The Hebrew University with Orit. Over the years, we went from being strangers to roommates to friends to sisters. My family in Israel became her family, and her family in Hungary became my family. While I was on fieldwork, her family housed me, fed me, and drove me across the country and often into other countries. During COVID, while I could not access the archives, Dezső went to take scans of the documents I pulled. *Every* book I could not access from libraries in London or the US, Dezső found for me through online second-hand stores. Judit and Dezső painstakingly digitized the electoral data in Chapter 5 when my eyes would not focus. Zita came with me to archives and helped me identify what every document was and helped me sort it to the appropriate folder. She digitized the directory, which is the source of much of the data in the second half of the dissertation, and helped me scour libraries, archives, and the internet for more information about individual associations and their branches. She also organized my last archive visit to the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives and introduced me to archivist Király Mátyás, who was also an incredible help as I tried to “follow the money” and understand where the funding for associations came from. Zita and the rest of the Ferenczi family are the reason I could dream of attempting to write this dissertation, and they are also the reason I managed to do it.

² Borries Kuzmany and Jeremy King also answered several emails and clarifying questions about their work.

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During the last couple of years as a PhD candidate, my case went from “unsolved major crime” to “closed” (without closure),³ I settled a civil case, and I finally found a doctor in the UK who was willing to work with me (within the boundaries of the NHS) to help me gain a little relief from near-daily migraines. Three women made sure that I could stay on track to finish this manuscript and focus despite the chaos that comes with being a survivor, plaintiff, and human in chronic pain. Thank you to Joan Toborowsky, Kate Daniels-Addison, and Dr. Elen Williams, who listened to me, represented me, and worked with me to have a better quality of life as I adjusted to my new steady state.

As someone whose life is splintered across five time zones and even more countries, *my* “people”, those who held me together as I wrote this dissertation, are similarly scattered around the world. First, I would like to thank my “adoptive” families, in addition to the Ferenczi family, who welcomed me into their homes during the many celebrations and holidays spent away from my own, and who helped me adjust to whichever city I moved to, the Toff and Berger family, the Yudkoff family, and the Levy family.

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³ In case anyone is wondering how the UBC RCMP informs survivors of a major crime that their case has been closed, with no arrest, they message their brother on LinkedIn—who did not know about the case. Apparently googling and finding an updated contact for said survivor is simply too hard. I would like to thank myself for having better research skills than the RCMP.

up after I fell. Thank you to Rita, Marta, Adam, Darrick, and Wynter, who looked after Lucifer (often for months at a time) while I went on fieldwork. Thank you to Adam Towle—everyone needs “a person” during grad school, someone you can count on when you have no family close by, someone who will pick you up from airports, carry boxes up and down stairs every time you leave and return from fieldwork, nearly die hiking up a mountain with you, look after your 101 house plants and blind cat while you go on fieldwork, and let you rant about history, or academia for hours at a time; Adam, Rio and Daphne were “my people” (and dogs) while I was in Philly.

There are three special people in my life who followed my academic journey through its various stages, some from the first grade to the end of the PhD, thank you to Danielle Levy, Alex Mierke-Zatwarnicki, and Darrick Lee. Danielle, my oldest and best friend from the first grade and flatmate in London, put up with me during the tail end of my PhD. Alex Mierke-Zatwarnicki has been on the other end of the phone for hours at a time (often with Liza)—no matter the time zone. Our ability to manoeuvre through dozens of topics in a four-hour conversation is often exactly the distraction one needs while battling graduate school exhaustion. During the coursework years, Alex shared resources with me and repeatedly had to remind me to go to bed and to stop working on the weekend (still working on it). After the coursework years, Alex’s company was always welcomed as we hopped back and forth from Canada, the Northeast Corridor, and various European countries. Without her there would be no road trips (even the ill-fated road trip of 2020 was worth it), there would be no canoe trips, and cabin trips would be a whole lot less fun. Finally, Darrick is the genius who sat beside me for the IB entrance exams, walked with me through the halls of Richmond High, pulled all-nighters with me at IKB Library, circled Penn Park with me way too many times, and most recently always gave me a couch to sleep on for the days I was at Oxford. Not everyone gets to go through high school, undergrad, and graduate school with their best friend, but I would not have done it any other way.

Finally, easily the most important people in my life—my family. When anyone meets my parents, it becomes obvious why I think the way I think. My parents not only supported my research *and me* throughout graduate school, but they supported me throughout my entire life, from when I thought I would be belting on Broadway to when they had to drive me to swim practice at 5 am and then voice lessons at 4 pm. As the eldest daughter, I also got to watch them raise my siblings. They gave the three of us everything they never had, all the good that they did have, but most importantly, they gave us unconditional love and support. The months I spent living in Toronto with my family during the COVID pandemic filled me with enough comfort, warmth, and care to carry through the rest of the PhD. Netta—or as I call her, “the best person I know”, and Matan visited me, laughed with me, travelled with me, grew with me, and they continue to teach me something every time we get to see each other. Growing up with my siblings and watching them find their own paths, views, and ways of navigating the world has taught me more about people (and Gen Z) than any book ever could. My nuclear family consists of a clinical researcher, economist, and computer scientist, and my sister will no doubt soon be a therapist; every one of us sees the world through a different lens. As a result, whenever the five of us manage to all be in the same city, our dinner table conversations are not exactly conducted in hushed tones. But it is exactly these dinner table conversations and growing up in a house that prioritized reading, learning, and asking questions about the world that no doubt shaped how I see it and my drive to understand it. For that, and *so* many other things, I am forever grateful.

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