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Becoming and Belonging? Lived experiences of naturalization and the implementation of citizenship law in Germany and Canada

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Naturalization, the acquisition of citizenship, constitutes the final step of a migrant's formal integration process. For many, becoming a citizen means gaining civic rights, protection from deportation, and freedom of movement. Mobility across borders hinges on our ability to identify ourselves through legal documentation as a citizen. As security concerns are increasingly used to justify the surveillance and monitoring of people's legal identity and status, asking questions about how citizenship is allocated and how nation states determine who belongs to their citizenry has become a vital part of migration scholarship. Citizenship policies are often interpreted as a reflection of a country's identity – what it values in a citizen – and are commonly used as an indicator of a country's general approach to immigration. Naturalization literature has long sought to determine and evaluate the precise factors deciding whether someone will become a citizen.

This dissertation examines the process of citizenship acquisition, its impact on the individual naturalizing and the experiences of those enforcing citizenship policy day-to-day. It asks how someone acquires citizenship formally, administratively, and emotionally and how that citizenship is interpreted. How is citizenship law put into action? Does becoming a citizen mean that someone feels like they belong to that country? Employing a bottom-up approach, this research studies the implementation of citizenship policy utilizing in-depth interviews with both new citizens and street-level bureaucrats in Germany and Canada. It combines theoretical and methodological approaches from public administration, political science and socio-legal studies incorporating questions of discretion and the perception thereof, definitions of citizenship, and legal consciousness.

This is a volume in the series of the Meijers Research Institute and Graduate School of the Leiden Law School of Leiden University. This study is part of the Law School's research programme 'Social Citizenship & Migration'.

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Lived Experiences of Naturalization
and the Implementation of Citizenship Law
in Germany and Canada

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