

# COMPARING CANADA

## METHODS AND PERSPECTIVES ON CANADIAN POLITICS

Edited by Luc Turgeon,  
Martin Papillon, Jennifer Wallner,  
and Stephen White



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# Contents

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Acknowledgments / vii

1 Introduction / 3

LUC TURGEON

**Part 1 The Politics of Diversity**

2 Framing Self-Determination: The Politics of Indigenous Rights  
in Canada and the United States / 27

MARTIN PAPILLON

3 The Management of Nationalism in Canada and Spain / 50

ANDRÉ LECOURES

4 The Comparative Study of Race: Census Politics in Canada,  
the United States, and Great Britain / 73

DEBRA THOMPSON

**Part 2 Political Mobilization**

5 The Comparative Study of Canadian Voting Behaviour / 97

ÉRIC BÉLANGER and LAURA B. STEPHENSON

- 6 Canadian Immigrant Electoral Support in Comparative Perspective / 123  
STEPHEN WHITE and ANTOINE BILODEAU
- 7 Between Hope and Fear: Comparing the Emotional Landscapes of the Autism Movement in Canada and the United States / 147  
MICHAEL ORSINI and SARAH MARIE WIEBE

### **Part 3 Political Institutions and Public Policy**

- 8 Parliamentary Politics and Legislative Behaviour / 171  
JEAN-FRANÇOIS GODBOUT
- 9 Comparing Federations: Testing the Model of Market-Preserving Federalism on Canada, Australia, and the United States / 198  
JENNIFER WALLNER and GERARD W. BOYCHUK
- 10 Climate Compared: Sub-Federal Dominance on a Global Issue / 222  
DAVID HOULE, ERICK LACHAPPELLE, and BARRY G. RABE
- 11 Putting Canadian Social Policy in a Comparative Perspective / 247  
RIANNE MAHON and DANIEL BÉLAND
- 12 Economic Development Policies in Ontario and Quebec: Thinking about Structures of Representation / 271  
PETER GRAEFE
- 13 Governing Immigrant Attraction and Retention in Halifax and Moncton: Do Linguistic Divisions Impede Cooperation? / 292  
KRISTIN R. GOOD
- 14 Conclusion / 317  
MARTIN PAPILLON, LUC TURGEON, JENNIFER WALLNER,  
and STEPHEN WHITE

Contributors / 326

Index / 332

# 1

## Introduction

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LUC TURGEON

Canadians have always been obsessed with comparison. One simply has to open a newspaper, listen to a radio, or hear students talk about their country to realize that the Canadian story is almost always told from a comparative perspective. When describing their country, Canadians often present a narrative that compares its trajectory to that of the American experience. Canada, the story goes, may be less powerful, but it is a more generous and egalitarian country than the United States, shown both by its universal health care system and its “mosaic” model of immigrant integration. A similar narrative appears when provinces are compared. Alberta, for example, is often presented, rightly or wrongly, as the United States of Canada, while Quebec is sometimes cast as a mini-European outpost in North America.

These conventional wisdoms about social and political life may not always be accurate, but the impulse to compare is the right instinct and, indeed, one increasingly shared by Canadian political scientists. We argue in this book that examining how the features of Canadian politics measure up to those of other countries, and how politics in provinces or Canadian cities compare to each other, is essential to better understanding our country. The comparative approach allows us to overcome a number of potential pitfalls in the study of Canadian politics: making erroneous normative judgments about aspects of Canadian politics, exaggerating Canada’s specificity or uniqueness, neglecting the country’s internal diversity, and over-emphasizing the importance of certain factors in explaining different political

phenomena. The case for comparison, however, is not solely methodological. We also suggest that adopting a more systematic comparative outlook on Canada is essential to revitalizing Canadian politics as a field of study. Comparisons not only infuse our research agenda with new theoretical and methodological perspectives but also contribute to expanding and opening the field to new questions or research programs that are not associated with the traditional canons of Canadian political science.

We are not alone in thinking this way. A growing enthusiasm for, and engagement with, comparative politics among students of Canadian politics led to the publication in 2008 of *The Comparative Turn in Canadian Political Science* (White et al. 2008). The volume artfully documents the contributions of Canadian political scientists to the study of comparative politics, asking whether those working on Canada are the source of innovation in comparative theory or the beneficiaries of theories developed elsewhere. The various chapters in *Comparative Turn* underline significant Canadian contributions to the comparative study of identity politics, federalism, and policy analysis, to name a few. That being said, the concluding chapter, penned by Alan C. Cairns, ends on a cautionary note, observing that Canadians “take” far more than they “give” to comparative theory development (243).

*Comparative Turn* and the attention it received testify to the growing interest in comparison in Canadian political science.<sup>1</sup> It in fact suggests a blurring of the boundaries between “Canadianists” and “comparativists,” a term long reserved for those who studied anything but Canada. Not only are Canadianists increasingly engaged in the theoretical debates of the comparative literature, as argued in *Comparative Turn*, but they have also increasingly adopted into their research the theories, tools, and methods of comparative politics in order to study Canada. This is where the present volume adds to the current debate by focusing on the art of comparing as a strategy for understanding Canada. Rather than looking at the contributions of Canadian scholars to the comparative literature, we ask what a comparative approach can bring to the study of Canada. Three questions motivate the contributions to this volume. First, *how do Canadians compare their country?* What are the diverse approaches, methods, and theories used to understand Canada from a comparative perspective? Second, *why do Canadians compare?* What value is added by a comparative strategy to the study of Canada? And third, *what can we learn about Canadian politics through comparison?* What are, in other words, the empirical benefits of comparing Canada?

Building on these core questions, our ambition is to provide an alternative reading of the classic themes of Canadian political science, from identity politics to electoral behaviour, from federalism to the study of public policy, by using a comparative approach. The twelve empirical chapters in *Comparing Canada* cover most of the topics one would encounter in an introductory course in Canadian politics. They are not, however, reviews of the literature or broad survey chapters such as are often found in textbooks. We have instead asked each contributor to prepare an original empirical analysis in order to demonstrate the concrete value of the comparative approach as a strategy for understanding Canada. For the most part, the contributions tend to be puzzle-oriented, theory-driven analyses, in the pure tradition of comparative analysis. *Comparing Canada* can therefore serve as a point of reference for scholars looking for comparative outlooks on Canada while also complementing a Canada-focused reading list at the advanced undergraduate or graduate levels. Taken together, the chapters not only confirm the value of a comparative strategy in understanding Canada but also make the case for a more systematic inclusion of comparative methods and theories in the study and teaching of Canadian politics – an argument that we return to in the conclusion of this book.

In the remainder of this introduction, we elaborate our case for comparing Canada and present some of the methodological anchors associated with a comparative strategy. But first, in order to put the current interest in comparison into perspective, we briefly discuss the role comparative approaches have thus far played in Canadian political science.

### **Comparisons in Canadian Political Science: Is Everything Old New Again?**

Ronald Watts (1999, 1) once said: “Many Canadians seem to think of comparative studies as simply excuses for foreign travel by self-indulgent Members of Parliament and sabbatical scholars or as a shameful acceptance of the pretensions of foreigners.” Richard Simeon (1989, 411) also observed that Canadian scholars tended to be “too closely tied up in current events” unfolding in the country to engage in the comparative literature. Such a view has, rightly or wrongly, contributed to the perception of Canadian politics as a field of study isolated from developments in the broader social sciences, pursuing somewhat arcane questions of limited interest to anyone beyond a small number of scholars – what Robert Vipond (2008, 4) describes as “political science created by Canadians, for Canadians, about Canadians.”

When looking at some of the classics in the study of Canadian politics, one is indeed struck by the predominance of case studies, from C.B. Macpherson's (1962) and James Mallory's (1954) studies of Alberta's Social Credit to Richard Simeon's (1972) study of Canadian intergovernmental relations and Jill Vickers's work on the Canadian feminist movement (see Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle 1993). There is something problematic, however, in presenting Canadian political science as having paid little attention to other countries or as having evolved somehow independently from theoretical developments in other fields of the discipline, including comparative politics.

Canadian political science has in fact often implicitly, if not explicitly, been comparative. Classics such as Robert MacGregor Dawson's *The Government of Canada* (1947) and James Mallory's *The Structure of Canadian Government* (1971) are full of comparisons between Canadian political institutions and those of the United Kingdom. Gad Horowitz's (1966) classic study of Canadian political culture is also comparative, contrasting the situation of Canada not only to the United States but also to Australia and Europe. In his book on patronage, which looks at cases as different as medieval Europe and pre-colonial Africa, Vincent Lemieux (1977) also compares the use of patronage in Quebec and the United States, arguing that differences in the types of patronage in both cases could be explained by differences in the structure of their respective party systems.

Moreover, Canadian political science did not evolve in isolation from theoretical developments in other disciplines and countries. Political economy in Canada is heavily indebted to theoretical developments abroad, especially British neo-Marxism and the French regulation school (Panitch 1977; Jenson 1989). Much of the electoral behaviour literature that emerged from the 1970s onward in Canada tested and refined theoretical models that were initially developed to explain the voting patterns of the American public (Sniderman, Forbes, and Meizer 1974; Jenson 1975). There is, in other words, a comparative tradition in the study Canada.

So, what is new under the sun? The shift in the past two decades is both quantitative and qualitative. More Canadianists are adopting an explicitly comparative approach to the study of Canada, and they are doing so with increasingly sophisticated tools and methods derived from the broader comparative literature. The Canadian Parliament, long the object of detailed monographs, is now the object of comparative quantitative and qualitative analyses (see Kam 2009; Garner and Letki 2005; Godbout, this volume). Quebec, often presented as a *société globale*, an exceptional case to

be studied on its own (Turgeon 2004), is now increasingly compared to other “small nations” such as Scotland and Catalonia (for a review, see Cardinal and Papillon 2011). Comparison is also increasingly a method of choice for policy analysis, whether in the cross-national study of the Canadian welfare state (Boychuk 2008; Dufour, Boismenu, and Noël 2003; Maioni 1998) or in the study of different provincial approaches to social protection, labour market training, or public spending (Boychuk 1998; Haddow and Klassen 2006; Tellier 2005). A number of non-Canadian scholars now include the Canadian case in their comparative studies, whether of sub-state nationalism (Hossay 2002; McEwen 2006), political parties in federal states (Chhibber and Kollman 2004), intergovernmental relations (Bolleyer 2009), or urban politics (Savitch and Kantor 2002), to name but a few examples. This pattern is similarly reflected in the course offerings of many Canadian universities, where courses previously taught from an exclusively Canadian perspective are now increasingly comparative in focus.<sup>2</sup> This, we suggest, is more than a passing trend. It is an explicit recognition of the value that the comparative approach brings to our understanding of Canadian politics.

### **Why Compare?**

In *The Rules of Sociological Method*, Emile Durkheim (2004 [1895], 63) provocatively argues that “comparative sociology is not a particular branch of sociology; it is sociology itself, in so far as it ceases to be purely descriptive and aspires to account for facts.” Scholars who view comparison as somehow superior to other approaches in the social sciences often write approvingly of this quote. We do not believe this to be true: not all studies of Canadian politics need to, or should, be comparative. There is great value in in-depth case studies that contribute inductively to the development of theories and to more nuanced knowledge of different facets of Canadian politics. In the Canadian context, one could think of Maurice Pinard’s (1971) work on third parties or Richard Simeon’s classic study of intergovernmental relations in Canada, *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy* (1972), as examples of case-focused and theory-building work that continue today to structure the field.

Some worry that an over-emphasis on comparison will eventually lead to the slow death of this kind of Canada-focused political science, an argument that resonates with concerns over declining enrolment in Canadian politics graduate and undergraduate courses.<sup>3</sup> If all Canadianists become comparativists, what will happen to the nuanced historical accounts of politics that

inform some of the classics in Canadian political science? In-depth knowledge of Canadian particularities can in fact continue to go hand in hand with comparative research as both can complement each other and feed off each other, therefore stimulating debates and creating a more dynamic field.

Comparison should revitalize, not cannibalize, Canadian politics. It should do so by inculcating fresh theoretical and methodological perspectives into Canadian discussions. Take, for example, the study of Canadian federalism. An area long dominated by institutional perspectives often closely tied up with political debates of the day, federalism has regained some vitality with the infusion of sociological and public choice perspectives imported from the comparative literature (see Erk and Swenden 2009; Wallner and Boychuk, this volume). This input of comparative theory has led scholars to ask new questions, for example, about the congruence between federal institutions and the socio-cultural characteristics of the Canadian federation, or about the impact of federalism on economic growth. A comparative perspective can also revitalize the field with new questions or research agendas concerning aspects of Canadian politics previously neglected or overlooked. Studies in this volume on race politics and immigrants' political behaviour testify to the potential of comparisons as a means of enriching the study of Canada with new questions and analytical lenses. Similarly, a number of chapters illustrate the value of comparison in the study of provincial or local politics within Canada, two areas long neglected in the field. Put together, we argue that this considerable appetite for comparison signals a renewal, not a decline, of Canadian politics.

In addition to its innovative and revitalizing functions, there are also very good methodological reasons to promote a comparative approach to Canadian politics. First, comparisons help us question and test assertions about Canada that we tend to take for granted. As argued by André Lecours in the present volume, the comparative approach provides a "reality check" on judgments we often make about specific aspects of the Canadian experience. It forces us to evaluate Canada not in light of some ideal conception of democracy or justice (although such an exercise is necessary and important) but, rather, in relation to the concrete experience of other countries or communities. The debate over the impact of multiculturalism on immigrant integration is a good example. Long dominated by normative claims (see Bissoondath 1994; Gwyn 1995; Kymlicka 1998), it is now infused with comparative analyses that provide a much better portrait of the Canadian state of affairs by situating it in relation to other immigrant-receiving countries (Banting and Kymlicka 2006). For example, in *Becoming a Citizen* (2006),

Irene Bloemraad compares the integration of two immigrant communities (Portuguese immigrants and Vietnamese refugees) into Canada and the United States, concluding that greater state support for settlement programs and official multiculturalism contributed to higher citizenship acquisition rates and levels of political participation for immigrants in Canada.

Comparisons also help us situate Canadian political phenomena in their broader global context and therefore avoid the pitfalls of exaggerating the uniqueness of certain aspects of Canadian politics. A key goal of the comparative approach is to make sense of the world's complexity by identifying dominant trends or commonalities among otherwise distinct units of analysis. Comparativists often use ideal-types and typologies to establish benchmarks against which the particular features of a given case are tested (Skocpol and Somers 1980, 178). For example, analysts of the Canadian welfare state have long used Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare regimes to situate the Canadian model in relation to its American and European cousins (Myles and Pierson 1997; Olsen 2002; Mahon 2008; Mahon and Béland in this volume). While we tend to underscore differences between the Canadian and American welfare states, a broader comparison suggests the two "liberal regimes" in fact share many characteristics, especially when viewed beside the European models. The deployment of such typologies stretches considerably beyond the parameters of the welfare state. Whether looking at how interest group articulation in Canada fits the corporatist model (Panitch 1979; Archibald 1983; Tanguay 1984); the extent to which Canada can be ranked as a majoritarian, a consensual, or a consociational democracy (Noel 1971; Studlar and Christensen 2006); or whether Canada is a two-party or multi-party system (Blondel 1968; Cairns 1968; Johnston 2008), comparative typologies and classificatory schema have helped us to better appreciate the features and conditions of Canadian politics.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, comparisons allow us to explain political phenomena through the testing of hypotheses derived from existing research and the development of new theories. This is, arguably, the core argument for comparisons. It has often been argued in Canadian politics that the absence of a strong left can best be explained by the political mobilization of cultural markers such as language and religion (Porter 1965). A comparison with a case such as Belgium, however, a multilingual state with a strong socialist party, demonstrates that the existence of strong cultural markers is not in itself an impediment to the emergence of a social-democratic movement or party. Adding cases to a study can also help in making inferences about the Canadian case with greater certainty. The

addition of the American case to Antonia Maioni's (1998) study of Canadian health care, for example, gives greater weight to the argument that pressures from the New Democratic Party were key to the adoption of Canada's universal health care system. As Campbell and Stanley (1963, 6, quoted in Imbeau et al. 2000, 802) argue:

Basic to scientific evidence ... is the process of comparison, or of recording differences, or contrast. Any appearance of absolute knowledge, or intrinsic knowledge about singular isolated objects, is found to be illusory upon analysis. Securing scientific evidence involves making at least one comparison.

Comparison is not only valuable for ruling out rival explanations and testing hypotheses: it is also essential for the development of new theoretical explanations. By exploring variations in outcomes among cases, we are prompted to find the roots of such differences and to outline factors, or a combination of factors, that might account for shared or unique aspects of the Canadian experience. As Stretton opines (1969, 245-47, quoted in Lijphart 1975, 159-60):

Rather than imitating experimental control, a more promising use of comparative study is to extend the investigator's experience, to make him aware of more possibilities and social capacities, and thus to help his imagination of question-prompting, cause-seeking and effect-measuring alternatives, rational models, ideal types, utopias and other useful functions. The function of comparison is less to stimulate experiment than to stimulate imagination ... Comparison is strongest as a choosing, not a proving, device: a system for questioning, not answering.

The notion that comparison contributes to both hypothesis-testing and theory development is particularly important since not all theoretical approaches have readily testable hypotheses (Mahoney 2007, 124). The contrast between rational choice theory and neo-institutionalism, two regularly employed macro-theoretical approaches in comparative analysis, is striking in this respect. Rational choice theorists start from the premise that individuals are utility-maximizers and logically deduce from this assumption a number of hypotheses. Neo-institutionalism, on the other hand, is more cumulative in its approach to theory development. Neo-institutionalists, especially historical institutionalists, tend to combine different elements besides institutions – for example, the role of ideas and of interests – to

formulate explanatory schemes for convergence and divergence across cases. Methodologically, neo-institutionalists often rely on what Bennett and George (1997, 6, quoted in Gildiner 2007, 508) define as “process induction,” which “involves the inductive observation of apparent causal mechanisms as potential hypotheses for future testing.” Comparisons, in other words, can be useful for testing the validity of existing, or deductively attained, theoretical claims, but they can also contribute to the inductive development of explanations.

Comparison is therefore essential to the revitalization of Canadian politics as a field of study, in terms of both research agenda and methods. It is nonetheless important to stress some of the limits of the comparative approach. First, since one of the key objectives of comparison is to test theoretical propositions or to uncover the sources of variations across a number of cases, it can sometimes miss the nuance, complexities, and idiosyncrasies of a given political situation or place. This is definitely true of Canada, with its mix of geographic, linguistic, and economic diversity. This is why we reject any suggestion that a comparative approach should simply replace traditional Canada-focused analyses.

Second, it can be argued that the comparative approach carries with it an inherently positivist epistemological bias, viewing the goal of social sciences as uncovering the causes of political phenomena through an analysis of observable facts. Daniel M. Green (2002, 13) argues that most of contemporary comparative politics takes a position of “mild positivism” since “even if we don’t avowedly seek broad general laws, we do our case study work with an eye to contributing to such effort.” *Comparing Canada* reflects the dominance of mild positivism in comparative politics. Chapters with a more critical or interpretive stand still approach comparison with the objective of isolating or underlining certain explanatory factors for a given phenomenon (see, for example, Orsini and Wiebe’s contribution on the politics of emotions). The development of an explicitly comparative methodology grounded in post-positivist epistemology remains a work in progress.

### **Compare What ... and How?**

So far we have discussed the potential benefits of comparing but have yet to define, in precise terms, what that approach is. There is a good reason for this: a multitude of definitions and perspectives exist regarding what constitutes the “comparative approach.” There are debates, for example, as to whether it should include the use of statistical methods and theory-testing case studies or whether it should be limited to qualitative, cross-national

comparisons. Adam Przeworski (1987, 35) provocatively argues that “comparative research consists not of comparing but of explaining,” therefore suggesting that the type and number of cases matter less than the method itself. By design, this volume reflects the diversity of vantage points regarding what constitutes comparison in political science: the contributors were directed to focus on particular features of Canadian politics but were given *carte blanche* to approach comparison from any angle. Accordingly, they present different perspectives on what constitutes a comparative approach to Canadian politics, and they use a number of distinct methodological tools and theoretical perspectives to do so.

The boundaries are fuzzy between what is and is not a comparison. Especially controversial in the literature is the extent to which case studies can be included in the comparative family. A typical definition of the comparative method is: “the systematic analysis of a relatively small number of cases” (Seawright and Collier 2010, 319). Other scholars, however, argue that such a definition of comparative social sciences is too restrictive (see Ragin 1987, 4). Landman (2008, 28), for example, states that “a single-country study is considered comparative if it uses concepts that are applicable to other countries, develops concepts that are applicable to other countries, and/or seeks to make larger inferences that stretch beyond the original country used in the study.” Many of our authors would agree with this broader definition of comparative social sciences. Simply put, a study of Canada is comparative to the extent that it engages with, tests, or applies a theory or a conceptual framework developed comparatively. For example, Bélanger and Stephenson’s study of voting behaviour in Canada approaches comparison by testing a well-established theory, applying it to the unique context of Canadian provinces. It uses comparative concepts and methods to better understand the Canadian reality and to speak to the comparative field more broadly.

Canada can also be used as a “crucial case” or “a most-likely” case in order to test the portability of a given comparative theory or possible explanation. In his oft-cited essay on case studies, Eckstein (1975, 118) describes a crucial case as one “that *must closely fit* a theory if one is to have confidence in the theory’s validity, or, conversely, *must not fit* equally well any rule contrary to that proposed.” A recent example of work using Canada as a crucial case can be found in Jennifer Wallner’s research on educational policies. According to Wallner (2010, 648), the Canadian case challenges the assumption in the federalism literature that national standards are required to

achieve similarity across federal subunits in a given policy field. She demonstrates that, even without national standards or a national department of education, Canada's different provincial educational systems are more alike than is the case in a number of more centralized federations that adopted national standards.

Similarly, while single case analyses can in fact be comparative in their outlook, not all multiple cases studies are comparative. A series of cases illustrating a trend or the discussion of a given policy in apparently unrelated countries or cases does not constitute, in and of itself, a comparison. In order to qualify as such, a study has to compare on certain grounds and try to make sense of similarities and differences across cases. For example, a survey of parliamentary systems is comparative to the extent that it engages in a discussion of the points of convergence and divergence, organizes or classifies them, or draws certain lessons from the survey. In order to achieve this explanatory goal, the selection of cases matters greatly.

A commonly used approach in this respect involves "paired comparison" or "matching cases." It involves the careful selection of two or more cases in order to compare the impact of a single variable. When conducting such a comparison, two strategies can be pursued. The most similar systems design (Przeworski and Teune 1970) is a comparative approach in which the common characteristics of the different cases constitute "control variables" that cannot account for the observed difference, while the remaining differences constitute the explanatory, or independent, variables.

Studies of Canadian politics that use the most similar systems design are quite common, particularly the comparisons between Canada and the United States. Mutual features of the two countries include their shared Anglo-American heritage, federal structures, and liberal-market economies. These shared variables thus cannot account for differences that may appear in a given phenomenon. The logic embedded in Canada's parliamentary system, which is accompanied by strong party discipline with multiple parties operating at the national and substate level, however, contrasts markedly with the American system of checks and balances and its two – undisciplined – parties. These differences and others have been frequently implicated as key explanatory, or independent, variables that account for a number of policy differences, ranging from health care systems (Maioni 1998; Tuohy 1999), modes of urban governance (Garber and Imbroscio 1996), environmental regulations (Harrison and Hoberg 1994; Montpetit 2002), and public policies towards lesbians and gay men (Smith 2008). *Comparing Canada*

similarly underscores the popularity of Canadian-American “most similar systems” comparisons, with chapter studies of the differences between the two countries in terms of Aboriginal politics (Papillon), the mobilization strategies of social movements (Orsini and Wiebe), and environmental policies (Rabe, Lachapelle, and Houle).

In light of their cultural similarities, comparison with other Anglo-Saxon systems, such as Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, has also grown in popularity, as demonstrated in this book by chapters on the role of race in the public sphere (Thompson), legislative behaviour (Godbout), federalism (Wallner and Boychuk), and immigrant political trends (White and Bilodeau). In fact, since the 1990s, comparisons between Canada and Australia have expanded exponentially, ranging from studies of their party systems (Sharman 1994), their fiscal arrangements (Béland and Lecours 2011), the interaction of feminists with the state (Chapell 2002), local governments (Brunet-Jailly and Martin 2010), and intergovernmental relations (Brown 2002), to name but a few.

The alternative to the most similar systems design is the most different systems design, which focuses on explaining convergences rather than divergences across cases. The cases selected should then ideally be different in almost all aspects except for one common element that leads to converging outcomes (Gerring 2007, 139-42). Most different systems designs are rarely used in the study of Canadian politics. One recent example is Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos’s (2012) study of the transformation of immigration policies in Canada and Germany, two countries with historically very different political systems, immigration histories, labour market regimes, and conceptions of the nation. Triadafilopoulos points to shifting international norms pertaining to race, ethnicity, and human rights as the reason for a similar transformation of their immigration regime.

There has also been a strong proclivity to only think of comparisons as cross-national studies. By this point, it should be clear that we strongly disagree with such a dogmatic interpretation of the comparative approach. As rightfully argued by Fourot, Sarrasin, and Holly (2011, 11), there is no reason to restrict the comparative method to international comparisons. A comparative approach can also be very effective for the study of Canadian provinces. Peter Graefe argues provocatively, in his chapter comparing economic development policies in Quebec and Ontario, that the study of provinces “is generally too arcane to garner much interest, even within the Canadian political science community.” But a theoretically informed comparative perspective on provinces may well contribute to “bringing provinces back in”

by raising the profile of previously unexplored aspects of provincial politics. Provinces also provide the perfect setting for a most similar systems comparison in which the cases share many characteristics. A decade ago Imbeau et al. (2000) implored Canadian political scientists to embrace a comparative agenda in the study of provinces precisely because of the multiple possibilities offered by ten very similar cases. It is then easier to isolate specific variables responsible for different trajectories or choices. While comparative studies of the ten Canadian provinces are rare (see Boychuk 1999; Tellier 2005; Wallner 2014), comparisons of a few provinces are often sufficient to outline important variations across Canada (see Bernard and Saint-Arnaud 2004; Haddow and Klassen 2006; Savard, Brassard, and Côté 2011).

This strategy can also be used to study urban politics. Kristin Good's (2009) award-winning book on urban multicultural policies in the Greater Toronto and Greater Vancouver areas is a great example. Good explains why certain municipalities are proactive in adopting immigrant integration policies while others are not. Controlling for the size of the immigration population and the different ethnic composition of municipalities, she argues that the configuration of municipal societies (whether they are dominated by one or two different ethnic groups, for example) structures the likelihood that local leaders will coalesce in urban regimes with multicultural goals. A number of chapters in *Comparing Canada* use a comparative approach to analyze provincial or local politics. This, we argue, is an important development for Canadian political science. Long neglected, studies of provincial and local politics can only benefit from the influx of comparative research questions, methods, and theories.

Finally, Canada can also be included in large- $N$  – multiple cases – cross-national statistical analysis. A now classic statistical study of Canada in a comparative perspective is Neil Nevitte's (1996) work on Canadian value-change in cross-national perspectives. Using pooled time-series and cross-sectional analyses, Nevitte shows a decline in deference towards authority in Canada and, drawing on data from the World Value Survey, argues that such change is the result of a genuine generation shift that is happening not only in Canada but throughout the Western world.<sup>4</sup> None of the authors in the present volume explicitly uses a large- $N$  strategy, although Bélanger and Stephenson's chapter comparing electoral systems could qualify as a large- $N$  study given the number of cases they consider. The limited number of large- $N$  studies in Canada can be explained by two factors: first, this type of study requires a tremendous number of resources;

second, large-*N* comparative studies are often criticized for their over-generalization and their tendency to quantify complex aspects of political life that are not necessarily amenable to such reductionism (Landman 2008, 52). Given the questions that we posed to our authors at the outset of this initiative, none of them felt that large-*N* cross-national statistical analyses fit the bill.

In sum, the key question is perhaps less what to compare than how to compare. Comparative analyses have in common a method more than a type of case, let alone a number of cases. The studies gathered in the present volume share this common methodological and theoretical concern for explaining the similarities and/or differences between Canada and other countries, or between different political units within Canada. Their ultimate objective, however, remains Canada-centric: they all seek to understand specific aspects of Canadian politics through comparisons.

### **Outline of the Book**

The purpose of this volume is to make the case for a comparative approach to Canadian politics. To do so, the chapters cover most topics generally found in a survey volume about Canadian politics. While this is not a book about comparative theories per se, the chapters are theory-driven empirical studies that elucidate and illuminate the concrete value of the comparative approach as a strategy for understanding Canada. Taken together, they provide a comprehensive portrait of Canada through a comparative lens.

Reflecting its centrality to Canadian politics, the first part of *Comparing Canada* is dedicated to the politics of identity and diversity. Using a process-tracing approach, Martin Papillon compares how Indigenous self-determination was first framed and then institutionalized in Canada and the United States. Drawing on historical institutionalism, he points to the importance of policy legacies as well as timing to account for differences in the framing of Indigenous claims and their institutionalization in the two countries. The chapter by André Lecours focuses on state strategies for managing minority nationalist movements in Canada and Spain. He presents different ideal types of management strategies, ranging from consociational arrangements to the politics of recognition, raising a series of hypotheses to explain the differences between the two countries. The section concludes with Debra Thompson's examination of race politics through the prism of census questions in three countries: Canada, Great Britain, and the United States. She argues that the Canadian and British cases challenge the conventional explanation derived from the American

case about census politics. Much like Papillon, she draws on work underlining the impact of norms and ideas on institutional change but with a focus on explaining unexpected convergence rather than divergence across her cases. Through process tracing, she explores the necessary conditions for certain ideas to be institutionalized and, as such, to explain the different timing of the introduction of race questions in the three countries.

Political behaviour takes centre stage in the second part of *Comparing Canada*. The first chapter in Part 2, by Éric Bélanger and Laura Stephenson, looks at Canadian voting behaviour from both a macro- and a micro-level perspective, revisiting two comparative theories whose applicability to Canada has been contested in the past. Often presented as an exception to Duverger's Law on the relationship between electoral systems and party systems, Bélanger and Stephenson make a novel contribution to this literature by exploring the impact of different electoral systems at the provincial level in Canada, finding that Canada may not be as exceptional as previously thought. Second, adopting a micro-level sociological perspective, they also revisit the applicability of the Michigan model of electoral behaviour to Canada, concluding that the concept of party identification does in fact travel across the border, operating in the same way for Canadian voters as it does for American voters. The chapter by Stephen White and Antoine Bilodeau explores partisan cleavages between immigrants and non-immigrants in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand in order to understand why support for the Liberal Party of Canada is so much higher among immigrants than among native-born Canadians. In the last chapter of Part 2, Michael Orsini and Sarah Wiebe draw on recent work on emotions in social movement theory to compare autism activism in Canada and the United States. They argue that emotions should not be dismissed as structuring forces shaping politics. They compare how variations in the emotional landscape of the autism movements in Canada and the United States have shaped the two movements as well as their opportunity structure.

Chapters in Part 3 are at the intersection of institutions and public policy. First, Jean-François Godbout uses the spatial theory of voting behaviour that was first developed to analyze legislative votes in the United States Congress. A primary assumption of this model is that elected officials support legislation closest to their own preferred policy positions. Godbout tests whether such assumptions hold in parliamentary systems in which party discipline is high by analyzing legislative behaviour in five countries: Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. Godbout's chapter also highlights the innovative software and data

management techniques that have facilitated the study of political choices. In their chapter, Jennifer Wallner and Gerard Boychuk explore the fiscal architecture of three federations: Australia, Canada, and the United States. They test the market-preserving model of federalism associated with the work of Barry Weingast. Proponents of this approach argue that the search for efficiency and growth will drive federations in a similar direction, causing a certain convergence among them. Wallner and Boychuk show that this perspective suffers from critical limitations in light of the Canadian case.

The next four chapters focus more specifically on public policy. Barry Rabe, Érick Lachapelle, and David Houle study the interplay of federal and sub-federal jurisdictions in the development of climate change policy in Canada and the United States. They discuss why subnational jurisdictions came to play a prominent role in both countries and outline the diversity of approaches taken. In their chapter on social policy, Daniel Béland and Rianne Mahon discuss the place of Canada in welfare state typologies, suggesting its fit with the “liberal” group is imperfect at best. Focusing on family-work balance policies in Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, they draw insights from both welfare regime theory and neo-institutionalism to explain similarities and differences between Canada and other Anglo-Saxon countries. Peter Graefe then explores provincial economic development strategies, focusing on Quebec and Ontario. Reviewing the literature on economic development and varieties of capitalism, Graefe criticizes both theoretical approaches for overemphasizing variations between the two provinces. He suggests instead that we should look for theoretical models that help account for both converging forces and variations. He finds such tools in the concept of “unequal structure of representation” developed by Rianne Mahon (1977). This concept helps in accounting for the unique character of Quebec while tempering claims of structural differences between the two provinces. Kristin Good then explores municipal approaches used to attract immigrants in two Canadian cities: Moncton and Halifax. Drawing on insights both from urban regime literature and the polity approach to city politics, she explores, more specifically, whether linguistic bifurcation impedes the development of governance arrangements in the immigration-attraction and retention sector.

By taking a fresh and explicitly comparative look at many of the enduring themes of Canadian politics, we hope to stimulate a renewed interest in and appreciation for this country. As each empirical chapter unfolds, *Comparing Canada* demonstrates that the systematic and sustained assessment of Canada’s features next to other cases is essential to better understanding our

own characteristics while simultaneously allowing us to apply and unpack new theoretical and methodological tools and techniques from the comparative field. Comparisons help us to avoid exaggerating our uniqueness and overestimating our own internal homogeneity. It can also bring to light important but previously overlooked variables in explaining the world we live in. The growing appetite for comparison should not, however, be viewed as a threat to Canadianists or as a death knell for the discipline; rather, we believe that it is a critical step to welcoming and encouraging a new generation of scholars to the field.

### Notes

I would like to thank my co-editors for their numerous and much appreciated suggestions on previous drafts of this introduction.

- 1 In the wake of *Comparative Turn*, a group of Quebec scholars undertook a similar exercise with a more specific focus on the place of comparison in the study of Quebec politics (see Fourot, Sarrasin, and Holly 2011).
- 2 Interestingly, many recent Canadian politics textbooks are also at the intersection of Canadian and comparative politics. See, for example, Hauss and Smith (2000); Thomas and Torrey (2008); Abu-Laban, Jhappan, and Rocher (2008); and Hueglin and Fenna (2006).
- 3 The publication of *Comparative Turn* led some to express such worries. See William Cross's (2010) review in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. See also the interesting debate in Rosanna Tamburri (2009).
- 4 Besides Neil Nevitte's work with the World Value Survey, Geneviève Tellier (2005) is another scholar who uses large-*N* quantitative analysis in a comparative perspective to study public spending of Canadian provinces.

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