Reconceptualizing Canadian Federal Political Culture: Examining Differences between Quebec and the Rest of Canada

David McGrane* and Loleen Berdahl†

*St Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan; david.mcgrane@usask.ca
†University of Saskatchewan; loleen.berdahl@usask.ca

While the concept of federal political culture has been attractive to federalism scholars, Canada has proved to be a puzzling case and generated contradictory results across studies. We test a new definition of Canadian federal political culture using original survey data and find that Canadians have moderate levels of federal political culture driven by a utopian view of federalism in which the promotion of diversity should be achieved without any negative consequences for the unity of the polity. We also find that Quebecers and other Canadians have similar levels of federal political culture and that the results are consistent when survey questions are altered to take out country-specific references.

Although the concept of federal political culture has been attractive to federalism scholars, Canada has proved to be a puzzling case, with different studies producing conflicting results. Some studies show Canada to have a strong federal political culture, while other studies find the opposite. Complicating matters, some studies suggest that the Québécois have a different federal political culture than the rest of Canada, whereas other studies find no substantive difference.

To better understand Canadian attitudes about federalism, in this article we reconceptualize federal political culture and define Canadian federal political culture as the extent to which Canadians view the potential advantages of federalism as important and the extent to which they find its potential disadvantages to be acceptable. We test this new definition using original data from surveys administered around the time of the 2015 federal Canadian election. We find that Canadians, on the whole, have neither high nor low levels of federal political culture, but rather have moderate levels of federal political culture driven by a utopian view of federalism where diversity is promoted without endangering the unity of the polity. We find similar patterns in both Quebec and the rest of Canada. The results are robust even when question wording is altered from being

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generic (speaking of federal systems generally) to specific (referring directly to the Canadian case).

Given these findings, we argue that the context of the specific country that one is studying is important to the success of any definition of federal political culture. Yet, while variations within countries and between countries poses challenges for comparative research on federal political culture, the finding that the specific and generic forms of question wording worked well across Canada's two major linguistic groups suggests that there is hope for finding a universal definition of federal political culture that can be applied across political contexts and jurisdictions.

Theorizing Federal Political Culture

Scholars have varied in how they approach and study federal political culture. In this section, we outline key conceptualizations of federal political culture. In doing so, we also address various issues concerning application of the concept to the Canadian case. Specifically, we discuss considerations regarding Quebec and the rest of Canada as well as decisions about keeping questions general or specific to the country of study, and in the process set out our expectations and hypotheses for this study.

Definition and Measurement of Federal Political Culture

The concept of "federal political culture" appears to emerge from Ivo Duchacek in *Comparative Federalism: The Territorial Dimension of Politics* (1970), where he notes that "federal culture" is a variant of the concept of "civic culture" elucidated first in the Almond and Verba's seminal work of the same name (1965). Duchacek (1970, 341) describes federal culture as that part of a civic culture encompassing "a set of orientations toward the federal political system and attitudes toward the role of self (in the federal case, the component units as well as the individuals) in the system." He explains that his idea of federal political culture comes from his reading of other works on federalism[1] that point to the success of federations being dependent upon the existence of public support for the values that are embodied by federal governance, support that has been characterized in these works by terms such as "federal creed, social factors, federal qualities of the society, or federal charisma" (1970, 346). Daniel Elazar followed up on Duchacek's work in 1987 by arguing that the maintenance of federalism involves citizens "thinking federal"—that is, being oriented toward the ideals and norms of power inherent within federalism (192). He holds that a strong federal political culture creates a "will to federate" that appreciates and sustains federal governance. Similarly, Preston King (1982) distinguishes between "federalism" being a normative concept involving the

holding and valuing of federal principles and "federation" being a concept that describes the various institutional arrangements in a federal country that create a division of powers, and Aaron Wildavsky (1998, 38–54) theorizes that federalism needs to be supported by a political culture that seeks to compromise egalitarianism with hierarchy, what he holds to be the essence of power sharing within federal governance. More recent work by Jenna Bednar (2009) and Michael Burgess (2012) has also theorized about the principles and values that underlie a strong culture of federalism within a polity, such as autonomy, partnership, unity, diversity, and reciprocity.

The suggestion of this formative literature is that federal political culture has something to do with federalism as a sociological or psychological phenomenon that exists within society outside of the formal institutions of government and the activity of political elites. It has something to do with citizens' deeply held beliefs or values about the importance of sharing and dividing political power in a federal arrangement. The focus, therefore, is not on the technicalities of which level of government is assigned which jurisdiction or even how much citizens know about the jurisdictional division of powers, but rather deals with more profound sentiments among citizens about why federalism is worthwhile and the value they place on benefits that it has for a polity (such as the promotion of diversity) and the concerns that they have about its drawbacks as a system of governance (such as the weakening of unity within the polity).

There have been several attempts to study federal political culture using public opinion surveys, with research drawing quite different conclusions with respect to Canada. Cole and Kincaid's initial work on federal political culture found that Canada has a strong federal political culture compared to the United States and Mexico, and they confirmed this finding in subsequent research (Cole, Kincaid, and Rodriguez 2004; Kincaid and Cole 2011). Brown, Kincaid, Cole and Deem's research examining federal political culture (2014, 2016) found that Canada has a stronger federal political culture than Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, and United States. In contrast, Fafard, Rocher, and Côté studied Canada as an individual case and concluded that Canada's "culture of federalism is quite weak" (2010, 28). At the root of these conflicting findings concerning Canadian federal political culture is researchers' reliance on competing definitions and set of measurements.

Fafard, Rocher, and Côté (2010) and Fafard and Rocher (2013) use a technical definition of Canadian federal political culture that involves the extent to which citizens understand the division of powers within the Canadian federation and desire public policies that give expression to minority views and the variety of local preferences that can exist. They operationalize this definition by asking respondents about their knowledge of the jurisdictional powers of federal and provincial governments, the desirability of the federal government imposing national

standards on provincial governments, and public policy preferences regarding the appropriate level of centralization and decentralization within a specific realm of government activity (e.g., whether federal or provincial governments should issue passports). The primary problem with this technical definition of Canadian federal political culture is that it is at odds with the idea that federal political culture encompasses deeply held values concerning the division of political power inherent in federalism. Questions on which level of government should be involved in which policy field are not questions of values but rather of policy preferences regarding how centralized or decentralized power should be in within the Canadian federation.[2] Following Preston King's logic (1982), such questions probe attitudes towards the institutional structure of the Canadian *federation* as opposed to the normative dimensions of Canadian *federalism*.

In contrast, Cole, Kincaid, and Brown (with co-investigators) opt for a values-based definition. Their survey questions probe the underlying values of the respondent when it comes to federal political culture. This values-based approach is appropriate to the original conceptualization of federal political culture, and has promise for the study of Canada in particular. Canadian political scientists have drawn an important distinction between values and policy preferences in their studies of political culture and research on voter behaviour that emanate from Canadian Election Studies (Simeon and Blake 1980; Blais et al. 2002; Anderson 2011; Gidengil et al. 2012; McGrane and Berdahl 2015; McGrane 2016). Values refer to respondents' beliefs about fundamental aspects of their society's politics, whereas policy preferences are more narrow opinions regarding specific policies that a government has enacted or could enact. The predominant position is that Canadian political culture is defined in terms of values and not policy preferences. For example, McGrane and Berdahl (2013, 3) define political culture "as the basic sentiments of the citizenry within a polity concerning politics and its relationship to the functioning of society." As such, political culture can encompass a wide range of political values that citizens could plausibly hold (for more discussion, see Henderson 2004).

However, there are important challenges with applying the Cole et al. model to the specific case of Canada. In Cole and Kincaid's work, a respondent with a low level of federal political culture agrees that it is preferable to have a country where there is (i) a strong leader; (ii) everyone speaks the same language and has similar religions and ethnicities; and (iii) governments that limit discussion and participation to fewest "groups" as possible when making decisions. At the same time, the respondent disagrees that the "federal form of government," in which power is divided between a national government and provincial and local governments, is preferable to any other type of government (Cole, Kincaid, and Rodriguez 2004; Kincaid and Cole 2011). Cole and Kincaid's questions are awkward in the Canadian context. A strong leader could be interpreted by a

Canadian as valuing a strong Premier, a situation that frequently occurs in Canada as Premiers often become national spokespersons publicly challenge Prime Ministers on a variety of policies. In our view, favoring strong Premiers to challenge the authority of the Canadian Prime Minister would be indicator of a high level of federal political culture, but this would be deemed as having a low level of federal political culture using the Cole and Kincaid definition. Further, questions regarding the desirability of multiple languages within the Canadian context risk not measuring an abstract federal value but rather feelings about the Québécois as a national minority and/or official bilingualism. Canada's diverse population and strong identification with multiculturalism render the decision-making question problematic, as a Canadian would be unlikely to interpret "groups" to mean only provincial governments; unspecified "groups" might include Indigenous peoples, environmentalists, trade unions, or women's groups that have frequently attempted to participate government decision making in Canada. The fourth question is also troublesome in the Canadian context. In Quebec, the term "federalism" is used to describe the constitutional status quo and it is a term that is juxtaposed with "sovereignty" which denotes some type of independence for Quebec. As such, Quebec respondents could easily interpret Cole and Kincaid's question about the "federal form of government" being preferable to other forms of government to be asking them about their feelings towards the sovereignty of Quebec. In short, while we are not questioning the appropriateness of Cole and Kincaid's questions for other countries, we argue that their measurements are problematic in the Canadian context.

Brown's definition of federal political culture, first developed for the Australian context (Brown 2012, 2013) and then later applied to Canada within a multi-country study (Brown et al. 2014, 2016), also focused on values. His work centers on citizens' assessments of the desirability of seven features of federalism (e.g., being able to vote for different parties at different levels of government, overlapping responsibilities of different levels of government, and allowing different laws in different parts of the country). While this model works better for Canada, his measures do not include an equal balance of positive and negative features (Brown et al. 2014, 2016), which is an important limitation, given that his early results generally showed that responses appear to be conditioned by whether a feature of federalism put forth is an advantage or disadvantage of federalism or if it is simply presented in a neutral manner as a statement about how federalism is structured (Brown 2012, 323).

In short, we agree with the value-based approach to defining federal political culture, but it is our assessment that there is need for innovation in operationalizing the concept within the Canadian context. Given the limitations of past measures for the Canadian context, and with the aim of setting out our hypothesis in regard to our own study, we do not necessarily anticipate that our

results will support those of previous value-based measures finding a strong federal political culture.

Differences in federal political culture in Quebec and the rest of Canada

Although we do not have a specific hypothesis about Canada's level of federal political culture, Canadian history does suggest that Canadians living inside and outside Quebec can be expected to differ on this matter. Many Canadian political scientists argue that Canada should be viewed as a multinational democracy[3] and that the Québécois are a minority nation within Canada (McRoberts 2001; Gagnon and Tully 2001; Gagnon, Guibernau, and Rocher 2003; Lecours and Béland 2008; Karmis and Rocher 2018). Though it does not always live up to this promise, federalism within a multinational democracy is expected to lead to a "multinational federation" that accommodates the demands of national minorities and gives them the ability to genuinely self-govern in contrast to "territorial federations" like the United States, Australia, and Germany that have structures that assume a single nationality underpinning the federal state (Resnick 1994; Kymlicka 1998, Seymour and Gagnon 2012).

Successive Quebec provincial governments have argued that Canada should become a veritable multinational federation. Such a federation would apply the principle of "dualism": federalism would create equality between Canada's two founding peoples (Québécois and English), and the Quebec provincial government, as the only institution in North America in which Francophones constitute a majority, would be given sufficient power and resources to protect the Québécois identity and preserve the French language in Quebec (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007, 77-83). To this end, since the end of the 19th century, successive Quebec provincial governments have called for greater provincial autonomy to create and administer their own programs that are separate from programs ran by the federal government (McRoberts 1993).

In sharp contrast, English Canadian political elites generally do not view Canada as a multinational federation, preferring a more territorial view that is suspicious of excessive accommodation of the Québécois national minority (Cook 1966; Resnick 1994; Gibbins and Berdahl 2014). As opposed to calling for provincial autonomy to protect a national minority, any calls for expanded provincial autonomy from English Canadian provincial governments have been based on promoting territorially based interests (e.g., securing taxation revenues for provincial governments when oil is extracted) and have generally been less demanding than those coming from the Quebec provincial government (Russell 2004; Romanow, Whyte, and Leeson 2007).

Given these opposing positions of English Canadian provincial political elites and Quebec political elites, it is not surprising that public opinion research has

generally confirmed the Quebec's populations' greater desire for provincial autonomy compared to residents of the rest of Canada, referred to as rest of Canada (ROC) (Kornberg and Archer 1982; Johnson et al. 1996; Young and Archer 2002), though recent scholarly data are not available. To what extent do these Quebec–ROC differences concerning attitudes towards provincial autonomy extend into the literature Canadian federal political culture? The research to date provides a mixed picture. Using their technical definition of federal political culture, Fafard, Rocher, and Côté (2010) found that Quebecers displayed higher levels of federal political culture than other Canadians. However, Brown et al.'s study using a values-based definition of federal political culture found that Quebecers had a level of federal political culture similar to that other Canadians (2016, 21–22).

Through its structures, federalism disperses political power in Canada and, therefore, empowers the Quebec provincial government, which is the protector of the interests and identity of the Québécois as a national minority. Therefore, we hypothesize that Quebec residents will have higher levels of federal political culture than residents in the ROC. For their part, Quebec sovereigntists want to push the dispersion of power in the Canadian polity to the point where Quebec becomes an independent country that enters into a "sovereignty-association" with the Canadian federal state and sovereigntist politicians elected to both the Canadian House of Commons and Quebec's Assemblée nationale have vigorously fought for more power for the Quebec provincial government, while Quebec is still a part of Canada (McRoberts 1993). As such, we expect that sovereignists will have higher levels of federal political culture than non-sovereignists in Quebec because they place greater value on the autonomy of Quebec provincial government. In contrast, because federalism is tied to territorially based interests rather than survival as a national minority for residents in the rest of Canada, we anticipate that federal political culture will be lower outside Quebec. Indeed, it is possible that some residents of the rest of Canada may view federalism with suspicion and see it as a means to allow excesses in the accommodation of the Québécois.[4]

General versus Specific Question Wording

The literature on federal political culture includes some debate about whether framing questions generically or specifically can influence results. Generic questions are those that do not refer to the country in question, in contrast to questions that make specific reference to the country (e.g., "Canadian federal government") (Cole, Kincaid, and Rodriguez 2004; Kincaid and Cole 2011; Brown et al. 2014, 2016). In recent work, Brown et al. (2016) clearly outline their rationale for using a generic approach to defining federal political culture in Canada and other federal countries by arguing that the term "federal" could have negative connotations in parts of federations where there are regional grievances and that citizens could lack

familiarity with the term (2016). Further, they argue that the word "federal" could have different meanings in different countries creating problems for cross-country research (2016). Fafard, Rocher, and Côté, who study Canadian federal political culture in isolation from other cases, take the opposite approach (Fafard, Rocher, and Côté 2010; Rocher and Fafard 2013). They argue that explicitly referencing the Canadian experience truly captures a respondent's level of federal political culture.

Research has yet to explore whether taking a specific or generic approach to question wording alters results. To advance understanding on this front, we use both approaches to test if there are any discernible differences. Given that past surveys have shown that Canadians both inside and outside of Quebec have many grievances with their federal government in Ottawa (Schwartz 1974; Elkins and Simeon 1980; Young and Archer 2002), we expect that both residents of Quebec and residents of the ROC will have lower levels of federal political culture when questions are framed specifically to Canada. Further, we expect Quebec sovereignists to have lower levels of federal political culture when questions refer specifically to Canada's "federal government" given the role that the federal government has historically played in campaigning against sovereignty. We base these expectation on the assumptions that the specific questions will make respondents think about the history of conflictual federal-provincial relations and the existential constitutional crises in Canada (particularly those involving Quebec's constitutional status), and that the generic questions will make the respondent think more abstractly about the advantages and disadvantages of having multiple levels of government without triggering the specific history of Canadian federalism and intergovernmental/constitutional conflict.

Research Design

Our research design treats Canada as two populations (Quebec and the ROC) and examines federal political culture within these populations separately. This is a common practice in Canadian voter behaviour and public opinion literature due to Quebec's own unique media and political party systems and its historically strained relationship with the federal government and the rest of Canada (Gidengil et al. 2012). Both surveys were administered online, as is increasingly standard practice in election studies in Canada; indeed, Breton et al. (2017, 1032) argue that "the internet mode should now be the default for election studies." During the 2015 Canadian federal election campaign, we contracted two companies to collect our data: Probit administered the ROC survey from August 10 to August 20, 2015 and Quebec-based SOM administered the Quebec survey from October 5 to October 15, 2015. For the Quebec survey, respondents had the option of responding in either French or English. Both companies take steps to construct internet panels of randomly selected respondents with no self-selection allowed and

both datasets are weighted according to region, sex, age, and education using Statistics Canada population estimates from July 2015.[5]

We contend that Canadian federal political culture should be conceptualized as a part of Canadians' underlying values about a fundamental aspect of their society's politics: federalism. As federalism theory emphasizes how federalism involves a necessary and justifiable trade-off between unity and diversity (for a review, see Burgess 2012), we suggest it is appropriate to study Canadian federal political culture in terms of normative judgements about the trade-offs that are inherent within federalism. Building off these ideas, we defined Canadian federal political culture as how important respondents find the potential advantages of federal governance that encourages diversity and how much respondents accept its potential disadvantages that count undermine the unity of the polity. We have operationalized this new definition of Canadian federal political culture by developing a set of ten normative questions contained in table 1.

The first set of questions asks the respondent how "important" the positive features of federalism are to themselves, i.e., how much they value these features of federalism that promote diversity through giving autonomy to the constituent parts of a federation. The second set of questions asks respondents how "acceptable" it is that federalism creates situations where undesirable outcomes are produced, i.e., the respondent is asked to make a value judgement about how acceptable it is to them that federalism creates situations that can destabilize the unity of the polity. Together, the ten questions combine into a single federal political culture measure: our federal political culture index is a means-based scale ranging from one to five. At one end of the index are respondents with scores of one ("low federal political culture"): these individuals indicated that all of the positive features of federalism are "extremely unimportant" and all of the negative features of federalism are "extremely unacceptable." At the other end of the index are respondents with scores of five ("high federal political culture"): these individuals indicated that the all of the positive features of federalism are "extremely important" and all of the negative features of federalism are "extremely acceptable." An individual with a score of three ("moderate federal political culture") could achieve this score in two ways: (i) they may have judged all of the positive features of federalism to be "moderately important" and all of the negative features of federalism to "moderately acceptable" or (ii) they could state that all of the positive features of federalism are "extremely important" and all of the negative features of federalism are "not acceptable at all." In either case, the respondent has mixed feelings towards federalism. In the first case, the respondent is mildly enthused about the positive features of federalism and only slightly concerned about its negative features, whereas in the second case, the respondent desires some type of utopian federalism where there is no trade-off between its positive and negative features and where one can enjoy both unity and diversity.

Table 1 Measures of Canadian federal political culture

	Specific questions	Generic questions
Positive features of federalism		
Laws	Provincial governments can create different laws in response to varying circumstances in different parts of Canada.	Multiple levels of governments allow for different laws in response to varying circumstances in different parts of a country.
Different identities	Provincial governments allow for the expression of different identities in Canada.	Multiple levels of government in a country allow for the expression of different identities.
Innovate	Individual provincial governments can innovate and lead the way for others.	Multiple levels of government in a country allow for different governments to innovate and lead the way for others.
Accountable	Strong provincial governments in Canada can help keep the federal government more accountable to citizens.	Strong lower levels of government in a country can help keep the central government more accountable to citizens.
Work together	Federal and provincial governments regularly work together.	Different levels of governments within a country regularly work together.
Negative features of federalism		
Argue	Federal government and provincial governments in Canada can argue over who is responsible for a particular problem.	Multiple levels of governments in a country can argue over who is responsible for a particular problem.
Slow decision making	Efforts by the federal and provincial governments in Canada to collaborate with each other can slow down decision-making.	Efforts by different levels of governments in a country to collaborate with each other can slow down decision-making.
Stop decision making	Efforts by the federal and provincial governments in Canada to come an agreement can stop things from getting done.	Efforts by the different levels of governments in a country to come an agreement can stop things from getting done.
Service levels	Canadians may have different levels of government services depending on where they live in the country.	Citizens may have different levels of government services depending on where they live in a country.

(continued)

Table 1 Continued

	Specific questions	Generic questions
National identity	Having both federal and provincial governments in Canada may make it harder to maintain an overarching Canadian identity.	Having multiple levels of government in a country may make it harder to maintain an overarching national identity.

Preamble to Positive Statements: "Please indicate how important each of the following aspects of Canada's federal system of government is to you. Please take the time to think about the question in order to give as accurate of an answer as possible" (for specific statements) and "Please indicate how important each of the following aspects of having multiple levels of government in a country is to you. Please take the time to think about the question in order to give as accurate of an answer as possible" (for generic statements). 1 = Not important at all; 2 = Slightly important; 3 = Moderately important; 4 = Quite important; 5 = Extremely important; 9 = I don't know. Negative features response scale: 1 = Not acceptable at all; 2 = Slightly acceptable; 3 = Moderately acceptable; 4 = Quite acceptable; 5 = Completely acceptable; 9 = I don't know. Preamble to Negative Statements: "Please indicate how acceptable each of the following aspects of Canada's federal system of government is to you. Please take the time to think about the question in order to give as accurate of an answer as possible" and "Please indicate how acceptable each of the following aspects of having multiple levels of government in a country is to you. Please take the time to think about the question in order to give as accurate of an answer as possible." Negative features response scale: 1 = Not acceptable at all; 2 = Slightly acceptable; 3 = Moderately acceptable; 4 = Quite acceptable; 5 = Completely acceptable; 9 = I don't know.

A strength of our datasets are the relatively robust sample sizes in both the ROC and Quebec that allowed for experimentation with question wording by splitting the sample. As table 1 illustrates, we include both specific and generic wording of the questions. In each survey, approximately half of the sample was asked specific questions measuring federal political culture and the other half were asked generic questions to test if question wording actually produces differences in results (respondent question type was randomized; see table 2 for distributions).

To test our hypotheses, we combined our survey questions on federal political culture into three sets of indices for analysis: a positive features index, a negative features index, and the federal political culture index. Reliability analysis suggests that, in both samples, the measures hold together quite well (table 3). All three indices include a large range of scores between 1.0 and 5.0, making the use of difference of means analysis, box and whisker plots, kernel density plots, and scatterplots acceptable.

Table 2 Sample distributions by question type

	ROC survey $N = 3{,}182$	Quebec survey $N = 4{,}263$
Specific federal political culture questions	N=1,598	N=2,075
	Atlantic Canada N=366	Quebec City N=325
	Ontario N=742	Montreal CMA N = 972
	Western Canada N=490	Other locations N=778
Generic federal political culture questions	N= 1,584	N=2,188
	Atlantic Canada N = 365	Quebec City N= 358
	Ontario N = 782	Montreal CMA N = 1079
	Western Canada N = 491	Other locations N= 751

Table 3 Reliability Analysis Of Indices (Cronbach's alpha)

	Rest of Canada	Quebec
Federal political culture (Specific)	0.6370	0.6797
Federal political culture (Generic)	0.7596	0.7717
Positive features (Specific)	0.7062	0.7543
Positive features (Generic)	0.7809	0.8464
Negative features (Specific)	0.6313	0.6599
Negative features (Generic)	0.7289	0.7297

Results: Levels of Federal Political Culture

Our data provide solid evidence that, take as a whole, Canadians have moderate levels of federal political culture using our definition of this concept (table 4). Looking at the results for the federal political culture index, we can see that the means for ROC residents and Quebec residents hover around three, the midpoint of our scale, for both the generic and the specific measures. The standard deviations are all quite similar as well, ranging from 0.555 to 0.663. The finding that Canadians have a moderate level of federal political culture lies between the findings of Brown, Kincaid and Cole on one hand and Rocher and Fafard on the other hand.

The moderation within Canadians' levels of federal political culture appears *not* to be the product of respondents selecting the midpoint across the ten questions, but rather appears to be reflective of the respondents' enthusiasm for positive features of federalism and dislike of the negative features of federalism. Table 4

Table 4 Difference of means across indices

	Federal political culture index Mean (SD)	Features of federalism index Mean (SD)	Features of federalism index Mean (SD)
ROC Sample	Specific: 3.30 (0.564)***	Specific: 3.93 (0.690)***	Specific: 2.67 (0.822)
	Generic: 3.23 (0.663)***	Generic: 3.84(0.762)***	Generic: 2.63 (0.871)
Quebec Sample	Specific: 2.96 (0.555)***	Specific: 3.59 (0.662)***	Specific: 2.34 (0.770)
	Generic: 2.79 (0.604)***	Generic: 3.29 (0.782)***	Generic: 2.30 (0.760)

Note: "Specific" indicates respondent was asked questions that referenced the federal and provincial governments of Canada; "Generic" indicates respondent was asked questions that only referenced "different levels of government."

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$ (Results of two-sample *t*-test with unequal variances).

illustrates that Canadians lean towards valuing the positive features of federalism as "quite important" (i.e., four on our scale) while finding the negative features of federalism to be "slightly acceptable" (i.e., two on our scale). This finding is better illustrated through scatterplots. In figure 1, the vertical axis represents the positive features of federalism on a scale of one (not important at all) to five (extremely important) and the horizontal axis represents the negative features of federalism on a scale of one (not acceptable at all) to five (extremely acceptable). If a large number of respondents had answered "three" across all ten questions, the dots would be clustered around the middle of the scatterplots where the two axes intersect. However, something quite different is observed: the dots cluster in the upper left quadrants, which indicates that these respondents valued the positive features of federalism as "quite important" or "extremely important" and at the same time found the negative features of federalism to be "slightly acceptable" or "not acceptable at all." In this sense, Canadians' moderate federal political culture embodies a utopian vision of federalism where they want to have the positive features of federalism without having to endure its negative features.

Our hypothesis that Quebecers would have higher levels of federal political culture than English Canadians is not supported by the data; in fact, the opposite is observed (table 4). This is visually demonstrated through box whisker plots (figure 2). As the location of the upper and lower adjacent values (represented by the whiskers) across the Quebec and ROC plots are similar, the points of interest are the medians (represented by the white lines) and the interquartile range ("the middle 50 percent", represented by the boxes). Looking first at the overall federal political culture index (for both the generic

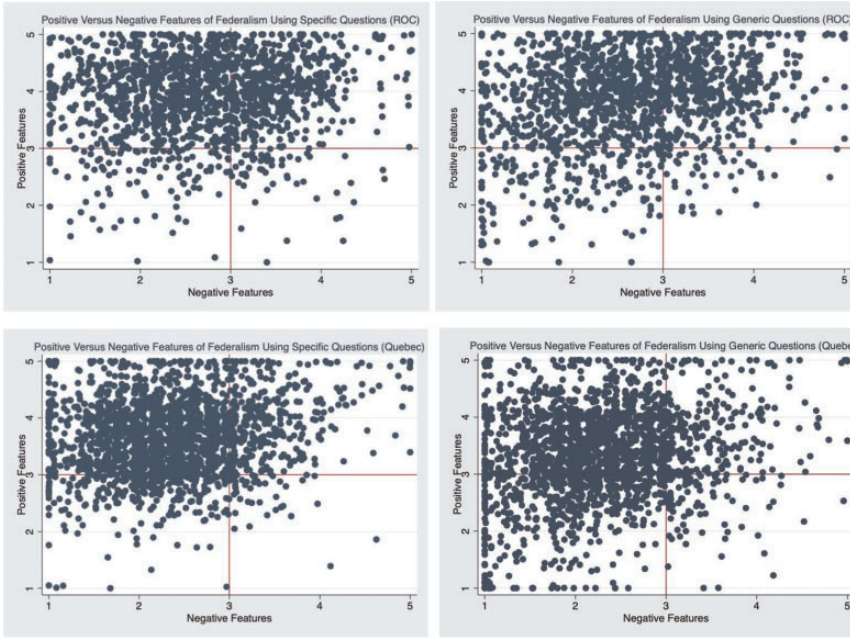

Figure 1 Positive versus negative features of Canadian Federal Political Culture (2015).

and specific measures), the medians and interquartile ranges are a bit to the right of the midpoint for the ROC residents and center on or are slightly to the left of the midpoint for Quebec residents, indicating that ROC residents have a slightly higher level of federal political culture. The other two box and whisker plots demonstrate that ROC respondents find positive features more important than do Quebecers and that they find the negative features of federalism to be somewhat more acceptable than Quebecers. Overall, figure 2 leads to the conclusion that Quebec residents have slightly lower level of federal political culture than residents of the ROC. This finding runs counter to both our expectations and the findings of Rocher and Fafard (2010, 2013), who argued that Quebecers have higher levels of federal political culture than residents of the ROC.

Before ending this discussion, it is worth commenting on the role that linguistic group and opinions on sovereignty play concerning levels of federal political culture within Quebec. First, and contrary to our expectations, supporters and opponents of sovereignty in Quebec as well as all three linguistic groups in Quebec (Francophones, Anglophones, and Allophones) had very similar levels of federal political culture when using generic questions or specific questions. The presence or absence of the words "federal government" did not lower the sovereignists' level

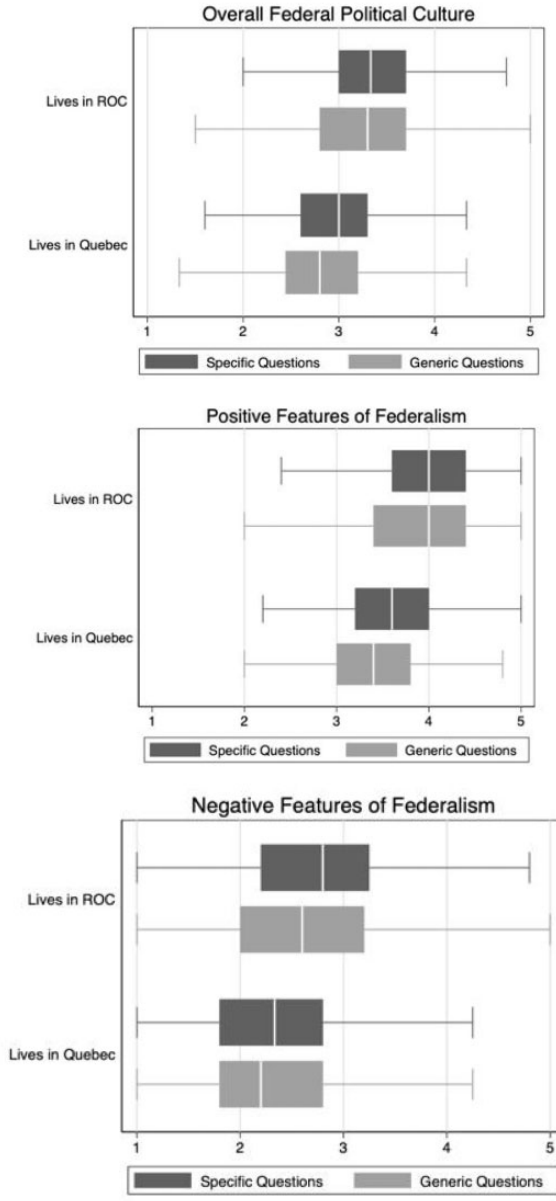

Figure 2 Federal political culture in ROC and Quebec (2015).

of federal political culture as we expected, nor did it have any effect on the level of the federal political culture of Francophones compared to Anglophones or Allophones. In fact, sovereignists actually had a slightly higher level of federal

political culture when questions referring to the Canadian federal government were used as opposed to generic questions. Second, our expectation that sovereignists in Quebec would have higher levels of federal political culture than non-sovereignists was supported when using the specific measures index but not supported when using the generic measures index. The mean was 3.07 out of five for the sovereignists and 2.86 for those opposed to sovereignty using the specific measures index, while opponents of sovereignty had a slightly higher level of federal political culture (2.81 out of five) when generic questions were asked than sovereignists (2.74 out of five). Further, there was no noticeable differences by linguistic group in Quebec when it came to levels of federal political culture. Quebec Francophones had almost exactly the same level of federal political culture as Quebec Anglophones and Allophones using the specific index (all means for all three linguistic groups fell within the range from 2.91 to 2.96; similar results for generic index). Third, and surprisingly, ROC residents had modestly higher levels of federal political culture than both Quebec sovereignists (mean 0.23 higher specific index; 0.49 higher generic index) and Quebec Francophones (mean 0.34 higher specific index; 0.43 higher generic index).

Taken together, our results suggest that the multinational view of federalism that is common among Quebec's political elites has not produced a higher level of federal political culture among Quebec sovereignists or Quebec Francophones when compared to ROC residents or Quebec residents who are not part of the province's national minority (i.e., Anglophones and Allophones). When we break down the Quebec results by opinions on sovereignty and linguistic group, a pattern of higher levels of federal political culture within Quebec compared to the rest of Canada does not emerge. If anything, ROC residents have slightly higher levels of political culture than residents of Quebec, regardless of those residents' opinions towards sovereignty or mother tongue.

Results: Generic versus Specific Questions

We anticipated that we would observe meaningful differences in Canadians' responses to the generic and specific questions concerning Canadian federal political culture. The results suggest that differences are present, but modest (see table 4 above).[6]

In the ROC sample, we find that the mean scores on the federal political culture indices are 0.07 points apart, the mean scores for the positive features index are within 0.09 points, and the mean scores for the negative features index are within 0.04 points. While the first two sets of indices have statistically significant differences, the differences are but substantively small.The same pattern is observed in the Quebec sample, although the differences are somewhat larger: a 0.17 point (and statistically significant) difference for the federal political culture index, a 0.30

point (and statistically significant) difference for the positive features index, and a 0.04 point difference for the negative features index. Together, the results suggest that the wording changes had a greater effect in the Quebec sample than in the ROC sample, but only for the positive features questions, and even there the effect was not very strong. Overall, across both samples, and across all indices, the specific questions generated modestly higher scores than the generic questions, but in all cases the differences were underwhelming. The results suggest that the differences in wording in our questions produced very minimal effects.

To visualize the data, we produced kernel density plots for each set of indexes within each sample (Salgado-Ugarte et al. 1993; Cox 2005). For our purposes, kernel density plots, produced using the kdensity command[7] in STATA, are very useful to visually represent the effects (or lack thereof) of different question wording on the distributions of cases within our samples. The kernel density plots below allow us to see where an index's scores cluster, and in so doing help us to visually discern if the changes in wording is really affecting the overall distribution of the scores in our samples. In the plots, the horizontal axis ranges from 1.0 to 5.0 to represent the five-point scales used on the survey, while the vertical axis ranges from 0.0 to 1.0 to represent the estimations of the density of cases at those particular points in the kernel density plot that the line passes through. A density of zero means that the kernel function estimates that almost no cases are found at that particular point in the graph, while a density of one means that the kernel function estimates that almost all cases are found at that particular point in the graph. In our plots, the lighter line represents the measurements taken using specific wording and the dark line represents the measurements taken using generic wording.

We present the ROC sample data in figure 3. When we examine federal political culture indices using the generic and the specific questions, we can see that the distribution of the cases across the two indices is remarkably similar: the lines of the kernel density plots rise and fall in tandem, with very little space between the two lines. The positive features indices demonstrate a similar pattern, as the distribution of cases varies little depending on the question wording that is used. The negative features indices also depict that the different wording has very minimal effects.

Figure 4 presents these same paired indices in the Quebec sample. The plots show similar patterns with the ROC, with one notable difference. In the Quebec sample, there is more variation regarding the positive features indices: while overall trajectories of the two lines are the same, there is more space between the two lines than is found in the other plots that we are presenting. Specifically, the responses for the generic wording (represented by the darker line) fall more steeply after the mid-point of the scale than the responses for the Canada-specific wording (represented by the lighter line). This finding illustrates that the specific wording

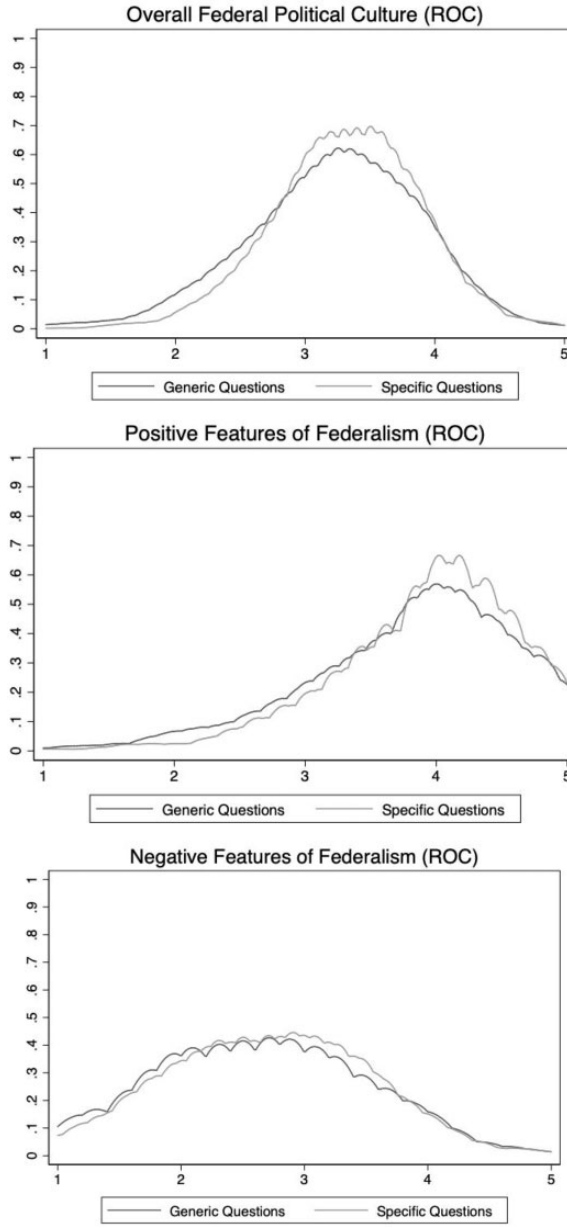

Figure 3 Measurement of federal political culture using generic and specific questions (ROC).

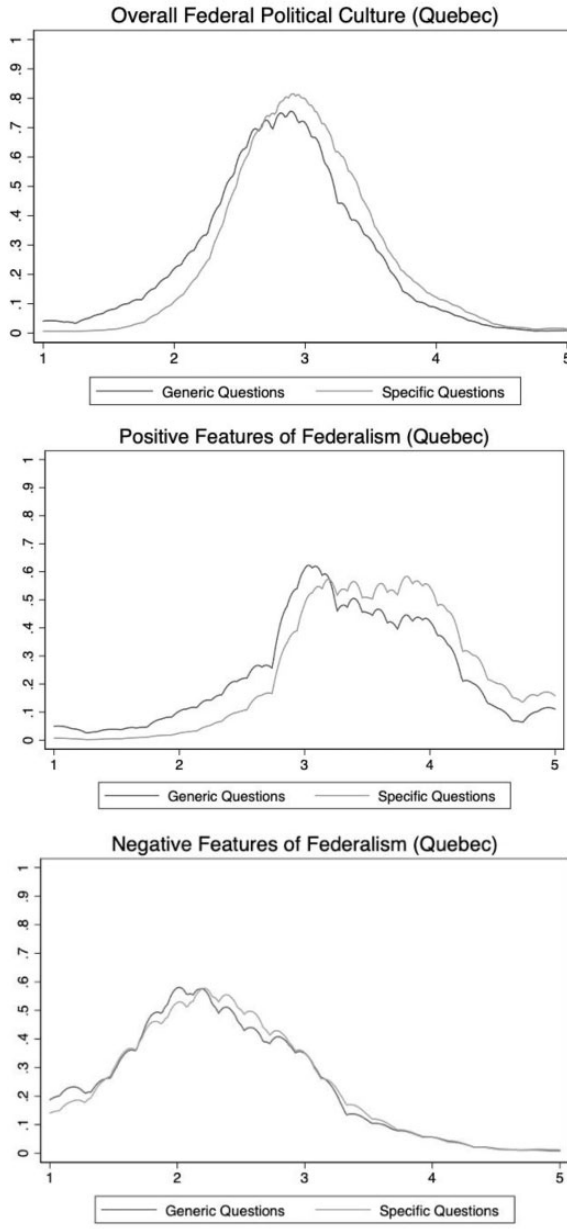

Figure 4 Measurement of federal political culture using generic and specific questions (Quebec).

did produce a small effect: Quebec residents were more likely to state that they find the positive features of federalism important using country-specific questions than to state that they find positive features of federalism important using generic questions. Yet, when it comes to the other two indices, the pattern that we have been observed in the ROC forcefully reasserts itself. We see that the distribution of cases on the negative features indices and overall federal political culture indices are almost identical: there is very little space between the dark and light lines as they rise and fall in exactly the same places.

Conclusion

In this article, we reconceptualize Canadian federal political culture by creating a new definition and set of measurements that was empirically tested in a public opinion survey administered around the time of the 2015 Canadian federal election. We argue that, as part of their political culture, Canadians hold values about how important it is that federalism promotes diversity through recognizing different identities, responding to local particularities, preventing the concentration of political power, and creating the opportunities for innovation and collaboration. Canadians also hold values concerning the acceptability of federalism resulting in situation that reduce the unity of the polity such as gridlock in decision-making, lack of standardization of government services, conflictual intergovernmental relations, and a weak national identity. Taken together, these values constitute Canadian citizens' federal political culture and Canadians appear to hold these values quite firmly. While respondents had the option of choosing "I don't know" to our questions, less than 5 percent did so on each measurement.

As with the definition of any academic concept, our definition of Canadian federal political culture has shortcomings and limitations. The complex nature of Quebec's relationship with the rest of Canada poses challenges when defining Canadian federal political culture. The multinational view of federalism among Quebec political elites contrasts with the territorial view of federalism held by English Canadian political elites, and finding a single set of questions that encompasses these competing views is difficult. Our definition of federal political culture is focused on the potentially positive and negative consequences of dispersing power between different levels of government within a federal system. Many of these consequences are congruent with territorially based concerns (e.g., allowing provincial governments to innovate, collaborate, and keep the federal government accountable). It is possible that more Quebec–ROC differences would have been evident if the survey included more questions concerning national identities in Canada and the accommodation of the Québécois as a national minority. While it is noteworthy that Quebec residents do not particularly demarcate themselves from ROC residents on our two measures that we did

include about identity (as shown in tables A1 and A2 in the Supplementary Online Appendix), wording choices may matter. Using both generic and specific wording, we found that Quebecers are slightly less likely than ROC residents to find it important that different levels of government allow for the "expression of different identities." (tables A1 and A2 in the Supplementary Online Appendix). From our question wording, it is not readily apparent for Quebec respondents to what extent "different identities" explicitly includes the Québécois national identity. The inclusion of the phrase "such as Québécois identity" at the end of this statement might have resulted in altered response patterns in Quebec. Similarly, within our generic questions, we ask about the acceptability that different levels of government "make it harder to maintain an overarching national identity." In this case, the generic form of our question is ambiguous for a Quebec resident because we do not define if we mean Canadian national identity or Québécois national identity.

Future researchers would be well-served to experiment with surveys that dive deeper into the topic of how national identities in Canada are intertwined with Canadian federal political culture. In particular, it would be interesting to find questions that fully capture multinational and territorial visions of Canadian federalism. Research might also consider how political identities, including Canadian, Québécois, and provincial (e.g., Alberta) identities, correlate with federal political culture.

Our study offers several lessons for comparative scholarship on federal political culture. First, context does matter. Existing values-based measures of federal political culture fit awkwardly within the Canadian context. The existence of the Québécois national minority and very strong Premiers who routinely counter the authority of the federal government make it difficult to find questions that would be interpreted in the same way in Canada as in other federal countries like the United States or Australia. Indeed, even within the same country, it can be challenging to find survey questions that are interpreted in the same way in different regions, especially in countries like Canada where one region is home to a national minority and the rest of the country is the home of the national majority.

Second, our research finds that generic and specific questions do not significantly alter responses, suggesting that the use of generic questions may be acceptable to measure federal political culture across federal countries. Our similar findings across the two question types should be verified in another federal system, as it is possible that Canadians automatically conflate generic statements about the positive and negative aspects of dividing political power among different levels of government within their own federal system of governance and citizens of other countries do not. If additional studies confirm the lack of significant differences between specific and generic questions, generic questions could be used not only across federal countries but also to examine if there is a latent federal political culture in countries with unitary systems. Therefore, our findings indicate that

there could be some hope for a universal definition of federal political culture that can be empirically tested in several different countries, although finding such a definition and corresponding set of measurements will be difficult.

In summary, federal political culture remains an intellectually appealing theoretical construction even if its measurement has proved elusive. The difficulties with measuring federal political culture mean that debate over the definition, conceptualization, and operationalization of federal political culture in public opinion research is bound to continue. Nonetheless, federal political culture is a useful concept: the presence of a strong federal political culture suggests well-functioning federal arrangements that create minimal animosity and the presence of a weak federal political culture suggests a disconnect between what citizens desire and existing political arrangements. Given its potential utility for both political scientists and practitioners of federalism, such as politicians and public servants working in intergovernmental affairs, it is worthwhile to continue to research the topic.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are available at *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* online.

Notes

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1. He cites Grodzins (1966), Livingston (1952), Franck (1968), and Truman (1962).
2. Such questions relate more directly to the large international literature on devolution literature that examines citizen preferences regarding which level of government should be responsible for various activities such as defense or health care policy and how these preferences are influenced by political orientations like partisanship, ideology, and feelings about governmental performance (for a summary, see Jacobs 2017).
3. Karmis and Rocher (2018, 4) define a multinational democracy as having the following characteristics: (i) constitutional association of two or more nations; (ii) various national communities have their own self-governing institutions; (iii) the nations and the composite multination are constitutional democracies; and (iv) being multicultural as well as multinational, meaning that multination diversity must be reconciled with multicultural diversity.
4. Research shows that opposition to the 1992 Charlottetown Accord in English Canada was driven by negative feelings toward specific proposals that were perceived to provide too much accommodation of Quebec's demands for more power within the Canadian federation (Johnston et al. 1996).
5. The weights were created using the ipfraking package in Stata that uses a procedure known as iterative proportional fitting or raking. See Kolenikov (2014).

6. Tables of the means and standard deviations for individual questions are presented in the Supplementary Online Appendix.
7. The k-density command uses the Epanechnikov kernel estimation function as its default and we did not change that setting.

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