

Is Quebec's Welfare State Regime Really "Distinct"?

Pierre-Marc Daigneault

Centre d'analyse des politiques, Université Laval

Daniel Béland

McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, McGill University

Lisa Birch

Centre d'analyse des politiques, Université Laval

Samuel David-Bélanger

Centre d'analyse des politiques, Université Laval

Introduction

Since the seminal contributions of Titmuss (1959) and Wilenski and Lebeaux (1965), various scholars have attempted to classify welfare state regimes. However, it is really the publication of *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* by Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990), a book that may have obtained paradigmatic status (Emmenegger, Kvist, Marx, & Petersen, 2015), which has spurred the 'welfare modelling business' or industry (Abrahamson, 1999).

Overall, however, the comparative welfare state literature has suffered from 'methodological nationalism', that is, it has been built on the assumption that nation states are the best – or the sole – unit of analysis (Ciccia & Javornik, 2019; S. Greer, Elliott, & Oliver, 2015). As a result, the comparative welfare state literature has largely neglected welfare arrangements at the subnational level (Hudson, 2012; Isakjee, 2017), thereby "defin[ing] distinctive regional welfare arrangements out of existence" (S. Greer et al., 2015, p. 409). We do suspect that many comparative welfare state scholars want to avoid the methodological challenges associated with comparing welfare regimes at the subnational level or, alternatively, assume that subnational welfare states do not differ significantly from their national counterparts (Hudson, 2012).

To be sure, there is a slowly growing literature focusing on the subnational level composed of qualitative, case-based studies of specific regions pursuing distinct welfare state development strategies, typically in the name of sub-state nationalism (Béland & Lecours, 2008; Greer et al., 2015; Greer, 2010). However, this case-based literature can have a positive bias toward the subnational welfare state and even "celebrates" it (Greer et al., 2015, p. 412). Therefore, scholars from this case-based strand often assume differences

between the subnational and national welfare state regimes, which reflect broader differences in subnational politics and state building strategies. This is in part why the idea of specific subnational “models” has emerged in both the scientific literature and regional political discourse (Béland & Lecours, 2008).

A case in point is the “Quebec model” (*le modèle Québécois*), which has received considerable attention from scholars studying political economy, nationalism and/or social policy (e.g., Arsenault, 2015; Béland & Lecours, 2006; Bouchard, 2013; Bourque, 2000; Klein, Fontan, & Harrisson, 2013; Lévesque, 2002; Noël, 2017; Papillon & Turgeon, 2003; Vaillancourt, 2012). Although this Quebec model is debated, there seems to be a consensus around its three key dimensions, which are as follows: (1) the Quebec State intervenes more in the economy and the society than its North American counterparts; (2) Québécois are deeply attached to the Quebec State, which is perceived as the defender of their economic interests and national identity; and, (3) the social partners such as corporate interests, powerful labor unions and a strong third sector (community organizations, non-profit associations, cooperatives and social enterprises), play a significant role in governing the province with the State through neocorporatist institutional arrangements. These studies suggest or assume that the welfare state regime of Quebec is significantly different or “distinct” from both that of Canada and of other provinces. With respect to social policy, the specificity of the Quebec model lies in its greater generosity and better coverage through a broad array of social programs.

In this paper, we build bridges between two literatures which have largely developed in isolation: 1) the quantitative comparative welfare state literature which tends to neglect subnational regimes, and; 2) the mostly qualitative, case-based literature which tends to magnify subnational regimes. We consider the distinctiveness of the Quebec welfare state regime as an empirical question, that is, a hypothesis to be tested, rather than as an assumption. To that end, we take stock of the quantitative empirical literature and determine whether the evidence supports the existence of a distinct Quebec welfare state regime that is more extensive and generous than its provincial and federal counterparts. Moreover, the paper explores the implications of this case for the study of welfare regimes at the subnational level.

This paper is divided into three sections. We first discuss how comparative scholars have defined and measured welfare regimes and how they have characterized Canada’s welfare regime. This section will provide the necessary conceptual and empirical background for taking stock of the Quebec model hypothesis. Second, we describe and justify the quantitative studies included in our sample. We present our results in the third section. In conclusion, we discuss research gaps and propose an agenda

for future research on the potential existence of distinct welfare regimes at the subnational level.

Conceptualizing and Measuring Welfare State Regimes

Three worlds of welfare and beyond

The most influential typology of welfare state regime has been developed by Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990). He defined *welfare state regimes* as the institutional arrangements between the state, the market and the family in the provision of social rights (1990, p. 19). Analytically, the concept of regime provides a macro, systemic, and holistic perspective on the welfare state rather a detailed micro- analysis of specific programs (Ebbinghaus, 2012, p. 3). Welfare regimes are characterized according to their level of *decommodification* – “the degree to which individuals or families can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of market participation” (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 37) – and the type of *social stratification* or ordering of social relations on which welfare regimes are based and that they perpetuate.

Let us describe each of Esping-Andersen’s three regimes in turn. The *liberal* regime, in which the market predominates, provides limited social rights to its citizens. Means-tested assistance as well as modest universal transfers and social insurance schemes characterize this regime. In order to enforce the individual responsibility and work ethic of citizens, social assistance is ungenerous and often leads to stigmatization of beneficiaries. The coverage of the welfare state in liberal regimes is residual and targeted to low-income people, thereby minimizing decommodification and generating high levels of inequality. Moreover, the liberal regime is built on a dualism between the poor, who are state dependents, and people from the middle class who can fend for themselves on the market. Esping-Andersen (1990, p. 27) argue that the United States, Australia and Canada are the archetypes of the liberal regime.

Conservative welfare regimes such as Austria, Germany and France, are built on a corporatist legacy according to which social rights are provided in a way that upholds social class and status differences, as well as traditional gender roles (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The conservative state, which plays a dominant role in welfare-state provision compared to the market, delivers welfare mainly through social insurance schemes (e.g., pensions). Moreover, the family plays an important role in providing care for children and elders, a role that is encouraged by excluding non-working mothers from social insurance. Therefore, social stratification is high in the conservative regime.

The *social democratic* regime, which characterizes Nordic countries such as Sweden and Denmark, provides the highest level of social rights and decommodification. This

regime “promotes equality to the highest standards” (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 27) by providing universal quality benefits and services to the middle class, in addition to the working class and the poor. In social democratic regimes, individual independence from both the market and the family is central. Therefore, the state takes in charge extensive welfare provision in the field of human services. Because all benefit from this generous and expensive universal system, all must contribute to it. Therefore, the social democratic regime is premised on high labor market participation by all citizens, including women.

Esping-Andersen’s (1990) work has led to an abundant literature building on and/or criticizing his typology (e.g., Bambra, 2005; Bonoli, 1997; Lewis, 1992; Scruggs & Allan, 2006). It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze these developments in full, but we discuss a few studies that underline the complexity of conceptualizing and measuring welfare state regimes. For instance, Bambra (2005) criticized Esping-Andersen’s work because it is almost exclusively based on cash benefits (pensions, sickness and unemployment benefits), neglecting important services provided by the welfare state such as health care. Another interesting criticism was developed by Castles and Mitchell’s (1992) analysis of welfare effort, policy instruments and policy outcomes. They have proposed a fourth, “radical”, type of welfare state regime, which applies to a subset of liberal countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom. In the same vein, Bonoli (1997) argued that Esping-Andersen’s work confounds the “how much” (e.g., benefits level, coverage, welfare effort) and the “how” (e.g., conditions of entitlement, provision through social insurance or universal programs) of welfare provision. By treating these two dimensions as separate, he found a fourth, ‘Latin’ or ‘Mediterranean’, type of welfare state regime that applies to countries such as Italy and Spain. This Latin regime shares many commonalities with the conservative regime, but is less developed and more fragmented.

Whereas most scholars have used a direct approach to the matter centered on what welfare states do and how they do it (i.e., welfare effort and policy instruments), others have used an indirect approach which focuses on social indicators (unemployment rate, female labour participation or voter turnout) to characterize welfare regimes (e.g., Chung & Muntaner, 2007; Saint-Arnaud & Bernard, 2003). These indicators are often — though not always (e.g., the public policy indicators used by Saint-Arnaud & Bernard, 2003) — considered as policy outcomes, that is, the consequences of the specific policies pursued under each welfare state regime. For instance, based on multilevel analysis, Chung and Muntaner (2007) found significant differences in infant mortality and low birth weight between welfare regimes. They found that social democratic countries had better health outcomes than countries displaying a different welfare regime, even after controlling for factors such as GDP per capita. An obvious limitation to this indirect approach is that the

social indicators used to measure policy outcomes can also be determinants of the same policies (i.e., the problem of mutual causality, see Saint-Arnaud & Bernard, 2003, p. 508). The indirect approach is nevertheless a legitimate strategy to characterize and measure welfare state regimes. In fact, we argue that a thorough comparison of welfare regimes at the national and subnational levels should include indicators of welfare effort and policy instruments (how much and how) as well as policy outcomes (with what impact).

Now, it is worth turning our attention to the unit of analysis and its consequences for the classification of countries by type of welfare regime. Esping-Andersen (1990) constructs his argument mainly at the country level of analysis, and occasionally at the supranational level (e.g., Scandinavian nations, Anglo-Saxon nations or continental Europe). It comes to no surprise then that there are disparities in the use of the key concepts as shown in Table 1. A possible line of explanation for Esping-Andersen’s methodological nationalism is that his decommodification index is based on sickness benefits, unemployment benefits and pensions rather than smaller cash benefits or education, health and social services (see Bambra, 2005). Yet these large cash benefits are generally under the responsibility of national governments, which leads Esping-Andersen to overlook the subnational level.

Table 1: Occurrences of Paired Concepts in Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*

Concept A	Occurrences	Concept B	Occurrences
National	112	Subnational	0
Federalism	6	Province, State or Lander	0
		Local	6
		Regional or Municipal	0
		City or cities as a geographic entity	1
Centralized	4	Decentralized	0
Canada	39	Quebec, or any other province	0

United States	173	New York or any other state government	0
Germany	157	Bavaria or any other lander	0

*Word count excludes mentions in the reference list at the end of the book.

Although Esping-Andersen does discuss urban and rural phenomenon, the focus is on the sociological process of urbanization and on social class, rather than on political units of organization for the production and delivery of social policies. The six times the word “local” is used concern the historical formation of pensions and the extent of their coverage. Consequently, by choosing the country as the unit of analysis, Esping-Andersen’s work implies that the central government in unitary states or the federal government in federal states determines the main parameters of the social welfare regime, thus rendering subnational governments irrelevant and invisible literally as shown from our word counts. As for “city”, this word only appears once as a real city (New York City). Yet cities often do play important roles in social policy design and delivery, especially for policies such as social housing, safe injection sites, emergency and even regular welfare services. Alternatively, as we claim, since the country is the unit of analysis, more should be done to explore the potential existence of distinct welfare regimes at the subnational level.

The Canadian Welfare State Regime is Liberal But...

Variations arise in the comparative literature regarding the classification of the Canadian welfare system depending on whether the unit of analysis is Canada as a country or the sub-national governments of Canada, and whether scholars consider some particularities of Canada’s decentralized welfare system. When focusing on the country as the unit of analysis, Esping-Andersen (1990) classified Canada in the liberal welfare state regime category. Other scholars have validated this characterization using various quantitative methods and data sets, which suggests it is quite robust. Indeed, Ebbinghaus (2012), who reviewed 11 empirical studies published between 1994 and 2009 adopting a comparative perspective on the welfare state, found that all but one classified Canada’s welfare state regime as liberal. In a similar review, Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser (2011) concluded that Canada was characterized as liberal in 15 out of 19 empirical studies, for a medium-high level of consistency.

However, this high level of consistency among studies should not mask a few stipulations by some scholars who nuance their classification and even disagreements among scholars about their classification of Canada's welfare state regime. An example of the former is provided by Saint-Arnaud and Bernard's (2003) study in which they analyze social indicators with hierarchical cluster analysis. While their results confirm that Canada belongs to the liberal type, they also found similarities with other regimes:

In short, Canada is a liberal country, but certain peculiarities set it apart from the liberal regime. Public interventions in Canada are a little more pronounced, and in certain respects social situations approach, if only timidly, those prevailing in Europe. But political participation remains relatively low, particularly if one compares it to social-democratic countries. (p. 522)

Let us stress that Saint-Arnaud and Bernard's (2003, 521) conclusion that "Canada is a liberal country, but..." is also consistent with qualitative analyses of the Canadian welfare state regime (e.g., Mahon, 2008; Myles, 1998).

There are also a few disagreements. For instance, although she did not explicitly challenge Canada's characterization as a liberal regime, Bambra (2005) found that Canada is closer to a cluster of countries that display a medium decommodification score for both cash benefits and health services (i.e., Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France and Italy). As such, Canada is very different from the classic liberal welfare regimes that offer meager cash benefits and health services (i.e., Australia and the United States) and somewhat closer (but not that much) to liberal regimes that are more orientated toward providing health services (i.e., New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Ireland). In a subsequent research note in which she replicated Esping-Andersen's decommodification index, Bambra (2006) found that Canada has more in common with Ireland, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark than with other liberal regimes. Similarly, Scruggs and Alan (2006) replicated Esping-Andersen's (1990) decommodification index and found that Canadian programs are more decommodifying than those of other liberal countries. Therefore, they classified Canada as belonging to the middle group of mostly conservative countries such as Austria, France and Germany.

Despite a few discordant voices, however, let us reiterate that a large majority of empirical studies have characterized Canada's welfare state regime in the liberal category. While Canada might not be a pure type of the liberal regime, it clearly belongs to this category of welfare state. Moreover, this conclusion is confirmed by recent quantitative work which did not explicitly sought to classify welfare state regimes. Indeed, Jacques and Noël (2018) found that Canada clusters with Australia and the United States with respect to its level of universalism and level of public social expenditures.

Are Subnational Welfare State Regimes Possible and Why Should we Care?

In this section, we discuss (in reverse order) the possibility of intra-country variations with respect with welfare state regimes and why it matters. By not considering the possibility that regions, provinces or even cities have a different welfare regime than their country, we obliterate a whole and crucial facet of the welfare state:

It is not unreasonable to presume that cross-national variation will usually be greater than intra-national variation, but if a certain sub-national territory might reasonably be presumed to occupy a *qualitatively different* class or category to the rest of its nation, then we have a problem. Even then, if this is a one-off, then perhaps those interested in broad scale macro-level comparisons of welfare states can reasonably overlook it. However, if similar – or the same – types of sub-national territories occupy a privileged position in many or all of the nations under consideration, then a theoretically significant trend is at risk of being missed as key sub-national variations are masked. (Hudson, 2012, p. 456)

In fact, using aggregate, national data may mask significant trends and within-country variations as well as more complex political and institutional dynamics in welfare state development, including at the national level (Greer et al., 2015). This is problematic, in particular, for studying social investment policies such as childcare and active labour market policies (ALMP) which are characterized by decentralized financing and implementation (Ciccia & Javornik, 2019, p. 2). Moreover, because subnational entities are more numerous than countries, scholars have bigger samples which allow them to perform more powerful descriptive and causal quantitative analyses (S. Greer et al., 2015; Imbeau et al., 2000).

Now, why should we expect that subnational welfare state regimes differ from their national counterparts in general and in Canada in particular? First, many subnational entities have considerable constitutional and financial autonomy when it comes to social policy. A case in point is the United States where states are responsible for approximately one third of the country's welfare spending (Greer et al., 2015). In fact, the results of various studies suggest that significant variations exist in terms of welfare arrangements at the subnational level. For instance, Greer, Elliott and Oliver (2015) studied the welfare effort of subnational entities in two liberal regimes, namely the United States and the United Kingdom, and found important intra-country differences in terms of the age-alignment spending ratio and the spending on active labour market policies as a percentage of the gross domestic product:

With regard to the age-alignment spending ratio, the coefficient of variation is 10.6 per cent greater for the sample of OECD countries when compared to the state ratios for the United States and 63 per cent greater than in the case of regions within the United Kingdom. Given the volumes of critical comparisons and theoretical groupings of OECD countries, it is surprising to consider that such a high degree of variation may be found within a single case. Moreover, in TANF, which the OECD considers to be the key American ALMP

programme, the coefficient of variation is actually greater in the USA (0.58) than in the OECD overall (0.53). (S. Greer et al., 2015, p. 422)

In Canada, provincial governments also have substantial constitutional and fiscal autonomy (Haddow, 2015; Imbeau et al., 2000). Indeed, Banting and McEwen (2018, p. 112) argued: “By the 1990s, Canada had one of the most decentralized welfare states among western democracies. Federal legislative authority over social protection was more limited than in any other federation in the OECD (Banting 2006; Obinger et al. 2005)”. Moreover, Imbeau and his colleagues (2000, p. 783) found that the variation in social expenditures (education, health and income maintenance) as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was greater among the Canadian provinces than among OECD countries. In Canada, not only the welfare effort (“how much”) is different, but also the “how” of welfare spending. For instance, Boychuk (1998) found important differences between provincial social assistance regimes in Canada. Furthermore, in Canada as in other countries, regional economic disparities as well as the social, cultural, demographic diversity among subnational governments, including possible variations regarding indicators of gender equality, influence both the population’s needs for social welfare in each region and the capacity of the relevant subnational government to deliver such services. Therefore, significant variations between provinces in terms of the size and features of their respective welfare state, as well as social outcomes are not only possible, but also plausible and even probable. This is particularly so in the case of Quebec for which an abundant literature has discussed the *modèle québécois* that is purported to be different from the rest of Canada.

Data and Methods

Our sample comprised empirical studies that explicitly address the question of what kind of welfare state regime Quebec might have. These studies have attempted to characterize the welfare state regime of Quebec to compare it to those of other Canadian provinces, and/or of other countries. Moreover, we only included quantitative studies that were conducted in the tradition of comparative welfare state literature *à la* Esping-Andersen. In this paper, we rely on King, Keohane and Verba’s (1994) definition of quantitative research:

Quantitative research uses numbers and statistical methods. It tends to be based on numerical measurements of specific aspects of phenomena; it abstracts from particular instances to seek general description or to test causal hypotheses; it seeks measurements and analyses that are easily replicable by other researchers. (1994, p. 3)

We assembled our sample using a “snowball” strategy. We started with a few studies that we already knew about, and we progressively added publications that we found on Google Scholar or through backward and forward reference searching. Our final sample

included seven sources using quantitative methods of which three journal articles (Bernard & Saint-Arnaud, 2004; Haddow, 2014; Raïq & Plante, 2013), four book chapters (Haddow, 2013; Plante & van den Berg, 2011; Proulx, Faustmann, Raïq, & van den Berg, 2011; Raïq, Bernard, & van den Berg, 2011) and two books (Haddow, 2015; Van den Berg, Plante, Raïq, Proulx, & Faustmann, 2017).

In total, these sources contained many “results” – our unit of analysis. Let us stress that we did not count twice very similar results presented by the same authors in different publications. By very similar, we mean that the authors compared the same cases and performed the same analyses using more recent data or that they included more cases in their comparisons but used the same data (e.g., Plante & van den Berg, 2011; Van den Berg et al., 2017, chap. 6). In those cases, we retained the more recent and/or extensive results. Whereas all these publications are included in our sample, we only included the most recent and/or complete analyses. We categorized each result according to the criteria in Table 2.

Table 2: Criteria for Classifying Evidence

Criteria and Definitions	Coding Categories	Operationalization
<i>Type of Results:</i> What is/are the main characteristic/s of the welfare regime analysed by this study?	Welfare effort (how much) and instruments (how)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data about the resources (inputs) that go to the welfare state (e.g., social spending as a % of the GDP) • Data about the way the welfare is delivered (e.g., decommodification of cash benefits and health services)
	Outcomes (with what impact)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data about social indicators that are considered the consequences of the welfare regime (e.g., poverty levels)
Direction of Results:	Positive = Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive or inferential statistics showing a

Does the result presented in this study tend to support the Quebec model hypothesis?		difference between Quebec and other provinces or Canada
	Negative = Contradicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive or inferential statistics showing no difference or similarity between Quebec and other provinces or Canada
	Mixed = Partially supports and partially contradicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive or inferential statistics showing both similarities and differences between Quebec and other provinces or Canada
Robustness of the Evidence How robust are the findings?	Strong / Conclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical tests with significant results
	Weak / Suggestive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences but no statistical tests or statistical tests with non-significant results

Results

Our sample contains 188 results. The complete and detailed list of results and their classification according to the above criteria is presented in appendix. As Table 3 indicates, most (128 or 68%) of these results address the outcomes of welfare state regimes, first and foremost levels of poverty measured through various indicators. Interestingly, only 14% of all results are exclusively based on a direct measurement approach of welfare state regimes (i.e., welfare effort and/or policy instruments). The remaining 18% of cases are based on a mix of policy effort, instruments, and outcomes. Whether they are positive or negative, most (63.3%) results are based on a weak/suggestive level of evidence (Table 3). Moreover, most (87.2%) comparative work on the Quebec welfare state regime focuses on Canadian, mainly subnational, comparisons (Table 5). The most frequent case to which Quebec is compared is Ontario, either exclusively (71 results out of 188 or 37.8%) or with other provinces and/or the Rest of Canada as a whole (45 cases out of 188 or 23.9%).

Table 3: Distribution of Results – Dimension Studied and Direction of Results

Dimension of Welfare State Regime	Strong \ Conclusive	Weak \ Suggestive	Total
Policy Effort \ Instruments	8	19	27
Outcomes	45	83	128
Both	16	17	33
Total	69	119	188

Table 4: Distribution of Results – Dimension Studied and Strength of Evidence

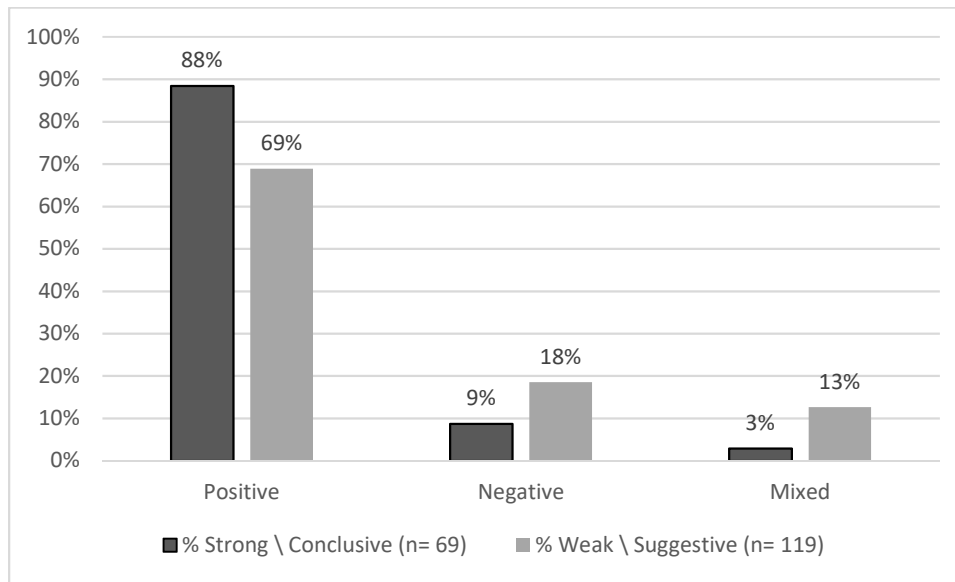
Dimension of Welfare State Regime	Direction of Results			Total
	Positive	Negative	Mixed	
Policy Effort / Instruments	23	3	1	27
Outcomes	98	19	11	128
Both	22	6	5	33
Total	143	28	17	188

Table 5: Distribution of Results – Canadian and International Comparison

Type of Comparison	Direction of Results			
	Positive	Negative	Mixed	Total
CANADIAN COMPARISONS	126	24	14	164
INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS	17	4	3	24
Total	143	28	17	188

Now, what is the level of support for the existence of a distinct Quebec model? The analysis of the results in our sample generally supports the hypothesis of the Quebec model. For instance, 76.1% of results support the Quebec model hypothesis, 14.9% contradict it, and 9.0% offer partial support for it (Table 4). This conclusion holds for both types of evidence. While the weak/suggestive evidence support the hypothesis of a Quebec model in 69% of the cases, this proportion rises to 88% with strong/conclusive evidence (Figure 1). A Chi-Squared test performed on the distribution of results in Table 4 revealed that the findings are statistically significant at the .01 level ($p = .008$), which means that it is very unlikely to observe the results in Table 4 if the Quebec Model hypothesis is false.

Figure 1: Evidence Pertaining to the Quebec Model Hypothesis



Let us take a deeper look at results based on their approach to the dimension of the welfare state regimes.

Welfare Effort and/or Instruments

Regarding the 'how' and 'how much' of welfare state regimes, 85.2% of results support the Quebec model hypothesis. An example that fits into that category is Haddow's (2015, p. 225-226) comparative analysis of Quebec and Ontario. He found, among other things, that Ontario's policy commitment in terms of childcare is lower than Quebec's, even after controlling socioeconomic differences between the two provinces in a regression analysis. This result is statistically significant for two of the three dependent variables in his model (i.e., childcare spending and childcare spaces) He also found, however, that since the mid-1990s Quebec has been consistently less generous with respect to the social assistance income of its median beneficiary (p. 129). Although this latter result suggests that Quebec is distinct from Ontario, it goes against the hypothesis of the existence of a more extensive and generous welfare state in Quebec. However, globally these different results suggest that the Quebec model targets its generosity toward families, which are perceived as being vulnerable and deserving, with the expectation that apt individuals should fend for themselves in the job market rather than depend on social assistance. This result is coherent with the activation and social investment paradigms (Daigneault, 2015; Jenson, 2004).

Welfare Outcomes

In terms of the results pertaining to welfare outcomes, 76.6% tend to support the Quebec model hypothesis. For instance, Raïq and Plante (2013) looked at the percentage of two-parent families who lived at least one year of poverty between 2002 and 2007. They found that the proportion in Quebec (17.1%) is not only lower than in Canada (20.9%), Ontario (21.3%), Alberta (23.6%) and British Columbia (23.6%), but is also statistically significant. This tends to corroborate the findings regarding the welfare efforts and instruments deployed in Quebec for families and their children. An example of mixed result related to social outcomes is found in Van den Berg et al. (2017, p. 104). They found that Quebec's poverty rate for single adults has been generally lower than for Alberta and British Columbia; however it has been generally higher than Ontario, the United States, Denmark, the Netherlands, and France.

Welfare Effort, Instruments, and Outcomes

Studies in our sample contain many results that are based on both a direct (how much and how) and indirect (with what impact) measurement of welfare state regimes. A first type of result pertains to the redistributive impact of various welfare policies. For instance, Haddow (2013, pp. 395-397) analyzed the redistributive impact of various policies — social assistance, workers' compensation, child benefits and income taxes — in the Canadian provinces. He found that, overall, Quebec's policies did a better job at reducing inequality than all other provinces, a result that is statistically significant at the .05 or .01 level, depending on the province. Another result is derived from a hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) of the four largest Canadian provinces and 20 OECD countries, including Canada (Bernard & Saint-Arnaud, 2004). HCA is an inductive method that classifies cases according to their similarities and differences on given indicators. Three types of indicators are used in this study: public policy indicators, which pertain mainly to welfare effort, and civic participation and social conditions indicators, which pertain to social outcomes. On one hand, Bernard and Saint-Arnaud's (2004) main result does not support the Quebec model hypothesis. With four clusters, Quebec clearly belongs to a "North American liberal" regime, as do other provinces, Canada, the United States and Iceland. Moreover, the authors had to force divisions and create 22 groups to see Quebec distinguishes itself from the Canadian cluster (p. 224).¹ On the other hand, when one takes a closer look at Bernard and Saint-Arnaud's results, there are some indications that Quebec's welfare state regime displays limited, but real differences with its Canadian counterparts. In fact, Quebec is, with Alberta, the province that differs the most from Canada as a whole. Moreover, of all provinces, Quebec presents the greatest differences

¹ If eight subdivisions are forced, then Alberta leaves the Canadian cluster to join the United States.

with the United States and the liberal regime, and the greatest similarities with European social democratic and conservative regimes (p. 228).

Discussion

In this paper, we took stock of the empirical literature which analyzed quantitatively the existence of a distinct welfare state regime for Quebec. Overall, our 188 results suggest that there is indeed a Quebec Model of welfare that is more generous and more extensive than its provincial counterparts. Moreover, although Quebec's welfare state regime clearly stands out, the work reviewed suggest that there are a few significant – albeit not as pronounced – differences between the other provinces as well. These results suggest that, in Canada at least, provinces have, first, enough constitutional and fiscal autonomy to build their welfare state in the direction that they choose and, second, the capacity to influence socioeconomic indicators such as poverty and inequality. In other words, provincial public policy matters a great deal in Canada. Our results also confirm the need to study the subnational level more closely to assess whether subnational welfare states within a given country are similar to each other and to their national counterpart. Theoretically this suggests that students of welfare state regimes, especially those interested in federal countries, should reject 'methodological nationalism' and pay close attention to the possible existence of distinct regimes at the subnational level (Ciccio & Javornik, 2019; Greer, Elliott, & Oliver, 2015).

We also need to stress the limitations of this study. First, whereas the number of results that we review is consequential, most of these results are indirect and/or based on weak/suggestive evidence. Second, this rough classification of evidence as weak/suggestive and strong/conclusive masks significant variations between the level of evidence. In reality, a regression analysis that controls for various factors is more convincing than a simple test that focuses on the difference of means between two tests. Finally, our unit of analysis is problematic. It was sometimes difficult to determine precisely what constitutes a result. For instance, in a table that compares Quebec to the other nine provinces on three relevant variables, do we have 27 results in total?

There are two next steps for this study. First, we need to refine the analysis of the results. We think that focusing on the strongest evidence presented here would be fruitful, as would be deepening our narrative review of these results, in addition to performing statistical tests (if possible). Second, more research is required to determine unequivocally what the parameters of the Quebec welfare state policy mix are, and to understand how and why the Quebec model emerged in the North American context. In that regard, various studies in our sample examined explanatory factors of the welfare state such as the strength of the political left, nationalist sentiment and the labor movement (e.g.,

Haddow, 2014). Comparative research looking more systematically at these factors is a key area of future research on the Quebec model and, more generally, on the study of subnational welfare regimes. Another avenue of inquiry worth exploring is interdisciplinary perspectives on the mix of social policy instruments and their impact on the observed differences in outcomes for Quebec. For example, Pierre Fortin, a Quebec economist, attributes some of these outcomes to the positive socio-economic impact of Quebec's social innovation in education — the cégep system — that equalized opportunities, notably access to post-secondary education and a higher standard of living over the last 50 odd years.

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