A. Henderson, “Regional Political Cultures in Canada,” *CJPS* 37:3 (September 2004)

**Overview**

Paper examines the existence of sub-state political cultures in Canada, revisiting research from Simeon & Elkins into the existence of provincial political cultures in Canada. It considers whether attitudes towards government have changes, and revisits the process by which sub-cultures are identified. Using data from the federal election profiles and CES, the paper identifies nine distinct regional variant cultures within Canada that possess different political attitudes and behaviours that cannot be explained by provincial boundaries.

**Background**

* Cdn political culture not what it used to be – Cdns are becoming less deferential, voter turnout is down, confidence in leaders is down, and Cdn political attitudes appear to be shifting
* This paper argues that interprovincial differences in political attitudes are either stable or declining, depending on the indicator, and that on measures of trust and efficacy, regional rather than provincial affiliations account for variations among Cdns
* This paper demonstrates some of the key problems with the political culture research – defines political culture by its indicators and develops spurious categories in attempting to showcase results (which are made largely irrelevant by the those 2 issues)
  + i.e. are survey questions such as “People like me have no say” really getting to issues of *political culture*????
* This paper tests some of the assumptions/enduring myths of regionalism and the existence of provincial political cultures
* Simeon and Elkins argue that provincial political cultures exist first, because provincial political institutions create meaningful cultural boundaries around citizens, and second, because of the varied relationship between the federal government and voters across the country
* However, they also acknowledge that it is “dangerous to assume citizens of geographically proximate areas share the same attitudes” – for them, not all Albertans think alike, let alone all Westerners
  + But the idea is really, more that, an Albertan is more likely to think like the aggregate of Albertans, than an Ontarian would
* Henderson’s results cause her to cluster her results according to the following regions:
  + (1) Cosmopolitan Quebec; (2) Suburban Toronto and Vancouver (????); (3) Urban Canada (???): (4) Rural and mid-northern; (5) Manufacturing Belt; (6) New France; (7) British North America; (8) Far north; (9) Metropolitan Toronto
    - Suggests these are nine “relatively homogenous” clusters

**Conclusion**

Article demonstrated inter-provincial differences appear stable over time, and the existence of regional clusters that could account for variations in attitudes to federal politics. Regionalism in Canada usually seen as an east-west phenomenon, but there is also an important north-south dimension.

Suggests that what we have been measuring thus far in political culture research is not the existence of provincial sub-cultures, but that of regional variations.