L. Imbeau et al., “Comparative Provincial Policy Analysis: A Research Agenda,” *CJPS* 33:4 (December 2000)

**Overview**

Paper argues that the 10 Cdn provinces offer a superb laboratory for testing hypotheses and theory building in policy analysis. Three areas of research in comparative PP stand out as being particularly well suited to analysis in this environment: (1) the growth and decline of the state; (2) the partisan influence on PP; and (3) neocorporatist explanations of policy outcomes.

**Backgrounder:**

* Bennett – “the comparative policy tradition has never been seriously embraced by Cdn policy analysts”
* Comparative provincial policy analysis in Canada has developed largely in the *case-oriented* tradition (vs. the *variable-oriented* strategy)
* Reasons in favour of utilizing provinces in comparative PP:
  + Cdn provinces share similarities making hypothesis testing easier (most similar systems)
  + Despite high commonality, there is still a high level of interprovincial variability on a number of phenomena of interest (in health, education, income maintenance) as well as relatively high degree of provincial autonomy
  + # of cases – small enough to allow comparative case studies, and large enough for statistical techniques
  + Costs are lower than for international comparisons, which have costs associated with translation/interpretation, and travel

**Lijphart’s four basic methods of research:** (1) case studies; (2) the comparative method; (3) the experimental method; and (4) the statistical method

“The potential contribution of comparative policy analysis in the Cdn provinces is clearly great enough to justify the development of research programmes to advance our understanding of industrial societies in general, and to specific problems encountered by policy actors, in particular. Such programmes could stimulate similar agendas for comparative research of regional governments in other federal states such as Switzerland, Germany and Australia, thereby contributing to the development of theories specific to sub-national public policy”