

ARTICLE



The Atlantic Challenge: How Political Science Understands Canada's Smallest Region

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how Canadian political science portrays Atlantic Canada, along with some of the consequences of persistent misrepresentations. I first explore traditional portrayals of Atlantic Canada as well as arguments challenging those conceptions, demonstrating that it is no longer appropriate to treat Atlantic Canada as primarily defined by either economic processes or common political culture. I then survey the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *Canadian Public Administration* and *Canadian Public Policy* to determine the extent to which discussions of Atlantic Canada still, (a) emphasize economic phenomena, and (b) assume a common Atlantic political culture. I find that, while political scientists are now less likely to study the region in terms of economic phenomena, they still perpetuate outdated depictions of Atlantic political culture. This tendency results in a certain degree of methodological imprecision and reinforces problematic assumptions about Atlantic political life.

KEYWORDS

Atlantic Canada; political science; regionalism; political culture; political economy

Regions are critical to Canadian political science. Not only are they directly studied as interesting entities in their own right, they shape how analysts approach a whole host of political phenomena. Canadian political history is almost always viewed in part through a regional lens, from the National Policy's creation of geographic winners and losers, to the evolution of federalism in relation to Québécois nationhood and Western alienation. Regions also stand alongside gender and age as obligatory intervening variables for which quantitative and comparative analysis control whenever possible. Given this centrality to the discipline, periodic examination and assessment are warranted regarding how Canadian political science understands specific geographic regions.

This article examines how political science understands Atlantic Canada, a region of the country in continuous flux. The recent Liberal electoral dominance within the region prompts questions about possible political cohesion, alongside long-standing debates about regional integration (see Finbow 2004; Mandale and Milne 1996; Wright 2015). The newly launched Atlantic Growth Strategy and the recent economic optimism surrounding Halifax (ACOA 2018; Bundale 2017) also suggest the time is ripe for a re-evaluation of the region's economic prospects as well as whether and how a "rising tide" in one corner of the Atlantic might indeed "lift all boats" across the region.

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Atlantic Canada is also a region in which inhabitants have frequently expressed frustration with how the rest of the country perceives them. Indeed, it is easy for federal politicians and the media to overlook or stereotype the four easternmost provinces; there are simply not enough voters or consumers in the region to warrant much attention, much to the chagrin of those who live there (see MacDonald 2016; Savoie 2006). Moreover, Atlantic political scientists have occasionally complained that the region is misrepresented within their discipline. Political science sits at the intersection of history, sociology, geography, law, economics, and, depending on whom you ask, several other social sciences. This field of study, perhaps more so than any other, should be able to capture the many facets of Canada's political regions. However, Stewart argues that "what passes for knowledge in Maritime political studies is often little more than an assortment of unsubstantiated suppositions" (1986, 136). Similarly, Finbow labels Atlantic Canada an academic "afterthought," its study dominated by "superficial analyses" (2004, 149; see also Smith 2002; Young 1986).

However, these criticisms are now somewhat dated and warrant revisiting in a more systematic manner. As such, this paper asks how Atlantic Canada is depicted within Canadian political science, and to what extent old clichés about the region still abound. To answer this question, I first present traditional portrayals of the Atlantic, as well as arguments problematizing those portrayals. This review suggests that it is not appropriate to treat Atlantic Canada as primarily defined by economic conditions and processes, nor is it useful to assume a common Atlantic political culture. I then explore whether these critiques have broader echoes in the discipline by examining how the region is portrayed within three major journals: *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *Canadian Public Policy*, and *Canadian Public Administration*. I pose two specific questions: To what extent are political scientists inclined to study the region in terms of economic processes?, and what assumptions do researchers make regarding Atlantic political culture?

My analysis finds that Canadian political science has caught up with one aspect of the contemporary reality but not the other. While there has been a decline in researchers' propensity to study the region in terms of economic phenomena, articles within the three journals still overwhelmingly portray Atlantic Canada as a united by a common political culture. This assumption is not only methodologically unjustifiable, but also feeds into problematic portrayals of the region and its inhabitants.

Atlantic Canada: Traditional Portrayals

Before the three journals are analyzed, this section presents traditional portrayals of Atlantic Canadian regional character and examines shifts in how the region has been understood and problematized. These portrayals are significant not only because they represent long-term, influential trends in how Atlantic regionalism has been studied, but also because they concern what have typically been seen as the "defining features" of Atlantic Canada. Canadian regions do not have the same set of defining characteristics; linguistic difference, for example, is a distinguishing feature of Quebec but not Ontario. With respect to Atlantic Canada, economics and culture are repeatedly cited as setting the region apart from the rest of Canada. These are the traits on which the idea of an Atlantic region has traditionally been built. However, the following discussion demonstrates that the primacy of both of these traits to the region has become questionable.

The earliest construction of an “Atlantic” region comes from political economy, as analysts sought to explain broad deindustrialization and underdevelopment east of Quebec. Early Canadian political economists focused on the three Maritime Provinces, as Newfoundland and Labrador had yet to enter Confederation. Drawing on Harold Innis’ writing, they pinned the Maritimes’ economic predicament to the decline of the region’s staples industries (see Saunders 1984). From this perspective, the region failed to adjust to a more “modern” economic landscape out of geographic distance, cultural inertia, and social backwardness (see also Clow 1984). This angle eventually fell out of vogue, as the rise of dependency theory provided an opportunity to rewrite the Maritimes’ economic history in a way that placed far more responsibility on the central provinces. Archibald (1971) brings dependency theory into studies of the Atlantic region, depicting an exploitative relationship of “internal colonialism” between the eastern periphery and the central core (as cited in Clow 1984). Following this theory, the arrangement of Confederation itself is to blame for Atlantic underdevelopment. Acheson (1972) then refocuses dependency theory on the early twentieth century, in light of evidence that Confederation did not instantly engender economic destitution east of Quebec, but rather initially brought prosperity to cities and towns in the region. Instead of Confederation itself, Acheson blames later concentration of capital in central Canada for the Maritimes’ decline. Writing a decade later, Clow (1984) criticizes the determinism of all of these dependency based discussions, placing more emphasis on how federal politics have impacted the Maritime economy.

Common to all of these discussions is a rejection of early Innisian staples theory and an increasing tendency to blame the region’s economic predicament on its relationship with central Canada and the federal government. Bickerton (2002) attempts to rescue Innis from these criticisms of early Canadian political economy, arguing that Innis was in fact a staunch decentralist and fretted over the possibility of Maritime dependence on federal funds hampering the responsiveness of provincial governments. However, Bickerton was writing at a time when this debate had already begun to fizzle out. Since the 1980s, few have engaged directly in the discussion over Atlantic underdevelopment and its causes.

While underdevelopment remains important to parts of the region, as interest in political economy has declined, some of these paradigms have become outdated and problematic. Most immediately apparent is that relying on economics to define the Atlantic region now often entails awkwardly half-integrating Newfoundland and Labrador into older political economy paradigms. For example, Brodie’s (1989) synthesis alternates between referring to the Maritimes and to Atlantic Canada. This is not entirely without justification; Newfoundland and Labrador and the Maritimes do share many important features, not least of which is the sort of underdevelopment found in “periphery” regions. However, there has been little interest in updating internal dependency debates to explicitly address this addition, rather political scientists are left to assume that the old Maritime paradigms can simply be extended northward.

Moreover, the assumption of a region defined by economics is problematic when divorced from the macro-deindustrialization question. Yes, the literature outlined above posits an Atlantic Canada united in economic despair—however, it is only in relation to the specific question of what causes underdevelopment. Apart from this question, overemphasizing economics reinforces stereotypes of hopelessness, destitution, and

dependence on Ottawa. Within political science and broader social science, such stereotypes can drown out more nuanced discussions of the region's place in Confederation (Finbow 1994; see also Forbes 1989). They also serve as expert validation of stereotypes common to both decision-makers and the wider public, legitimizing beliefs about perpetual poverty and hopelessness. These stereotypes are already present within broader Canadian political discourse; to give one example, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper once infamously decried the region's "culture of defeat" (see Laghi 2004). They also risk becoming self-fulfilling as they perpetuate pessimism amongst residents and prospective immigrants (Halliday 2015; see also Smith 2002).

There is also significant diversity in economic conditions within the Atlantic; particularly in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, in which capital cities are home to huge portions of the population, urban centers diverge significantly from the rest of their respective provinces. In January of 2018, the unemployment rate for Halifax and St. John's was 6.8% and 8.4%, respectively, compared to a nationwide rate of 5.9%. However, Nova Scotia's overall unemployment rate at this time was 8.2%, while Newfoundland and Labrador's was 14%. Since 2001 (the earliest date for which such information is publicly available through Statistics Canada), neither capital city has had an unemployment rate higher than that of their respective provinces. Atlantic Canada is then not entirely united by a common long-term economic condition. Moreover, these rural-urban imbalances are highly political; just as Atlantic Canadians might complain of jobs and younger generations fleeing to Alberta or Toronto, so too might Newfoundlanders residing in the outports lament the relative concentration of capital in St. John's (see Richling 1985; Okkola and Brunelle 2017). Just as certain economic policies might benefit manufacturing in central Canada at the expense of public services in the eastern periphery, so too might policies designed to promote growth in Halifax negatively impact Cape Breton or the rural mainland (see CCPA 2003). This contradicts emphases on overarching regional economic trends and related broad-brush depictions of Atlantic underdevelopment.

In short, the literature on Atlantic underdevelopment is weakening in relevance, as deindustrialization is no longer the hugely popular question that it once was for students of Atlantic regionalism. Beyond this question, there is little reason to consider the Atlantic as a region defined by its economy. Doing so reinforces stereotypes of destitution and glosses over important heterogeneity within the region.

When economics is dropped as a regional "definer," what is left to distinguish the Atlantic from the rest of Canada? The common answer is political culture. For Wiseman (2007), political culture refers to a stable set of political beliefs, values, and attitudes shared by a population. Geography rarely actually determines culture, rather, other variables coinciding with geographic boundaries shape the political culture that eventually comes to be identified with the region itself (Cochrane and Perrella 2012). Provinces provide the most obvious boundaries here. Not only do they come with clear physical borders, but cultural differences between each are naturally reflected in legislatures and policy debates (see Héroux-Legault 2016, 179). Wiseman (1981), for example, argues that differences in partisan competition between Ontario and each of the four western provinces reflect different waves of settlement and the cultural attributes brought by each.

Others have focused on how cultural attributes may transcend provincial boundaries, resulting in multi- or sub-provincial cultural regions. McGrane and Berdahl, for example, find that "provincial boundaries in and of themselves are not a significant determinant

of sub-state political cultures” (2013, 487); instead, the regions of the Prairie Provinces and Atlantic Canada may in fact be more reflective of distinct political culture than the provinces they contain.¹ Still others have chosen smaller geographic units and have used those to rethink cultural regions independently of jurisdictional boundaries (see Henderson 2004, 603). Cochrane and Perrella (2012) note the inherent advantage of using the smallest units possible, as characteristics of larger geographic regions can be gleaned from such an analysis while the inverse is impossible.

The traditional view of Atlantic Canada’s political culture rests on perceived traditionalism as well as the idea that, across the region, the proliferation of corruption and patronage has resulted in widespread disaffection and cynicism (see Simeon and Elkins 1974; Young 1986; Stewart 1986). This image has been increasingly challenged as politics in the Atlantic region have evolved. For example, McGrane and Berdahl (2013) do not find that Atlantic residents are particularly disaffected or traditionalist in their analysis, which excludes Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Wiseman (2007) describes how Atlantic Provinces moved away from the politics of traditionalism and patronage, with the growth of the NDP in the region as well as the short-lived election of MLAs from the right-wing populist Confederation of Regions Party in New Brunswick.

There is also some evidence that the region might not constitute a distinct cultural entity at all. For one, residents do not consistently identify as Atlantic Canadians. This is most immediately evident with respect to Newfoundland and Labrador, a province that prides itself on being culturally distinct from the Maritimes (Wiseman 2007; Slumkoski 2011). While the Maritime/NL distinction might seem minor to those not from the Atlantic region, for residents, the difference is significant. Savoie, for example, writes, “I do not ... consider Newfoundland and Labrador to be part of my region any more than I do, say, Manitoba” (2006, ix).

Additionally, studies of Atlantic political culture have often turned up significant differences between provinces. Stewart (1986) argues that there are far more cultural differences between the three Maritime Provinces than Canadian political scientists typically recognize. He highlights differences in partisan competition as one indicator, a point of variance that has since only grown starker following third-party success in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Similarly, Finbow (2004) outlines several political characteristics that distinguish the Atlantic Provinces from one another, concluding that depictions of cultural homogeneity are ill-advised. Finally, when Atlantic residents were surveyed on the question of government intervention in the economy (a common indicator of political culture), Cochrane and Perrella (2012) find no overarching regional pattern.

The cultural variety within Atlantic Canada remains visible when provinces are removed from consideration entirely. Writing in 2004, Henderson measures variation in indicators on trust and belief in political efficacy, asking whether these common political cultural attributes vary based on traditional provincial or regional boundaries. She finds that, when political culture is divorced from provincial boundaries, “Atlantic Canada is not a coherent region, although many of the Atlantic constituencies appear in a cluster characterized by large proportions of respondents with British ancestry” (2004, 604). All of this suggests that, as was the case with economy, political culture is weakening in relevance to Atlantic Canadian regional identity. Traditional portrayals of cynicism and disaffection are well outdated. Residents are quick to distinguish the Maritimes from Newfoundland and Labrador. And, studies of political culture between and within provinces reveal significant cultural variety.

Neither economy nor political culture should then be overemphasized when discussing the region. The remainder of this article now turns to the broader discourse of Canadian political science, asking whether the discipline reflects these shifting conceptions of Atlantic regional character. Two questions flow from the preceding discussion. First, how do analysts consider economics as a defining regional feature? Second, how does the discipline deal with challenges to the idea of a common Atlantic political culture?

Atlantic Economy

As previously discussed, for several decades, broad underdevelopment in Atlantic Canada was an extremely popular subject of inquiry for political scientists. Such discussions were understandably based on depicting economic distress as fundamental to Atlantic Canadian regional character. However, outside of those discussions an over-emphasis on economics can lead to mischaracterizations of Atlantic Canada, reinforcing stereotypes of perpetual destitution and masking imbalances within the Atlantic.

The objective of this section is to determine the extent to which political scientists still see Atlantic Canada as defined by economic phenomena. Such a perspective would entail disproportionately focusing on economic phenomena within the region—much in the same way that analysts might, for obvious reasons, study Quebec in terms of language policy or nationalism. Of particular interest is whether or not analysts are emphasizing economic processes and phenomena *even when they are not directly addressing the question of what causes underdevelopment*. This would demonstrate a general belief within the discipline that economic processes are particularly important to Atlantic political life.

To consider this question, I first conducted a survey of articles published in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (CJPS), *Canadian Public Administration* (CPA), and *Canadian Public Policy* (CPP) between 1980 and 2015. I selected these journals for two reasons. First, they provide an appropriate representation of “mainstream” Canadian political science research²—they are the same journals that Debra Thompson (2008) uses to examine the absence of race within Canadian political science. Second, these journals are not known for publishing a large number of regional studies. There is then little-to-no overlap between the articles examined here and the literature surveyed in the preceding section, rather these journals represent the extent to which the broader discipline reflects changing conceptions of Atlantic Canada.

Journals were first searched for abstracts³ containing all common names given to each region and its subregions, such as the Maritimes and the Prairies, as well as the provinces and four largest metropolitan areas within each.⁴ Regions chosen were as large as possible, as results from smaller regions could be included as part of a larger region’s representation but not vice versa. Some regions engendered more search terms than others; most obviously, the two multiprovincial regions naturally require more terms. However, as articles are not “double-counted” for each region (e.g. an abstract mentioning both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia would only be counted once in the “Atlantic” column), this did not confer any advantage.⁵ A complete list of search terms is available in Appendix. Irrelevant results (such as articles returned solely due to the author’s institutional affiliation) were removed manually after the searches, as were book reviews and review articles, which do not typically have abstracts.⁶

Figures 1 and 2 present the findings of this survey,⁷ with Figure 2 breaking down results by decade up until 2015. As many articles study more than one region, the total number of articles is less than the sum of each region's individual results in the above figures. Atlantic Canada is actually studied quite frequently in these journals, calling into question Finbow's previously cited characterization of the region as an "afterthought" (2004, 149)—it certainly does not seem to be ignored by any measure. Atlantic Canadian results amount to 11.3% of the 777 articles that reference one or more regions in their abstracts. This is nearly double the region's share of the Canadian population (6.6%). Meanwhile, Quebec (23.2% of the country) is studied in 41.6% of the articles returned here, the territories (0.3% of the country) are studied in 1.9%, Ontario (38.3% of the country) is returned in 31.4%, and the West (31.6% of Canada's population) is studied in 29.1% of the articles.

To address the economy question, the articles returned in this search were then tagged⁸ according to whether they consider economic phenomena. Specifically, the "economy" tag was used for articles that discuss economic development/collapse, the economic impact of a particular policy, or the constraints of economic conditions on policymaking or political decision-making. Possible topics include (but are not limited to) unemployment, trade policy, fiscal constraints, and government engagement with specific industries or firms.

Figures 3 and 4 present the results of this effort. Of the 88 articles discussing Atlantic Canadian cases, 27—or 30%—consider economic phenomena. For Quebec, the portion is 21%; for Ontario, 23%; for the West, 26%; and for the North, 40%. Aside from the North—for which the sample of articles is extremely small—Atlantic Canada is the region with the highest rate of the economy tag. Moreover, the second highest region—the West—is also a part of the country often characterized by economic processes, figuring large in discussions of resource exploitation and regional imbalances (see Brodie 1989; Innis 1923).

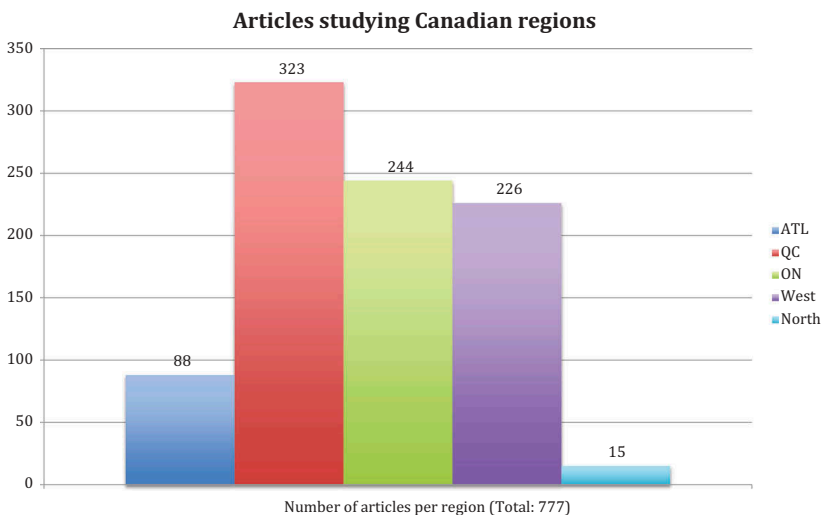


Figure 1. Articles studying each Canadian region, 1980-2015

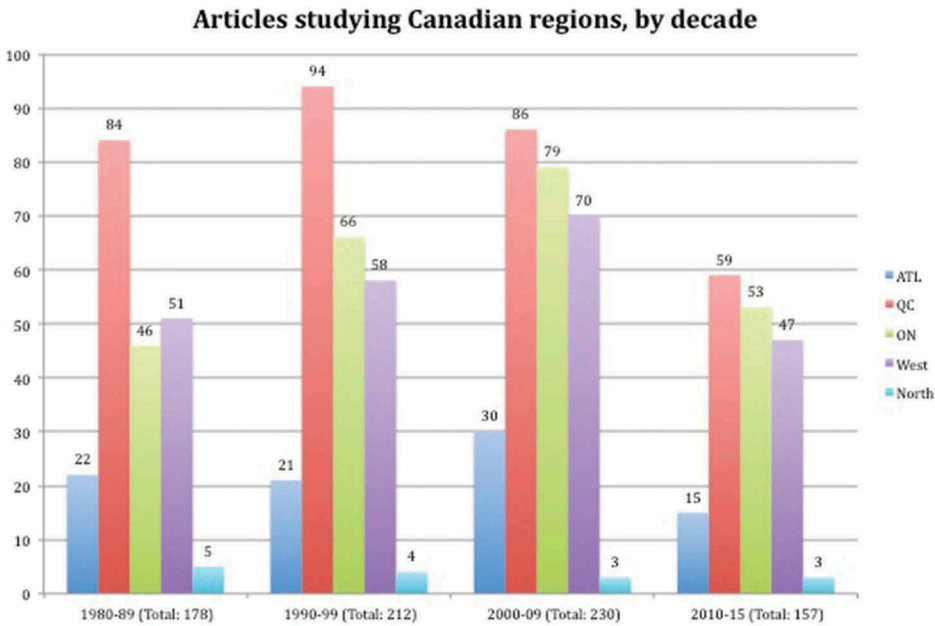


Figure 2. Articles studying each Canadian region by decade, 1980-2015

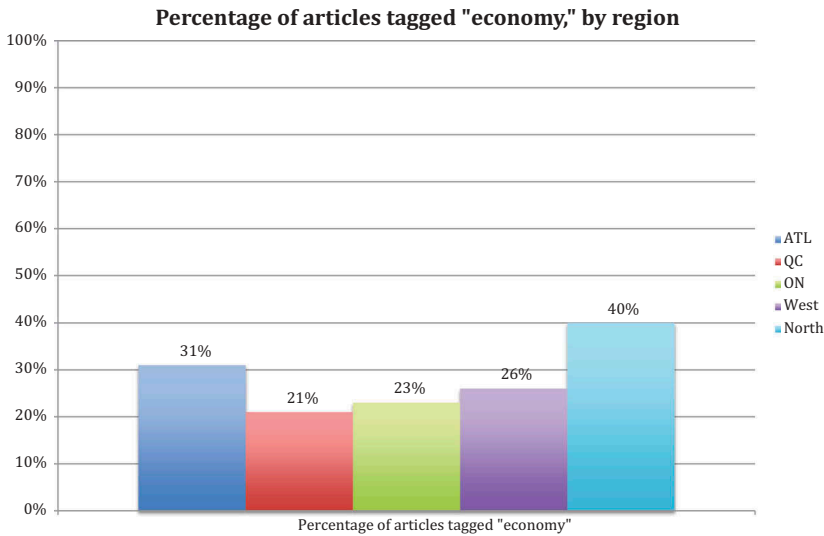


Figure 3. Percentage of articles tagged "economy" by region, 1980-2015

Meanwhile, the rate of the economy tag is lowest for articles studying Quebec, in which regionalism is largely defined by language and culture.

The overall difference between regions here is perhaps not particularly dramatic, especially when the smaller numbers of Figures 3 and 4 are taken into account.

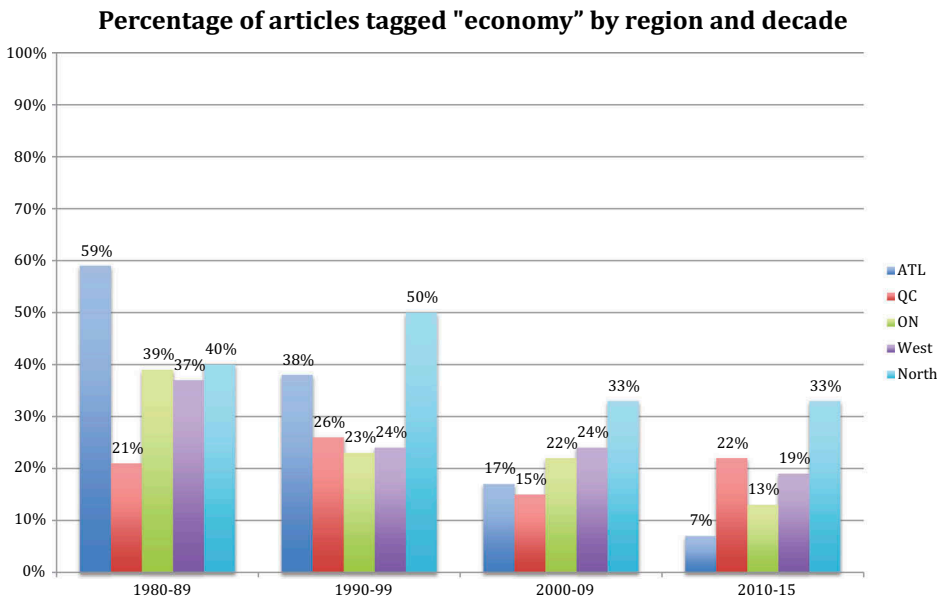


Figure 4. Percentage of articles tagged "economy," broken down by region and decade

However, there is a visible trend over time. Of the 27 articles considering Atlantic economic phenomena, 13 date from the 1980s. These represent 59% of all Atlantic Canadian discussions returned for this time period. From 1990 until 2015, this number drops dramatically. The 1980s represent the most recent decade in which studies of Atlantic deindustrialization were popular. That being said, none of the Atlantic articles from the 1980s actually directly address the causes of Atlantic deindustrialization. Rather, they reflect a general disproportionate impulse to study Atlantic economic phenomena, which in turn contributes to the idea that the region is defined by its economy.

There is then a drop in propensity to discuss Atlantic Canada in economic terms, one that coincides with the decline in political economy-based questions about deindustrialization. While other regions demonstrate a similar shift in emphasis away from economics, it is nowhere near as dramatic as that observed in Atlantic Canada. This is a welcome trend. It appears here that, in the 1980s, political scientists emphasized economic phenomena as a defining regional feature of the Atlantic. Since then, however, the discipline has become more balanced, with recent discussions of the Atlantic actually *less* likely to prioritize economic processes.

Over the past three-and-a-half decades, political scientists have curtailed any impulse to study Atlantic Canada in terms of economic phenomena. The previous section outlined concerns about stereotypes and broad-brush depictions of the region, both consequences of an overemphasis on economic traits as regional-defining features. The analysis here suggests that these concerns, while once relevant, have faded in significance as the discipline moved away from political economy-based discussions of

regional underdevelopment. As the deindustrialization question faded, so too did any disproportionate propensity to discuss the region in economic terms.

As previously discussed, the other most commonly cited defining attribute of the region is its supposed common culture. As such, the next section explores whether or not the discipline reflects evolving understandings of Atlantic political culture. It finds that political science clings far more tightly to this traditional portrayal of Atlantic regionalism, continuing to assume that a common culture exists even as analysts have adopted increasingly nuanced views of this trait.

Atlantic Political Culture

As previously discussed, the extent to which a distinctly Atlantic political culture exists is debated within the literature on culture and regionalism (see Wiseman 2007; McGrane and Berdahl 2013; Henderson 2004). This literature, which focuses on the identification of regions in which inhabitants share political beliefs and orientations, has not consistently found that the four Atlantic Provinces exhibit common cultural traits. This stream of the discipline has significant implications for how other Canadianists conduct their research. Specifically, the cultural regions identified are frequently used to break down results or control for intervening variables in subsequent analyses, particularly studies of public opinion, voter behavior, or other political phenomena that may vary according to broad cultural difference. Academics conducting such studies do not always use the same regional groupings, rather they make methodological choices over which boundaries they will use to differentiate between political cultures. More so than in the political economy literature, then, there is a clear methodological connection here between the literature on regionalism and the broader discipline.

To identify assumptions that Canadian political science makes about Atlantic political culture, I consider the extent to which the discipline still broadly assumes that the four provinces can be lumped together in a unified cultural region. However, this time it is not sufficient to examine articles returned in the search of abstracts. Rather, the inquiry considers articles that break down the entire country, regardless of whether their abstracts mention specific regions or provinces. As such, I manually examined all research articles in these three journals published between 1980 and 2015 to determine if and how they formally divide the country by region.

Figures 5 and 6 exhibit the results of this inquiry. Here, Atlantic Canadian results are displayed alongside Western Canada, in which interprovincial cultural differences have also been frequently observed and debated (see Lipset 1968; MacPherson 1962; Wiseman 1981).⁹ The contrast between Western and Atlantic Canada is clear; while Atlantic Canada is almost always lumped together in a single cultural region, there is significant variety in how analysts consider the west. Indeed, Figure 5 demonstrates that there is not even a clear preference for how to consider Western Canada. When British Columbia is removed, conceptions of the remaining “Prairie” region are still more varied than Atlantic Canada. Even Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the combined population of which roughly equals Atlantic Canada, are considered separately 14 times—13 of which are in analyses that combine the Atlantic. In contrast, only two research articles here present Newfoundland and Labrador and the Maritimes as separate regions (Eagles 2004; Corak 1993), a division that is extremely popular amongst those looking closely

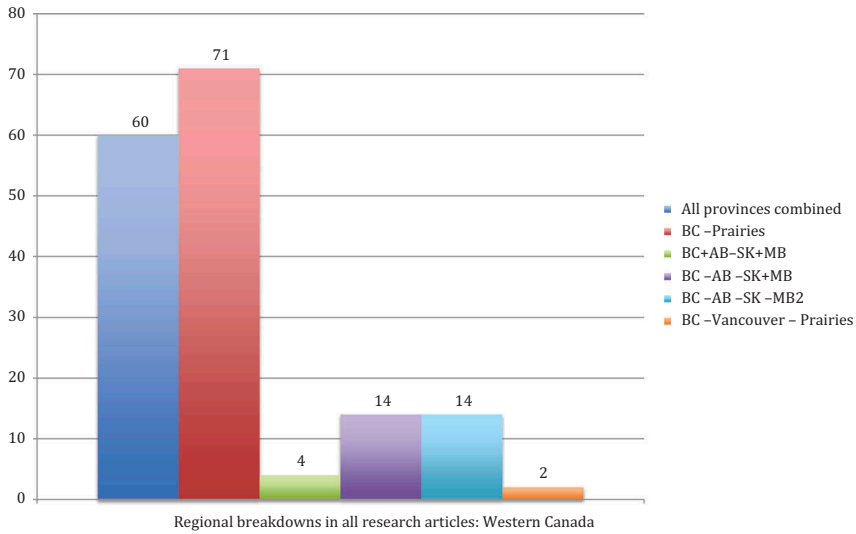


Figure 5. Depictions of Western Canada in CJPS, CPA and CPP

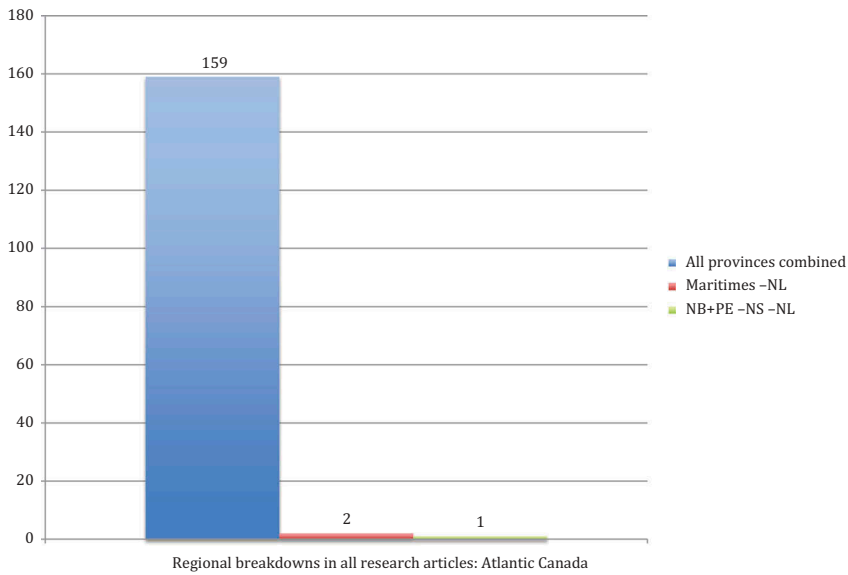


Figure 6. Depictions of Atlantic Canada in CJPS, CPA and CPP

at Atlantic political culture (see Wiseman 2007; Slumkoski and Arthur 2011). One article also considers Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick as a region (de Silva 1999)— however, this is likely for sampling reasons, as all other Canadian provinces are separated.

Political scientists then still almost always lump the Atlantic Provinces together when breaking down the country. While not all of these instances necessarily reflect a belief

that Atlantic Canada constitutes a unified cultural region—analysts might very well choose regions for other reasons—a large proportion certainly would. Given the near-unanimity of this trend, it reflects at least in part an implicit assumption about Atlantic cultural regionalism. That political scientists' hold to this belief is not surprising, however, nor can it necessarily be condemned outright. The smallest western province still has over a million residents, more than the largest Atlantic province. It is far easier to sample the western provinces as separate regions than the Atlantic. Even when Simeon and Elkins (1974) consider regional and provincial political cultures, they exclude Prince Edward Island due to an insufficient number of survey responses. Is it really fair to expect political scientists to jump through hoops to distinguish between Atlantic Provinces when even those explicitly considering provincial culture run into sampling challenges?

When Stewart considered this same question in 1986, he argued,

Too often, survey researchers have automatically aggregated Nova Scotians, New Brunswickers, and Prince Edward Islanders into a single sample large enough to permit a sophisticated treatment of data. Yet, empirical relevance, rather than methodological ease, should be the rationale behind any such grouping. (1986, 138)

It is surely sometimes justifiable to group the four provinces together. However, if the discipline writ large is to capture the Atlantic region's cultural heterogeneity, researchers should acknowledge the debate here and explicitly defend methodologically any grouping decisions they make. As it stands, given the extent to which the four provinces are still lumped together without justification, it appears that in many cases methodological ease still trumps empirical relevance. This means that political scientists are likely failing to capture divergence within the region in their Atlantic Canadian samples.

However, there are other, less obvious consequences to considering the region as culturally united. These are examined over the following pages. First, as with the issue of economic underdevelopment, this trend represents expert validation of distorted views of the region. In this case, those distorted views have been strategically mobilized by the federal government to the detriment of the Atlantic. In *Inventing Atlantic Canada* (2011), which documents Newfoundland and Labrador's accession to Confederation in 1949, Slumkoski notes that during accession negotiations, Ottawa insisted on defining the province as part of a unified "Atlantic" region. This was not a matter of acknowledging some kind of pre-existing shared cultural identity; rather, the federal government used this alleged shared region to declare that financial assistance to the province would only aim to raise its social and economic development to the Maritime average (see Slumkoski and Arthur 2011). Slumkoski writes, "...even during the negotiations to bring about union, [Ottawa] saw Newfoundland as linked to the Maritime Provinces; it was the Maritime provincial average—not the Canadian one—that would be the new province's benchmark for economic and social development" (4). Considering Newfoundland and Labrador as part of an Atlantic region then not only overlooks possible divergences here, but also reinforces a politicized effort from central Canada to artificially create a region.

Canadian political science's acceptance of a common Atlantic culture also contributes to a wider disciplinary problem of integrating race into analyses, one that is particularly important to the Atlantic. In favoring conceptions of relatively static, geographically bound political culture, political scientists routinely overlook race as a lens. Thompson

outlines this problem in “Is race political?” (2008), arguing that the concepts of culture and ethnicity are typically depoliticized and blind to power dynamics. She points out that racial diversity rarely lines up with traditional Canadian regions, as evidenced in part by Henderson’s (2004) use of race in delineating alternative conceptions of regionalism. Thompson (2008) writes that race is even absent from the famous Hartz–Horowitz account of the Loyalist migration, noting that the migration “included approximately 3,000 free blacks who had been emancipated in exchange for their loyalty to the British Crown during the American Revolution,” and “can be linked to the modern-day black communities in Nova Scotia” (538–9).

Thompson’s argument about the absence of race within the discipline is particularly relevant to the Atlantic. The black settlements that Hartz and Horowitz fail to take into account are often referred to as “indigenous” as a way of distinguishing them from later immigration waves (see also Walker 1986). Nova Scotia is home to the largest indigenous black population in the country; this presence complicates liberal portrayals of Canadian multiculturalism and their emphases on willful immigration. Moreover, the razing of Africville in the 1960s is perhaps the most well-known example of anti-black racism in Atlantic Canada (see Nelson 2008); Walcott notes that, following the displacement, many black Nova Scotians even left Canada for the United States (2003, 40–1). More recent examples of so-called “American-style” racism abound in the region (see Perreux 2010). It is impossible to understand Atlantic Canada without considering race, which is papered over in analyses based on geographically bound culture.

The assumption that a unified Atlantic cultural region exists has been disputed again and again, but continues to define how the region is approached within Canadian political science. Considering Atlantic Canada as a culturally defined region has its roots in political expediency and persists in political science due in large part to methodological convenience. Its consequences are broad, from oversimplifications of Atlantic political culture to reinforcement of the discipline’s tendency to ignore race, a lens that is critical to understanding the region.

Conclusion

The goal of this discussion has been to assess the position of Atlantic Canada in Canadian political science. First, a literature review demonstrated that the relevance of old conceptions of Atlantic economic destitution and common political culture has weakened. Following this review, I then identified and assessed trends in how Atlantic Canada is portrayed within the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *Canadian Public Administration*, and *Canadian Public Policy*. A preliminary survey of these journals establishes that Atlantic Canada is studied relatively frequently, despite past complaints of insufficient attention (see Finbow 2004; Stewart 1986). The first query then finds that any disproportionate study of economic phenomena within the region has decreased since the decline of the underdevelopment question. The second finds that it is still almost universally assumed in Canadian political science that the four provinces constitute a unified cultural region (see Henderson 2004; Slumkoski and Arthur 2011; Wiseman 2007). This trend not only constitutes widespread methodological laziness, but also contributes to larger analytical problems surrounding the mobilization of geographically bound cultural regions in political analysis.

In assuming the existence of a shared Atlantic political culture, Canadian political science perpetuates an overarching narrative of Atlantic Canada that fails to fully capture the region's complexities. To challenge it, researchers should regularly acknowledge and justify the ever-present trade-off between methodological convenience and empirical relevance when breaking down the country. They should also embrace race as an analytical lens and apply it to understandings of diversity in Atlantic Canada, where depoliticized "culture" rings particularly hollow.

Finally, political scientists should be conscious of the extent to which their validation of outdated views of Atlantic Canada legitimizes and reinforces those same views among policymakers—this is particularly significant as Atlantic Canada itself is largely an invention of the federal government (see Slumkoski and Arthur 2011). The Atlantic is small, and may not always fit with how political scientists like to consider Canada; however, a change of course here constitutes an opportunity to produce a richer picture of the country and all its corners.

Notes

1. McGrane and Berdahl excluded British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick from their analysis as those provinces are absent from the post-election surveys on which they rely.
2. CPP and CPA complement CJS in that they each focus on areas that are highly important to political science (and particularly regionalism and federalism), but are not always highlighted in more traditional "political" discussions such as constitutional and electoral politics.
3. While it was possible to search the full text of journals and return more articles, a more conservative query is better-suited to ensuring the articles returned actually *study* the subjects mentioned in the keywords and do not just mention them in passing.
4. London, Ontario, was not included due to the potential for confusion with the UK capital, nor was the tri-cities area because it includes three distinct city governments. They were replaced with the next largest metropolitan areas. By consequence, the Ontario column may slightly underestimate this region's actual representation.
5. The search also included French translations of terms when applicable; that being said, doing so rarely made a difference as most abstracts were provided in both languages.
6. Abstracts that were returned for one search but were relevant to other regions were also added to the appropriate columns. For example, Hwang et al's (2007) abstract refers to "Atlantic and Ontario residents," and was thereby initially returned for the Ontario search but not the Atlantic Canada search (Searching the word "Atlantic" alone would have returned far too many irrelevant results relating to the ocean, NATO, etc.). It was added manually to the Atlantic tally.
7. Contact the author for information on numbers of articles from specific journals as well as any other inquiries about this data.
8. Tagging and sorting was conducted using Zotero bibliographic management software.
9. Articles considering all 10 provinces independently were discarded, as such breakdowns are frequently based solely on administrative divisions and do not typically reflect a methodological choice to divide the country in a particular way. In addition to the results displayed here, there are some articles in which regions are controlled for in analysis but not specified in the actual paper (see Mendelsohn, Wolfe, and Parkin 2002; Ruggeri, Howard, and Bluck 1994). Some articles also combine Atlantic Canada with Ontario (Mendelsohn and Nadeau 1997), Quebec (Henriques and Sadorsky 2013), or even the West and far North (Varette and Zussman 1998); in these cases, it was simply noted that Atlantic Canada itself was combined into one region. Finally, only three articles employ radical departures from traditional ways of thinking about regions, moving beyond geographic proximity (Gidengil 1989; Juteau 2000; Henderson 2004)—these are not displayed in the chart.

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Appendix Search terms

	Atlantic Canada	Quebec	Ontario	Western Canada	Northern Canada
• Region and sub-regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic Canada • Atlantic Provinces/ Provinces de l'Atlantique/ Provinces Atlantiques • Maritimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quebec/ Québec 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Canada/ l'Ouest Canadien • Western Provinces • Prairie Provinces/ Provinces des Prairies • Prairies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Canada
• Provinces and Territories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nova Scotia/ Nouvelle Écosse • New Brunswick/ Nouveau Brunswick • PEI/Î.-P.-E. • Prince Edward Island/Île du Prince Édouard/ • Newfoundland/ Terre-Neuve • Labrador 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quebec/ Québec 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manitoba • Saskatchewan • Alberta • British Columbia/ Colombie Britannique • BC/B.C./C.B. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nunavut • Yukon • Northwest Territories/ Territoires du Nord-Ouest
• Cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halifax • St. John's/Saint-Jean • Moncton • Saint John/Saint-Jean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quebec/ Québec • Montreal/ Montréal • Sherbrooke • Saguenay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto • Hamilton • St. Catharines • Oshawa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vancouver • Calgary • Edmonton • Winnipeg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iqaluit • Whitehorse • Yellowknife • Hay River

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