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Support for Political Leaders and Elected Representatives in Quebec

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Abstract

The literature on political support in advanced industrial democracies has expanded fairly steadily over the last fifty years, but the findings on people's outlooks toward political authorities and their consequences are far from conclusive. There is also ongoing debate about what factors best account for the way people feel about their political authorities. In this paper we take a more focused analytical approach and employ data from the recent Comparative Provincial Election Project to examine how Quebecers feel about their different political authorities across various levels of government. We also explore some potential consequences and test some prominent explanations. Our findings indicate that only minorities of Quebecers like their leaders and elected representatives (whether new or old, federal, provincial, or municipal) and even fewer like all of their respective leaders and elected politicians across all levels of government. Our evidence also suggests that this low support may result in further political disengagement and decreased confidence in the ability of authorities and political institutions. Furthermore, we find that variations in support for political authorities in Quebec are best explained by government performance as well as some cultural and structural factors.

Keywords: Political support; Leaders; Elected representatives; Government performance; Quebec

Introduction

The literature on political support in advanced industrial democracies has expanded fairly steadily over the last fifty years or so [1-12]. Yet, after several years of examining the cross–national evidence, the findings pertaining to the "democratic deficit" and more specifically to people's basic outlooks toward political authorities (or politicians) are far from conclusive. For instance, not everyone concurs that citizens have become more disillusioned with their politicians. There are also differing views on whether this could eventually result in more detrimental consequences than basic changes in government. And there is an ongoing debate about what factors best account for the way people feel about their political authorities [6,10,11].

In this paper, we delve a little deeper into this line of investigation and employ a slightly different analytical approach. Recent evidence from the Quebec component of the Comparative Provincial Election Project allows us to explore how a particular subsystem of the Canadian population perceives different types of politicians across multiple levels of government. In particular, in this analysis we examine and compare how Quebecers feel about their various political leaders and elected representatives at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. We also explore whether such outlooks could eventually result in more severe forms of disaffection or possibly even erosion in diffuse political support [1,11,12]. In addition, we investigate what factors most consistently account for how Quebecers feel about their various political authorities across multiple levels of government.

Some Background

Turning first to the literature to gain some perspective on what has recently been documented on mass support for political authorities, it quickly becomes evident that there is no clear consensus and still a need for further investigation. For instance, while some may suggest that people's perceptions of politicians have deteriorated over time [11,12], the bulk of the cross–national and cross–time evidence is actually quite mixed. Dalton [13] for example, concludes based on his evidence that "...public skepticism about politicians and government officials is spreading to virtually all the advanced industrial democracies". Yet Norris [11,14] argues that Dalton's [10] analysis is not entirely compelling.

Dalton's evidence that the public has become more skeptical about elected officials is certainly suggestive and important; nevertheless, some caution is needed when interpreting the results of the regression[1] [14].

Likewise, in Canada the findings have also been mixed. There is some evidence to suggest that support for political authorities has deteriorated over time, but there are also signs of significant fluctuation. For example, Clarke and his colleagues [15] have plotted evidence that shows "...a steady erosion of public support for political leaders, both as individuals and collectively". That said however, Kornberg and Clarke [5] also report that findings from panel studies suggest that support for political authorities is unstable and, depending on the politician, that it clearly fluctuates from time–to–time [16].

To this point, much of this research on political authorities has centered largely on more general comparisons of people in government and political leaders in order to test for broad–gauged generalizability and cross–time trends across advanced industrial states. This is certainly one way to test the spread and severity of people's disillusionment with their politicians, but another is to narrow the focus by looking systematically within societies at people's outlooks toward different types of politicians and across different levels of government. In this analysis, our aim is to examine how one subcomponent of the Canadian population–Quebecers–feels about their federal, provincial and municipal leaders and elected representatives, and to pay particular attention to the magnitude and consistency of the results across these levels and types of authorities.

[1]Analysis used in his study since, out of forty–three separate questions, only seventeen saw a statistically significant fall in trust over time

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Also, when it comes to potential consequences, the literature outlines a variety of plausible implications resulting from low levels of support for political authorities. The range of possibilities span from one extreme to another. The most prominent line of thinking suggests that a decline in mass support for political authorities is not likely to have many relevant or severe consequences [10,14]. For example, Dalton [13] contends that "discontent with the political authorities normally has limited implications... [and that] negative attitudes toward political officials can and do exist with little loss in support for the office itself or the institutional structure of government".

Another perspective, however, maintains that a continuous and pervasive problem with low levels of support for political authorities may turn citizens off of the political process. As Lenard and Simeon [12] point out in the introduction of their recent edited volume on *Imperfect Democracies*, "these dangers may encourage, at best, dissatisfaction with democratic political performance and, at worst, a more general disaffection that suggests that the legitimacy of the democratic system is in peril". More specifically, by disaffection Lenard and Simeon [12] mean that citizens may disengage even more from the democratic process. The supporting evidence in Canada has already shown that citizens are participating less in political parties and elections [17,18]. Also, more recent findings indicate that nearly 60 percent of Canadians no longer participate in conventional political activities, such as volunteering for a political campaign, donating to a political party, or contacting a politician [19].

A third possible consequence is that ongoing periods with low levels of support for political authorities may detract from support for more diffuse objects such as political institutions. Political authorities require citizens' support in order to govern and implement authoritative decisions. As Easton [1] makes clear, however, "if the members [of a political system] lose confidence in the ability of any authorities at all to cope with the problems of the day, the effect on support to other levels of the system may be very serious, at least for the persistence of that kind of system" [1]. In this analysis, we explore the evidence from Quebec to determine whether there is any consistent evidence to support either of these latter two more detrimental possibilities.

In terms of potential explanations of variations in support for political authorities, the literature provides at least two main lines of argument. The first suggests that political support for various specific and diffuse objects may be linked to basic performance. For instance, Norris [11] finds a significant gap between what citizens want from their democracies and the kind of governance that they receive. She identifies this as the "democratic deficit" and concludes based on her rich and systematic analysis of several societies that bad performance is largely to blame for low levels of political support. Moreover, recent survey results representing the Canadian population also lends some support to this plausibility. In particular, Samara's [20] Democracy Report finds that according to Canadians, Members of Parliament are failing at representing their needs.

Furthermore, closely intertwined with this argument are the notions of corruption and ethical misconduct. Studies have clearly demonstrated that evidence of a lack of integrity can have important and direct implications for political support [21,22]. Moreover, recent evidence suggests that this particular variant of the performance argument may be important to investigate in the Canadian case and particularly in Quebec. Data from the 2012 Americas Barometer indicate that nearly two–thirds of Canadians are of the view that

corruption among political authorities is prevalent [23]. Also, the ongoing Charbonneau Commission[2] in Quebec has exposed the degree of collusion and corruption that has been prevalent within the province's political system which clearly may have implications for political support.

A second major line of argument suggests that populations within advanced industrial states have been undergoing a variety of structural and cultural changes that may also have significant consequences for political support. For instance, Dalton's [13] cognitive mobilization theory suggests that citizens in post–industrial societies have benefited from greater education and significant advances in technology. This shift has, in turn, made them more engaged in the democratic process than older generations. This may, however, also make them more critical. Nevitte [24] for instance, argues that the combination of cognitive mobilization and the information explosion may be fueling an expanding "efficacy gap" in which people's perceptions of their capacity to engage and contribute to the democratic process exceeds their perceptions of the political system's capacity to respond. This may, as a result, have negative consequences for political support.

In a similar vein, the media malaise thesis [25] contends that it an increase in negative news coverage may be responsible for low levels or declines in political support. It is important to point out however, that recent evidence casts some doubt on this particular proposition. In her more recent analysis, Norris [25] finds that "users of television and radio news proved more satisfied with democracy, not less....[and that] regular use of all these media reduced the democratic deficit, or the gap between expectations and perceived performance" [11]. These more recent findings suggest that exposure to media news may actually serve to temper people's expectations or their negative orientations toward democratic performance.

There are at least two additional variants of the structural and cultural change line of argument that may also be relevant. The first suggests that the changing value orientations of younger post–materialist generations have made them distinct in various ways from their more materialist parents and grandparents [26-30]. In particular, the evidence suggests, that younger generations are not as respecting of authority and more likely to challenge political elites as a result. Also, Putnam's [31] declining social capital thesis suggests that because citizens in advanced industrial societies spend less time interacting (particularly younger generations) and more time commuting and watching TV, they are less likely to be trusting of others, and that includes their political authorities.

In this paper we investigate both of these main lines of argument and their different variants in order to examine which, if any, have the most consistent effects on support for different types of politicians across various levels of government in Quebec. In addition, we also control for a variety of basic contextual factors that might be relevant. For instance, factors such as whether one is federalist, nationalist or in support of some form of Quebec independence are important to consider because these affiliations are commonly associated with varying political outlooks and demands. And, depending on which politicians are in charge at the time and the types of political outcomes they have experienced as a result, it is quite conceivable that members in these different groups may have more or less favorable perspectives on political authorities. For similar reasons, we also take into account several other factors such as language, age, sex, income and place of birth, because these too have featured as relevant divides in Quebec politics in the past.

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[2]For an overview of events related to the Charbonneau Commission from June to December 2012 see the Montreal Gazette timeline prepared by Roberto Rocha

The Data

As was mentioned in the Introduction, the data for this investigation come from the Quebec component of the Comparative Provincial Election Project (CPEP)[3]. The CPEP is a fairly recent initiative that is designed specifically to examine citizens' outlooks toward the Canadian democratic process and their electoral behavior across different provinces. The Quebec survey is particularly unique in that it employs an expanded questionnaire that permits us to conduct more detailed analyses of a variety of topics. For example, it allows for the exploration of Quebecers' orientations toward various political leaders and elected representatives across the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government, while also controlling for a variety of theoretically relevant explanations.

Some additional points to note about this data set are that these are post–election surveys that are administered after provincial elections. For instance, the last Quebec election was held on 4 September 2012 and the Quebec CPEP survey was in the field from 5 September 2012 to 11 October 2012. The questionnaire was implemented in both French and English and randomly administered to slightly more than 1000 respondents. More specifically, most participants were sampled from a randomly compiled online panel (n=728) and the rest were randomly contacted using Interactive Voice Response technology. It is also important to note that the data for this entire project were collected by a professional firm – Abacus Data – with significant experience in conducting online surveys. Finally, prior to being implemented in the field, the questionnaire was rigorously scrutinized and tested.

Findings

As part of the Quebec survey, respondents were asked to use a 100 point scale to describe how they felt about various political authorities, "where zero means that you really dislike the individual and 100 means that you really like the individual". This is one way to access how citizens feel about their politicians. And so we, started our analysis by implemented specifically at what Quebecers think of their political leaders and their elected representative's at all three levels of government–the federal, provincial and municipal. Our findings are reported in Table 1[4].

Note first, that regardless of the level of government or the type of political authority examined, the evidence is remarkably consistent. Most Quebecers either dislike or feel indifferent (no more than neutral) toward their Prime Minister (PM), Premier (incumbent or newly

	Federal		Provincial		Municipal		All
Leader			**Marois**	46%			
	Harper	20%	**Charest**	36%	**Mayor**	45%	4%
	(1,002)		(1,002)		(992)		(991)
Elected Representative	**MP**	40%	**MNA**	46%	**Councilor**	34%	19%
	(987)		(991)		(980)		(973)
Average	30%		46%		39%		
Both Leader and Elected Representative	10%		27%		26%		3%
	(987)		(990)		(975)		(971)

Question: "Using a 100–point scale, where zero means that you really dislike the individual and 100 means that you really like the individual, how do you feel about the following people?" Responses represent the proportion of Quebecers who scored >50 on the 100–point scale.
Source: Quebec CPEP

Table 1: Proportion of Quebecers who like their political leaders and elected representatives (n).

[3]See, http: //cpep.ualberta.ca/
[4]See Appendix 1 for operationalization of variables.

elected) and Mayor. Moreover, the results are similar when it comes to Quebecer's outlooks toward their Member of Parliament (MP), Members of the National Assembly (MNA) and City Councilors. There are some notable variations of course in that certain leaders, such as the current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper (20 percent) and the former Premier of the province, Jean Charest (36 percent) are not as well liked as the current Premier, Pauline Marois (46 percent) or municipal leaders (45 percent). Also, on average these results suggest that political authorities are more liked at the provincial (46 percent) and municipal (39 percent) levels than they are at the federal level (30 percent). Still, on the whole, the standout finding from this preliminary systematic probe is that only a minority of Quebecers like their political leaders or elected representatives, even though in some cases they have only just been elected.

Note too that when we look simultaneously at the proportion of Quebecers who like both their leaders and their elected representatives at different levels of government, the findings are even more striking. For instance, only 10 percent of Quebecers like both their Prime Minister and their MP. The findings are once again slightly better at the provincial and municipal levels, but not enough to make them any less concerning. At the provincial level, only 27 percent of Quebecers like both their Premier and their MNA (both of whom had just been elected at the time). And only 26 percent of Quebecers indicate that they like both their municipal leader and their city councilor. Moreover, three other related findings are also particularly revealing. The first shows that only 4 percent of Quebecers like all of their current political leaders. The second indicates that slightly more, but still less than 20 percent of Quebecers like all of their current elected representatives. And the third suggests that only 3 percent of Quebecers like all of their current leaders and elected representatives at all three levels of government.

A fairly common position in the literature maintains that if citizens are not happy with their political authorities, they can simply vote them out. The implication is that frustrations with politicians are not likely to accrue and linger, potentially resulting in more detrimental implications down the road [14]. The results in Table 1, however, seem to suggest that a pervasive disillusionment toward key political authorities may actually be present in Quebec. Only minorities of Quebecers seem to like their major political authorities, regardless of whether they are leaders or elected representatives and irrespective of whether they are federal, provincial, municipal and in some cases, even newly elected politicians. To explore the severity and potential ramifications of these findings, we explore this evidence further for any signs of a systematic association between low support for authorities and sample measures of disaffection. The first measure we examine is general interest in politics at different levels of government..

The findings reported in Table 2 suggest that support for political leaders and elected representatives is both systematically and consistently associated with Quebecers' interest in federal, provincial and municipal politics. Quebecers who dislike their key political authorities are not as likely to take a broad interest in politics as those who like their core politicians. Moreover, these differences, regardless of the type of politician or the type of interest that we consider are not just superficial or minor. They range, depending on the level of government that we examine, from just over 10 percent to just fewer over 20 percent and they are consistently statistically significant. Note however, that according to these results, variations in outlooks toward political authorities may have more discerning consequences at the federal and municipal levels than at the provincial level, where Quebecers appear to be more interested in politics as a whole. Then again it is also possible that these figures may be slightly inflated because

	Support for Leader				Support for Elected Representative			
	Dislike	Like	Diff.	Sig.[a]	Dislike	Like	Diff.	Sig.[a]
Interest	**(<50)**	**(>50)**			**(<50)**	**(>50)**		
Federal Politics (High)	72%	91%	21%	0.15***	65%	85%	20%	0.18***
	(798)				(784)			
Provincial Politics (High)	81%	94%	13%	0.18***	80%	92%	12%	0.14***
	(661)				(652)			
Municipal Politics (High)	49%	68%	19%	0.17***	52%	71%	19%	0.15***
	(880)				(868)			

Questions: "Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means no interest at all and 10 means a great deal of interest, how interested are you in FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL/MUNICIPAL politics generally?" Responses represent the proportion of Quebecers who scored >7 on the 10–point scale.
[a]Tau-B measures of association, ***p<0.001
Source: Quebec CPEP

Table 2: Proportion of Quebecers who have a high degree of interest in politics by degree of support for the leaders and elected representatives (n).

		Support for Leader				Support for Elected Representative			
		Dislike	Like	Diff.	Sig.[a]	Dislike	Like	Diff.	Sig.[a]
Cynicism		**(<50)**	**(>50)**			**(<50)**	**(>50)**		
Federal Level		54%	30%	24%	-0.18***	53%	44%	9%	-0.07**
		(1,002)				(987)			
Provincial Level	**Marois**	49%	46%	3%	-	54%	42%	12%	-0.12***
	Charest	62%	29%	33%	-0.31***				
		(1,002)				(991)			
Municipal Level		55%	42%	13%	-0.11***	57%	43%	14%	-0.08**
		(992)				(980)			

Cynicism Index: Proportion who strongly or agree with each of the following statements: "Most politicians are corrupt; We would probably solve most of our big problems if decisions could be brought back to the people at the grass roots; Parties buy elections and votes; Rich people and big business have too much influence in politics." Responses represent the proportion of Quebecers who scored >.51 on the standardized additive index.
[a]Tau-B measures of association, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001
Source: Quebec CPEP

Table 3: Proportion of Quebecers who have a moderate to high level of cynicism by degree of support for the leaders and elected representatives (n).

these data were collected immediately after a provincial election. Note too that according to these findings, even those who are highly supportive of their political authorities tend not to be as interested in municipal politics as they are in federal and provincial politics, which again suggests that certain levels of politics may generally be more interesting to Quebecers than others.

Another sign of disaffection is cynicism. The results in Table 3 suggest that support for political authorities is also systematically and relatively consistently linked to variations in cynical outlooks. Quebecers who dislike their major political authorities are more inclined to express cynical viewpoints about the political world than those who think more positively about their primary politicians. However, these results also suggest that outlooks toward political leaders in particular may have more discerning consequences than what citizens think about their elected representatives, at least at the federal and provincial levels. For instance, the evidence at the federal level indicates that these are significant differences in cynical outlooks between those who like and dislike the Prime Minister. Also, at the provincial level the data indicates that there are no significant differences in cynicism between those who like and dislike the newly elected Premier–Pauline Marois. But there are significant and large differences between those who like and dislike the previous Premier–Jean Charest. Furthermore, these findings indicate that differing outlooks toward municipal leaders and elected representatives also have discerning consequences for cynical outlooks, but that the results are not as striking as those for provincial and federal leaders.

The preceding results lend some support to the plausibility that greater disaffection from a pervasive and sustained pattern of dislike for politicians may indeed be possible. But recall too that Easton [1] suggests that low levels of support for political authorities may

eventually lead to more than just a disaffected or disengaged citizenry. To the extent that disillusionment with political authorities begins to detract from citizens' confidence in their abilities it could also have more detrimental implications for diffuse support of political institutions. Consequently, in Table 4 we examine the association between Quebecers' feelings of like or dislike for their political leaders and elected representatives and their confidence in political authorities across all three levels of government.

Again the findings are highly consistent. Positive evaluations of political leaders and elected representatives are systematically linked to more confidence in their abilities. For instance, 88 percent of Quebecers who like the Prime Minister also indicate that they are confident in his abilities. However, only 18 percent of those who dislike the Prime Minister say that they are confident in his abilities, a 70 percent difference. Likewise, the results are also extremely robust for other leaders (although more so at the municipal level than at the provincial level) and for elected representatives (particularly at the provincial and municipal levels). Moreover, these findings suggest that when citizens like their political leaders at a particular level of government, they are also more likely to be confident in their elected representatives, the only exception being at the federal level. Conversely, when citizens like their elected representatives at a particular level of government, they are also more likely to have greater confidence in their political leaders. These crossover effects may not be as robust, but they are significant nonetheless and especially striking at the municipal level.

It is not surprising given the findings in Table 4 that the results in Table 5 suggest a systematic link between support for political leaders and elected representatives and confidence in core government institutions across all levels of government. More specifically, these findings indicate that when Quebecers like their political authorities,

		Support for Leader				Support for Elected Representative			
		Dislike	Like	Diff.	Sig.ª	Dislike	Like	Diff.	Sig.ª
Confidence		(<50)	(>50)			(<50)	(>50)		
Federal Level	**PM**	18%	88%	70%	0.56***	32%	38%	6%	0.06*
	MP	63%	63%	-	-	33%	84%	51%	0.42***
		(1,002)				(987)			
Provincial Level	**Premier**	36%	85%	49%	0.45***	55%	67%	13%	0.13***
	MNA	62%	75%	13%	0.13***	32%	90%	58%	0.51***
		(1,002)				(991)			
Municipal Level	**Mayor**	26%	89%	63%	0.56***	37%	78%	41%	0.33***
	Councilor	44%	81%	37%	0.35***	32%	89%	67%	0.48***
		(992)				(980)			

Question: "Please indicate how much confidence you have in the following political authorities?" Responses represent the proportion of Quebecers who have "a lot of confidence" or "some confidence."
aTau-B measures of association, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001
Source: Quebec CPEP

Table 4: Proportion of Quebecers who have at least some confidence in their political authorities by degree of support for the leaders and elected representatives (n).

	Support for Leader				Support for Elected Representative			
	Dislike	Like	Diff.	Sig.ª	Dislike	Like	Diff.	Sig.a
Confidence	(<50)	(>50)			(<50)	(>50)		
Federal Institutions	21%	68%	47%	0.37***	26%	41%	15%	0.15***
	(977)				(963)			
Provincial Institutions	36%	59%	23%	0.24***	39%	57%	18%	0.18***
	(970)				(961)			
Municipal Institutions	20%	69%	49%	0.43***	32%	62%	30%	0.26***
	(964)				(952)			

Question: "Please indicate how much confidence you have in the following institutions?"… "government", "political parties", "civil service", "parliament/assembly/councils." Responses represent the proportion of Quebecers who have "a lot of confidence" or "some confidence."
aTau-B measures of association, ***p<0.001
Source: Quebec CPEP

Table 5: Proportion of Quebecers who have at least some confidence in core government institutions by degree of support for the leaders and elected representatives (n).

they are more likely to be confident in their core government institutions. For instance, 68 percent of Quebecers who like the Prime Minister also express at least some confidence in their core government institutions at the federal level (such as the federal civil service, the federal government, and the federal Parliament and federal parties). Meanwhile, only 21 percent of those who dislike the Prime Minister have confidence in their core federal government institutions. This too is no small difference (47 percent). Moreover, these findings suggest that perceptions of leaders may have more potential consequences than support for elected representatives, particularly at the federal and municipal levels. Also, support for elected representatives may have more notable implications for municipal institutions than for federal and provincial institutions.

The results presented in Tables 2-5 are provocative but there is still much more work that needs to be done. That said the impact of attitudes toward political authorities is strikingly consistent and far from weak, regardless of the outcome, level of government or type of politician. Low levels of support in Quebec appear to be pervasive and systematically linked to various measures of disaffection and diffuse support, including a greater disinterest in politics more generally, higher levels of cynicism, lower levels of confidence in political authorities, and lower levels of confidence in core government institutions. All of this suggests that perhaps political authorities play a more substantial role in fueling the democratic deficit than the literature typically expects. And if that is the case, then it may be even more pertinent to

learn more about what in particular drives people's likes and dislikes of political authorities[5].

The regression analysis presented in Table 6 investigates some determinants of Quebecers' support for their political leaders and elected representatives across various levels of government. Recall that there is an ongoing debate about what best accounts for variations in political support across different advanced industrial states between those who advocate performance–based explanations and those who advance structural and cultural change arguments. The investigation in Table 6 considers both as well as some prominent contextual factors.

Overall, these results suggest that very few factors have consistent and robust effects and that, on balance, contextual explanations are among the least relevant. Moreover, these findings also indicate that both performance–based measures as well as various structural and cultural change measures have significant effects. The latter in particular, however, depending on the level of government or type of politician, sometimes work in varying ways. The most consistent and powerful finding by far suggests that the more satisfied Quebecers are with the performance of their leaders and elected representatives, the more inclined they are to like their political authorities, even after taking into account a variety of other plausible explanations and even after controlling for factors such as party identification at the federal and provincial levels[6].

Note that, closely linked to performance, honesty and ethical standards also matter, but to a much lesser degree and not as consistently. At the federal and provincial levels, Quebecers' support for their political leaders is higher when they view them as being highly honest and ethical. But the same does not apply for elected representatives (MPs and MNAs). Conversely, the findings at the municipal level are entirely opposite. Honesty and ethics are not a significant determinant of support for municipal leaders, but they are significant in determining Quebecers' support for city councilors. More specifically, these findings indicate that Quebecers are more likely to support their city councilors when they see them as being honest and ethical. Note, however, that when these data were collected, the Charbonneau Commission had not yet completely uncovered the many scandals involving various mayors and, as a consequence, if these data were collected today these results may be different.

In terms of structural and cultural factors, the first relevant finding

[5]See Appendix 2 for operationalization of variables.

[6]We do not report these findings here for consistency reasons as we do not have party identification measures for the municipal level.

	Federal Level		Provincial Level		Municipal Level	
	PM	MP	Premier	MNA	Mayor	Councilor
Determinants	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)
Performance & Integrity						
Satisfaction with performance (satisfied)	**.71 (.02) ***	**.56 (.03) ***	**.62 (.03) ***	**.68 (.03) ***	**.63 (.03) ***	**.56 (.03) ***
Honest and Ethical (completely)	**.06 (.03) *	-.02 (.04)	**.17 (.03) ***	.06 (.04)	.02 (.04)	**.07 (.03) *
Structural and cultural factors						
Cognitive mobilization (high)	**.18 (.04) ***	**.15 (.05) **	**.09 (.04) *	**.12 (.05) *	**.15 (.04) ***	**.20 (.04) ***
Efficacy gap (high)	-.03 (.04)	**-.13(0.5)*	-.02 (.05)	-.09 (.06)	-.07 (.05)	**-.12 (.05) *
Media exposure (high)	.03 (.04)	.09 (.06)	-.05 (.05)	.08 (.06)	.04 (.05)	**.17 (.05) **
Post–materialist (vs. materialist)	**-.06 (.02) **	.03 (.03)	**-.05 (.02) *	-.03 (.03)	-.02 (.02)	-.01 (.02)
Deferential (high)	**.04 (.02) *	.003 (.02)	**.09 (.02) ***	-.002 (.02)	**.08 (.02) **	.04 (.02)
Trust (high)	-.003 (.01)	-.02 (.02)	.02 (.01)	-.01 (.02)	.003 (.02)	.01 (.01)
Contextual factors						
Sex (female)	-.02 (.01)	.03 (.02)	.02 (.01)	.02 (.02)	.01 (.02)	**.03 (.01) *
Nationalist (vs. independent)	-.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.02 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	.01 (.02)	-.03 (.02)
Federalist (vs. independent)	**.04 (.02) *	-.01 (.02)	**.14 (.02) ***	**-.06 (.02) **	-.02 (.02)	-.01 (.02)
English (vs. French)	-.02 (.02)	.02 (.03)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.001 (.03)
Allophone (vs. French)	.05 (.03)	-.03 (.04)	.03 (.03)	.05 (.04)	-.01 (.04)	.05 (.04)
Immigrant (vs. Canadian born)	.01 (.02)	-.04 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	-.05 (.03)	.01 (.03)	-.04 (.03)
Age (Young)	.01 (.02)	-.003 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	.03 (.02)
Income (high)	.01 (.02)	-.003 (.03)	-.02 (.02)	.04 (.03)	**-.05 (.02) *	-.04 (.02)
Constant	-.06 (.03)	**.15 (.05) **	-.06 (.04)	**.11 (.05) *	**.09 (.05) *	.05 (.05)
R²	.69	.31	.67	.42	.45	.39
n	874	854	873	857	860	842
*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001						
Source: CPEP Quebec						

Table 6: Regression Analysis–Determinants of support for political leaders and elected representatives.

to note is that cognitive mobilization has both significant and consistent effects. The more educated and engaged in politics that Quebecers are, the more likely they are to support their political authorities, regardless of the level of government or type of politician. Also, our evidence suggests that the efficacy gap has significant effects, but only on support for elected representatives at the federal and municipal levels. More specifically, these results indicate that the greater the efficacy gap the less supportive Quebecers are of their elected representatives. Note too that media consumption has a positive effect on support for elected representatives, but only at the municipal level.

The findings of this analysis also suggest that post–materialist value change has negative implications particularly on support for political leaders. More specifically, the evidence shows that post–materialists are less inclined to like the Prime Minister and Premier than materialists. Also, the findings indicate that the more deferential Quebecers are, the more likely they are to like their political leaders.

Lastly, as far as relevant contextual factors there is relatively little to report. In this case, the significant findings are mostly sporadic and inconsistent. For instance, these data suggest that women are more likely to support city councilors than men, but that sex is not a significant factor for any of the other political authorities that we assess. Also, Quebecers with higher levels of income are less likely to support their municipal leaders. But this determinant is not relevant at any other level of government or for any other type of politician. The only contextual factor presenting any significant pattern is the individual's self- identification as either federalist or separatist/sovereignist. We find that federalists Quebecers are more likely to support their federal and provincial political leaders than those who are more in favor of leaving the Canadian political community[7]. Also these findings indicate

that federalist Quebecers are less likely to support their MNAs than Quebecers who would like for Quebec to be independent.

Conclusion

A prominent approach to studying political authorities has been to look across countries and to compare findings over time. In this investigation we employ a slightly different analytical approach by looking more specifically at Quebecers' outlooks toward both their political leaders and their elected representatives across different levels of government. Our results, while still preliminary and less generalizable than those that are typically reported in the literature, display a notable degree of consistency. In all there are five key findings that emerge. The first is that only a minority of Quebecers like their major politicians–regardless of whether they are leaders, elected representatives, new, old, federal, provincial, or municipal. The second is that very few Quebecers like both their political leader and their elected representative at each level of government. The third is that extremely few Quebecers like all of their respective political leaders, or all of their elected representatives, or all of their core politicians. The fourth important finding from this analysis suggests that a sustained period with low levels of support for political authorities may result in less interest in politics, greater cynicism, less confidence in political authorities and less confidence in core government institutions. The fifth and final finding suggests that both performance–based and structural and cultural change arguments have important effects on Quebecers' support for political authorities, but that performance is by far the most powerful and consistent determinant of outlooks toward political leaders and elected representatives.

The findings from this analysis are particularly revealing because they suggest that, by not paying enough attention to what people think about political authorities, we may be taking too much for granted.

[7]These results are likely consistent because the Premier that we analyze in this investigation is Jean Charest and not Pauline Marois.

First, it trivializes the central role played by political authorities in representative democracies. It is true that political leaders and elected representatives can come and go, but politicians are among the most visible focal points there are between citizens and the state. Also, they are arguably featured more prominently than any other object of support [1,8,11]. Furthermore, political authorities perform core democratic functions in that they authoritatively convert people's political demands into outputs and they are responsible for contending with and reacting to variations in mass support [1]. So from this Eastonian perspective, the success (and legitimacy) of a political system is largely contingent on how politicians carry out their functions. This clearly raises the stakes as far as the relevance of political authorities is concerned. Also, as the evidence from this analysis shows, this may have important consequences.

Second, the common understanding that in a democracy with multiparty options, political authorities can simply be voted out and replaced during the next available opportunity, too easily assumes that the alternatives are acceptable and equal to the task. More specifically, for transitions in political authorities to proceed when required and without accruing any sustained negative consequences, the alternatives must consistently appear different, capable and appealing to voters. Otherwise, as Easton [1] suggests: where pre–existing systems of some stability are threatened with loss of support, unless a counter–elite or organized groups are available and ready to give direction and impulse to the disaffected, the status quo can survive for long periods? Apathy, inertia or inadequate leadership have accounted for the persistence of political objects in many systems when the level of support is astonishingly low [1].

In cases such as these, it is not unreasonable to expect that a festering or pervasive lack of support for political authorities might lead to more significant consequences than just the desire for basic electoral change.

Third, there are reasons to suppose that governing in democracies may now be more challenging than in the past and this again raises the relevance of political authorities by placing greater demands on their capacity to perform. Easton argues that "the more complex, heterogeneous and differentiated a political structure, the more likely it is that the members will speak in many separate voices given the opportunity". Moreover, there is now much evidence that suggests that the value mix in various advanced industrial societies has diversified, Canada being no exception [27,28,30,32-34]. Such an increase in diversity may make it even more difficult for the average politician to reconcile differences and come up with widely acceptable outputs. Political authorities today likely have to respond to a greater volume and more complex set of citizen demands than in the past [1]. And as Dalton [10] suggests, this creates "the potential for more citizens to feel that government is not sufficiently addressing their concerns. In a fluid, multidimensional policy space it is very difficult for government to satisfy most of the people most of the time".

Political authorities occupy a pivotal role in the political process and they may not always be so easily replaced, even in a multiparty democracy where there are other alternatives to choose from. Also, increased diversity may make it much more challenging for politicians to deliver on citizens demands. Consequently, we do not believe that the relevance of political authorities should be so easily discounted. Moreover, the findings of this investigation reveal that this line of analysis may be quite fruitful. Digging more systematically into mass support for political authorities, its consequences and its determinants may provide some useful clues about the democratic deficit and how we might improve the democratic process and we should certainly try to learn more about it.

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