Back to the Future: Historical Political Science and the Promise of Canadian Political Development

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"As social scientists," wrote R.A. MacKay in his Presidential Address to the Canadian Political Science Association in 1944, "we labour in the stream of history." MacKay, an accomplished scholar and civil servant who had spent several years immersed in historical research as a member of the Rowell-Sirois Commission, insisted that a historical perspective would remain essential for political scientists even in an age of disciplinary specialization. "Without historical perspective," MacKay wrote, "the social scientist misses, or wrongly assesses, the dynamic elements of his field of interest, or misinterprets the trends" (MacKay, 1944: 281).[1]

How well have Canadian political scientists heeded this advice? In this essay, we will describe a rich tradition of historical political science in Canada, as well as its uneven popularity over time. We will suggest that historical research during the "CJPS era" in Canadian political science reached a peak in the 1980s and has declined in prominence more recently, a pattern that contrasts starkly with the growth of a subfield in American political science known as American political development, whose central contributions we will briefly survey. We will conclude with some suggestions about the merits of a similar approach—a more self-conscious community of "Canadian political development" scholars—in Canadian political science.

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Historical Research in Canadian Political Science

How "historical" is Canadian political science? To offer the beginning of an answer to this question, we have assembled a dataset containing each article and research note published in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science/ Revue canadienne de science politique*[2] from its first volume, in 1968, to the end of 2015. Since our interest is in the Canadian politics subfield, we began by identifying all of the publications with Canadian content.[3] We then coded each publication as historical or non-historical. We opted for a generous definition of "historical," coding as historical any research that dealt with events, policies, or actors at a remove of fifteen years from the publication date.[4] This included articles whose data began in the past and carried on to the present (such as "Turnout in Canada, 1965–2015").[5] This approach turned up about 140 publications, which we then coded by major research topic, such as federalism, elections, or indigenous politics.

Given our broad definition of historical research, we also organized the historical publications into more specific "genres," which we generated based on the content of the historical articles in the journal. These four genres are:

1. *Dataset expansion.* These articles use historical data to expand the number of available cases or observations. J.A. Laponce's article (1988) on the Jewish-Canadian electorate, for instance, uses data from 1953 to 1983 to explore the ideological preferences of Jewish-Canadian voters.
2. *Key events and turning points*: These articles address institutional changes, policy decisions, election results, and other events that occurred in the distant past. They assume that the events are worthy of study for their own sake, and draw on political-scientific concepts and tools in their explanations. Jennifer Smith's (1988) article on Confederation and American federalism is a good example of this genre.
3. *Change and Stability*: These articles explore the long-term development of important institutions, policies, and issues, emphasizing change and stability over time. Eric Helleiner's article (2005) on Canada's longstanding commitment to a floating exchange rate is a fine example of the genre.
4. *Legacies of the Past*: These articles look to the past to explain the present. This genre has been buttressed in recent decades by historical institutionalist arguments (Thelen, 1999), but the basic approach has existed in Canada for decades. The "Hartz-Horowitz" thesis, which seeks to explain Canadian political culture by reference to the mix of ideologies that was present in Canada's formative years, is a well-known example (Horowitz, 1966).

Abstract.   How "historical" is Canadian political science? This paper sets out to answer this question through an analysis of historically oriented articles that have appeared in this journal from its first volume, in 1968, to 2015. We suggest that historical research in this journal is at once enduring and uneven, a pattern that we then explore in more detail in a case study, spanning forty years, of historical articles that focus on the interconnected themes of the constitution, courts, and federalism. The unevenness of this pattern suggests that the intellectual and methodological foundation of "historical" Canadian political science may not be as firm as it appears. We therefore conclude with a description of some methodological and conceptual tools, originally fashioned within the historically oriented subfield of American political development in the United States, that Canadian political scientists might deploy to probe important and enduring questions of Canadian politics.

Résumé.   Dans quelle mesure, la science politique canadienne est-elle « historique »? Cet article vise à répondre à cette question à travers une analyse des articles historiquement orientés publiés dans cette Revue, depuis la parution du premier volume en 1968 jusqu'à 2015. Nous suggérons que la recherche historique dans cette Revue est à la fois durable et inégale, un schéma que nous examinons ensuite plus en détail dans une étude de cas, s'étendant sur quarante ans, d'articles historiques centrés sur les thèmes interconnectés de la constitution, des tribunaux et du fédéralisme. L'irrégularité de ce schéma suggère que le fondement intellectuel et méthodologique de la science politique canadienne « historique » peut ne pas être aussi fixe qu'il y paraît. Nous concluons donc par une description de quelques outils conceptuels et méthodologiques, façonnés aux États-Unis à l'origine du sous-domaine du « développement politique américain » historiquement orienté, que les politologues canadiens pourraient déployer pour approfondir des questions importantes et durables de la politique canadienne.

Having identified these genres, we read titles, abstracts, and occasionally the full text of each of the historical articles in the dataset, coding each article by research topic and genre. Overall, then, our dataset enables us to reflect on the prominence of historical research in the Canadian subfield, the styles of research that political scientists have employed, and the topics that have received attention from historically oriented scholars.

What does the CJPS dataset tell us about historical research in Canada? The first lesson is that historical scholarship has been present in the Canadian discipline, albeit unevenly, for the whole of the journal's history. Figure 1 records the proportion of Canadian politics articles in each volume of the CJPS that are coded as historical from 1968 to 2015; the light gray line is the actual volume-by-volume figure and the darker black line is a five-year moving average. Overall, more than one in six Canadian politics articles in CJPS (18%) are historical, and even in recent years, when the overall proportion is lower than in the past, the average number of historical articles in the journal is still about 10 per cent of the total.

Equally obvious in Figure 1, however, is the uneven distribution of historical research over time. Historical approaches appear to have enjoyed a boom period during what we might call the long 1980s, between volume 11 (1978) and volume 23 (1990). On average, fully 30 per cent of

FIGURE 1
Canadian Historical Articles in CJPS (Proportion of Cdn. Articles)
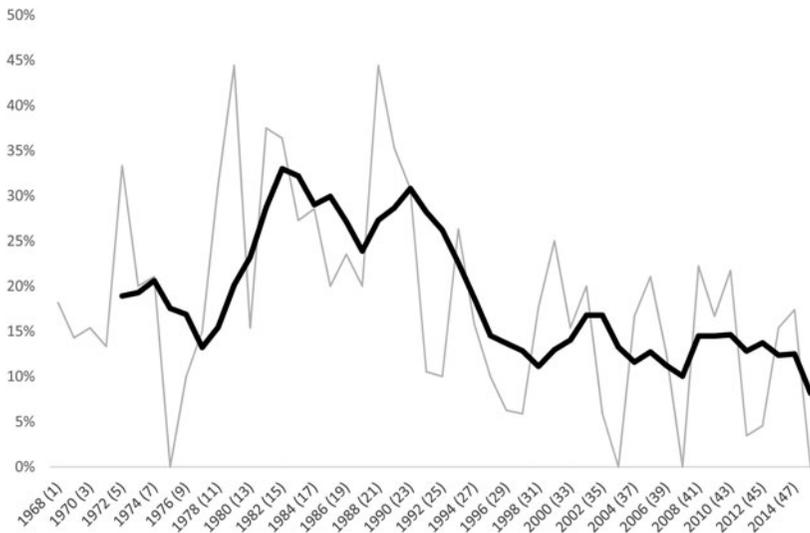
all Canadian articles during this period were historical, suggesting that historical research was prominent, even dominant, at the time. After 1990, however, the visibility of historical work in the CJPS declined precipitously, soon stabilizing at a new average of about 10 per cent of Canadian articles. The timing of this decline is particularly ironic given that, as we will soon see, it was at precisely the same moment that the historical subfield of American political development was on the rise in the United States. We will return to this boom period in the 1980s, along with the subsequent decline, in our case study of Canadian constitutional and federalism scholarship below.

Figure 2, which summarizes historical research in the CJPS by topic, provides some clarity on the subject matter of Canadian historical work. The range of topics is wide; nearly all of the key subthemes of Canadian politics have been addressed historically in the CJPS. Nonetheless, five topics stand out as especially prominent: constitution, federalism, and the courts; legislatures and executives; parties, party systems, and elections; public policy and administration; and voting behaviour and public opinion. These categories cover most of the major subjects of political science research in Canada and suggest that historical research is by no means limited to areas of study that have traditionally relied on qualitative research methods.

Figure 3, which disaggregates Canadian historical research by genre and topic, provides a final useful angle on the data. The figure reveals

FIGURE 2
Historical Articles by Subject
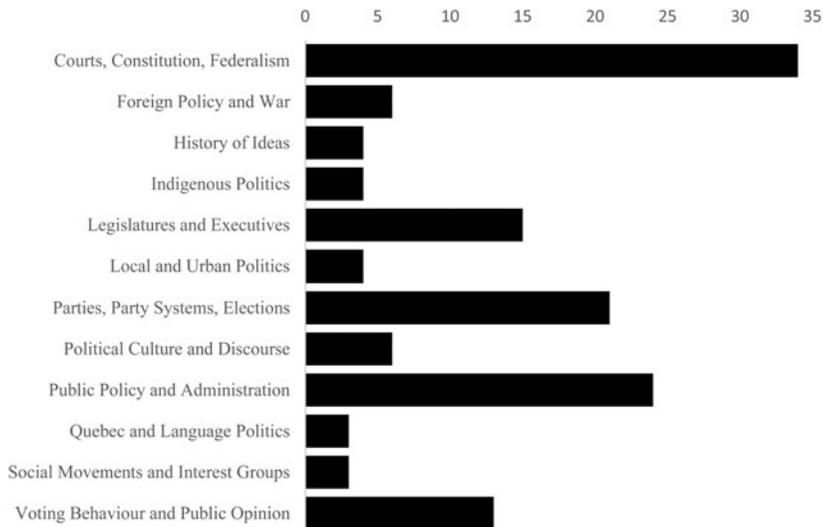
interesting relationships between topic and genre. Among scholars of elections and political behaviour, dataset expansion is a common approach, with scholars pooling data from numerous elections or surveys into a single larger dataset. This approach is also common in studies of legislatures and executives, where scholars regularly pool data on MPs or cabinet ministers to extract patterns of recruitment and careers. These studies are historical in the sense that they use data that most of us would recognize as "old," but they assume that temporal effects are less important than other variables, such as gender or ideology, and thus combine observations from diverse time periods into larger pools of data.

Other genres in Figure 3 reveal similar patterns. Studies of "key events" are most common among scholars of the constitution, federalism and the courts, for whom studies of decisive turning points—Confederation, the Charter, and so on—are common. Similarly unsurprising is the prominence of federalism, parties and elections, and public policy within the "change and stability" genre; research questions related to long-term stability and change—such as the relevant "periods" in the development of Canadian federalism or the party system—have been central to these subfields for years. The fourth and final genre, focusing on the historical roots of contemporary politics, has been less common than the others, with a small number of articles focused primarily in the areas of federalism, political culture, and public policy.

Figure 3
Historical Articles by Topic and Type

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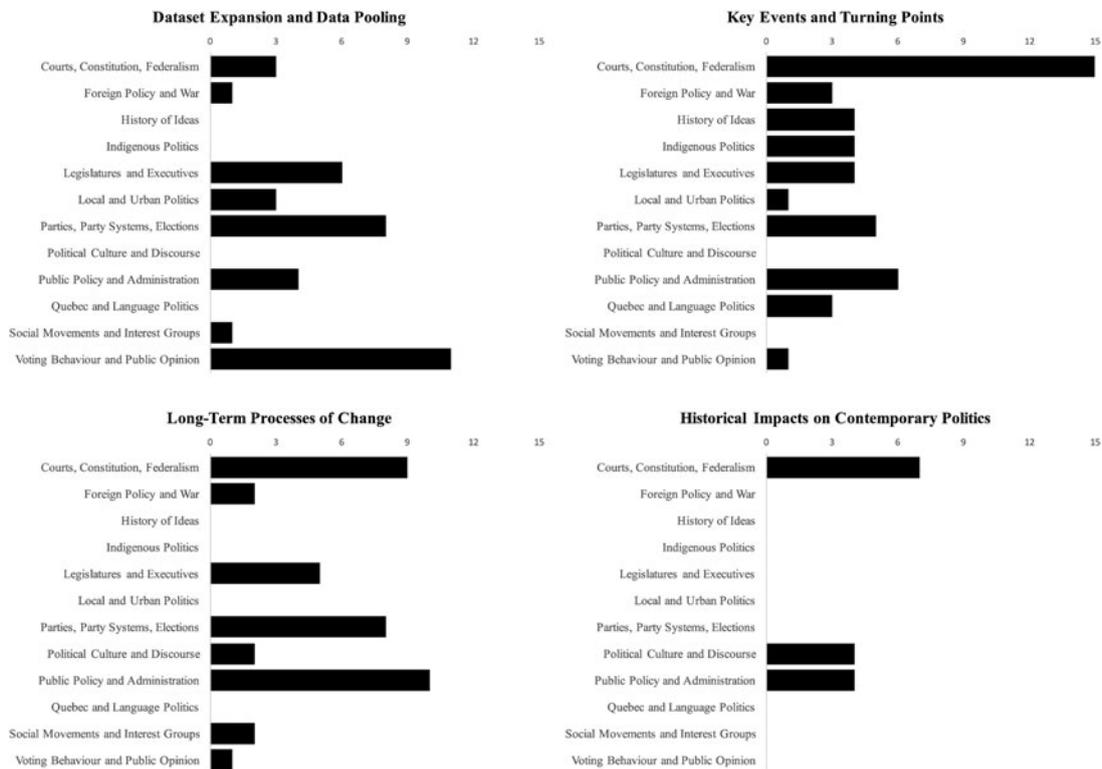
Overall, then, historical approaches have been present, though at widely varying levels, across time periods, research topics, and methods in Canada. While historical research in the CJPS experienced a surge in popularity in the 1980s, and declined significantly in subsequent years, it nevertheless remains visible in the journal today.

Case Study: Constitution, Federalism, and Courts

On the basis of this high altitude overview of articles that have appeared in CJPS over the past 50 years, we have argued that historical research is notable both for its endurance and its unevenness over time. What accounts for this pattern? And what, if anything, does it tell us about the place and potential of historical research in Canadian political science?

To answer these questions, we propose simultaneously to narrow and broaden our focus. To narrow it, we will look in greater depth at one subset of articles surveyed in the first flyover, namely those dealing centrally with the constitution, federalism, and the courts (hereafter CFC for short), a cluster of subjects that has been particularly important to, and prominent within, Canadian political science over the course of the history of CJPS. To broaden our perspective, we will look beyond the historical articles to include all of those that deal centrally with CFC, for it is possible that the pattern of decline we have detected may have more to do with the ebb and flow of the sub-fields than with specifically historical approaches. Alan Cairns articulated one version of this argument in his 2001 review of *Canada's Founding Debates*, a collection of documents related to the Confederation debates of the 1860s. Cairns celebrated the collection as a "magnificent project," an "attack against the historians' abandonment of constitutional history in favour of history from below and against the political science behaviouralists whose focus on society and culture relegated law and constitutions to the sidelines" (2001). The argument is telegraphic but emphatic: Historically informed research on Canadian constitutionalism declined because the study of "law and constitutions" was no match for the juggernaut of behaviouralism.

One might want to qualify Cairns' blunt diagnosis, but the general story to which he alludes—the gradual decline of historical and constitution-centred approaches to Canadian politics—is standard enough. The birth of CJPS in the late 1960s did indeed coincide with the appearance of behaviouralism and other empirically sensitive, methodologically individualist, theory-driven approaches. And it is certainly plausible to argue that these cutting edge approaches did eclipse scholarly interest in CFC in the 1970s. This might well explain why, according to our calculations, just seven articles were published in CJPS in the 1970s on CFC—less than one per year. Of these, only two engaged seriously with history,

TABLE 1
Constitution, Federalism, and Courts: CJPS Articles by Decade

	1970–79	1980–89	1990–99	2000–09
Historical	2	10	12	4
Total	7	20	28	35

both written by—you guessed it—Alan Cairns (1971, 1977). Relegated to the sidelines indeed.

The problem with the declension thesis, however, is that it can't account for what happened to Canadian political science in the 1980s and 1990s, when CFC articles rebounded to prominence. As Table 1 shows, in the 1980s a total of twenty articles appeared in CJPS that dealt centrally with CFC. The trend continued in the 1990s when fully 28 CFC articles appeared. Such a big bounce is hard, indeed impossible, to square with a simple story of decline.

What accounts for the resurgence of CFC? In his magisterial survey of Canadian federalism scholarship, Richard Simeon argued that "the political analysis of federalism has been fundamentally shaped and stimulated by crises in the federal system" (2002: 2), a preoccupation which, in Simeon's view, helps to explain the ebb and flow of scholarly attention to federalism. It is true that Simeon was speaking only about federalism scholarship, but federalism scholarship in Canada has always been so deeply entangled with constitutional (especially jurisdictional) issues that it seems fair enough to extend his insight to include the courts and constitution within its ambit. The point, building on Simeon's insight, is simply this: from the promulgation of the *Constitution Act* (including the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*) in 1982, through Meech, Charlottetown, and finally the Quebec referendum of 1995, Canada (and Canadian political scientists) lived through a decade-and-a-half of ongoing, wrenching political and constitutional turmoil, a period devoted to what Peter Russell has famously called "mega constitutional politics." For better or worse, it is hardly surprising that political scientists would take up their pens to write systematically about these events and that the table of contents of CJPS would reflect this preoccupation.

Lest one think this renewed interest in the 1980s and 1990s in CFC was coincidental, it is worth noting that the list of CFC articles in CJPS in the 1980s and 1990s maps almost perfectly onto the timing of the national unity crisis. Of the twenty articles that treated courts, the constitution, or federalism in the 1980s, for instance, all appeared after the *Constitution Act, 1982* had come into effect, and most addressed questions generated by the constitutional renovation that had just occurred.[6] The boundaries in the 1990s are slightly less precise, but there too CFC articles are

heavily front-loaded to the first half of the decade; fully two-thirds of all CFC articles in the 1990s appeared before the 1995 referendum.

What is equally striking is the extent to which these CFC articles emphasized historical themes, analysis, and evidence. Of twenty CFC articles that appeared in the 1980s, fully half were broadly historical; in the 1990s, two-fifths were. Here again we should not be surprised. The sense that the constitution was "up for grabs" lent the mega-constitutional debate an urgency it otherwise would not have had, but the very open-endedness of the debate allowed, or even pushed, scholars to reach back to consider first principles and historical antecedents. For some significant number of political scientists, in other words, there was a sense that one couldn't answer the questions "where do we go from here?" without first asking "how did we get here?"; uncertainty about the future generated renewed interest in the past. Some of the approaches to this genealogical question focused on what we earlier called key events and turning points and led a number of scholars to revisit how Confederation came about and reinterpret what it created (Romney, 1992; P. J. Smith 1987; J. Smith, 1983, 1988; Vipond, 1985, 1989). Others focused on the long-term development of ideas and institutions, dwelling on the dynamics of stability and change over time (Elkins, 1989; LaSelva, 1993; Russell, 1991; Vaughan, 1986; Wiseman, 1992), while still others set out to recover and re-examine the "big" ideas that underpinned the work of the Canadian constitutional architects (Ajzenstat, 1985, 1990, 1997; Preece, 1984; Resnick, 1987; D. Smith, 1995). One way or another, as mega-constitutional politics floundered, historical scholarship flourished.

In light of the relationship between the constitutional campaigns on the ground and the scholarship published in CJPS, one might think (to extend Simeon's insight) that once "constitutional fatigue" set in post-1995, scholarly interest in constitutionalism, courts, and federalism would fade as well. In fact, the story of CFC in the 2000s is more complicated. As it happens, the presence of articles in CJPS that centred on the constitution, federalism, and courts in the first decade of the twenty-first century surged. By our count, CFC articles accounted for some 35 entries between 2000 and 2009, more in absolute (and proportionate) terms than in any single decade since CJPS was created. Many of these dealt with the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. By the turn of the millennium, the Supreme Court of Canada had produced a sizeable jurisprudence that could be plumbed by scholars wanting to understand how judicial decisions are made (McCormick, 2004; Smithey, 2001; Songer and Johnson, 2007; Songer and Sinparapu, 2009; Wetstein and Ostberg, 2005), how courts have changed (or not) patterns of political behaviour and mobilization (Abu-Laban and Nieguth, 2000; Clarke, 2006; Hausegger and Riddell, 2004; Hennigar, 2004; Kelly, 2001; Morton and Allen, 2001; Scholtz, 2009; Vengroff and Morton, 2001; Webber, 2009), and how the Charter has (or

has not) transformed the way in which rights are discussed, understood, and deployed as political resources (Brodie, 2001; Green, 2000; Macfarlane, 2008; M. Smith, 2002). Nor was this spike of interest confined to the Charter. Federalism scholarship also experienced a renaissance as political scientists began to rethink the conventional categories of Canadian federalism in light of structural change both domestically and internationally (Gibbins, 2000; Harmes, 2007; Hueglin, 2003; Leo, 2006; Leo and Andres, 2008; Leo and August, 2009; Leo and Enns, 2009; Wilson, 2008;). And fatigue notwithstanding, there was even a sprinkling of articles that dealt centrally with questions of the constitutional order (Ladner, 2005; McBride, 2003; McRoberts, 2001; Mendelsohn, 2000).

What *is* different about the content of CJPS in the first decade of the millennium is the absence of historically informed or developmental approaches to CFC. Of the 35 articles that, by our count, addressed CFC themes, only four met our (generous) definition of historical. To be fair, this apparent turn away from history may well have something to do with timing. Consider, for example, the remarkable outburst of scholarship related to the Charter. Just as the constitutional crises of the 1980s and 1990s created an environment congenial to historical scholarship, so the bumper crop of early Charter cases produced a rich harvest for scholars interested in understanding both the process and substance of judicial decision making. What made the Charter and Charter jurisprudence so compelling, by this reading, was precisely that these phenomena embodied different institutional dynamics and furnished new data. Under the circumstances, it is understandable that scholars would want to look forward rather than back. Once an empirical benchmark has been clearly established on the basis of these early cases, one might argue, there will be ample material for a future generation of Charter scholars to look back as well as forward, and to pose their own developmental questions (see Hausegger et al., 2010; Songer et al., 2011).

Still, the absence of what Richard Valelly and Suzanne Mettler call a developmental "sensibility" in this recent CFC scholarship is striking. If one's purpose is to understand whether and how the Charter has transformed Canadian political discourse, would it not be helpful to provide "before" and "after" snapshots of political discourse to illustrate the argument (Macfarlane, 2008)? Similarly, if one proposes to show how the strategy and behaviours of rights-seeking groups have changed since the Charter came into effect, would it not be important to consider the possibility that these groups had already begun to anticipate the need to change their strategies well before the Charter came into existence (Epp, 1998; M. Smith, 1998, Tremblay, 2013)? And in a discussion of the Harper government's approach to federalism, would it not help us understand "open federalism" to draw attention to the historical resonances with the old idea of "dual federalism" (Harmes, 2007)? Yet in all of these cases, history largely disappears from the story.

History in American Political Science: The APD Tradition

The relative indifference to history that we have detected in recent CFC articles is, in our view, an unfortunate feature of this slice of recent scholarship in Canadian political science. It is not simply that "history matters" in some vague, bromidic way, and our intention is not simply to persuade Canadianists that they should do more to set out the historical background of the phenomena they want to explain. Nor is our intention simply to return to the "good old days" when historically informed approaches to Canadian politics were more prevalent, if not dominant. Our goal is more ambitious. Our core claim is that history provides a solid platform from which to advance the basic mission of political science, namely, to describe, explore, and explain the use (and abuse) of (state) power. It is here, we think, that the concepts and tools of the American political development subfield (APD) may provide a useful next step for political scientists in Canada, both for those who are already well disposed to historical approaches and for those who need to be persuaded that historical approaches can yield the sort of explanatory leverage that is coin of the realm in modern political science (Broschek, 2012). Since APD is not well known in the Canadian discipline (M. Smith, 2009), we need to begin with a brief outline of the main features of the APD approach.

American political development is a well-established subfield in the American political science discipline. The subfield originated in seminars at Harvard and Cornell in the 1970s which focused on the applicability of political development theory to the American experience (Gerring, 2003; Zelizer, 2003). In the 1980s, the subfield moved away from the international development literature and began to crystallize as a leading contributor in the emerging "historical institutionalist" approach. By the late 1980s, APD scholars had founded a journal, a section of the American Political Science Association, and were teaching undergraduate and graduate level courses in APD in universities across the country. Today, APD is widely recognized as a field that "focuses on the causes, nature, and consequences of key transformative periods and central patterns in American political history. More than other political scientists, APD scholars look to historical processes to analyze governing structures and policy outcomes, and build theories about political change" (Kersh, 2005: 335; Orren and Skowronek, 2004).

Within this broad focus on the causes and consequences of events and patterns in American history, APD is distinguished by two distinctive commitments, each of which, we will argue, is relevant to Canadian political science. The first is a commitment to "big" questions about the nature and development of the American regime. While APD research has undoubtedly grown more specialized in recent decades (Skowronek, 2003), many APD scholars continue to tackle ambitious and important

questions about American politics, such as the nature of the American welfare state (Morgan and Campbell, 2011), the role of racial politics in the development of American institutions and policy (King and Smith, 2005), and the causes and consequences of the New Deal (Katznelson, 2013). APD scholars are distinctive not only in their historical approach to these topics, but also in their willingness to address them in large-scale, ambitious terms. While most subfields focus on particular slices of the American political experience, many APD scholars strive to explore and explain the whole "pizza pie" (Pierson, 2007: 147; Mettler and Valelly, 2016: 3).

A second distinctive feature of the APD subfield has been a set of conceptual and theoretical innovations related to our understanding of political stability and change. Because APD originated in, and remains closely linked with, the broader tradition of historical institutionalism, its best known contributions are focused on the role that institutions play in producing durable outcomes over time. APD scholars have helped to outline how economic, social, and political trends are mediated by existing institutional structures, making it impossible to explain political outcomes without reference to the institutional context from which those outcomes emerged (Skocpol, 1992; Weir, 1992). APD scholars have also been central in extending this argument to the study of public policy, demonstrating that durable public policies can themselves shape future policies, government capacity, and even public opinion and participation (Campbell, 2012; Mettler and Soss, 2004).

Yet APD is much more than a synonym for historical institutionalism.[7] One of the qualities that distinguishes APD, indeed, is its combination of conceptual diversity and methodological creativity. An important recent example is the concept of *political orders*, a concept that attempts to synthesize two of the subfield's most prominent empirical research traditions–political culture and institutions—into a single coherent approach (Orren and Skowronek, 2004). For Desmond King and Rogers Smith, two leading APD scholars, political order describes a "coalition of governing state institutions, nonstate political institutions, and political actors that is bound together by broadly similar senses of…goals, rules, roles, and boundaries" (2005: 78). This concept shows considerable promise for assessing the relative importance of ideas, institutions, and political action in shaping long-term patterns of political development (Béland, 2009; Schmidt, 2008; Smith, 2006).

The concept of political order as a network of actors, ideas, and institutions has led APD scholars to the additional insight that order must invariably be *plural*: not one political order but an "intercurrence" of multiple orders across political time (new ideas and institutions never fully replace old ones) and space (political orders vary across policy domains and geographic territory). Here, too, APD scholars are combining earlier historical

institutionalist approaches with more recent concepts to explore how polit-
ical change can be produced by the "friction" that occurs among diverse
political orders within the American state (Lieberman, 2002; Orren and
Skowronek, 2004; Sheingate, 2014).

Overall, then, we might summarize APD as a set of two nested com-
munities. Most broadly, APD is a community of political scientists who
investigate political history and who treat ideas and institutions both as
explananda in themselves and *explanans* for phenomena ranging from
civil rights policy to the American welfare state (Mettler and Valelly,
2016). In a nutshell, APD stands or falls by its core commitment to
"putting history first" (10), to understanding patterns of politics as they
unfold over time. Why does the Constitution endure? Does policy run in
cycles? Do elections display recognizable patterns over time? What
happens when the duties and expectations of the president grow over
time in ways that "layer" the new on the old? In what ways does the
legacy of slavery manifest itself in current politics? These are core APD
questions because they are all, at base, questions that can only be answered
in light of the "big picture" of the long-term development of American
politics.

Within this community, a somewhat smaller group of scholars is com-
mitted to developing concepts, theories, and techniques that will illuminate
these big historical questions. As the recently published *Oxford Handbook
of American Political Development* (Valelly et al., 2016) illustrates vividly,
the APD scholarly world is both a fertile incubator of theories of political
development (among them political order, path dependence, and intercur-
rence) and a site brimming with methodological diversity (employing
everything from rational choice to normative political theory by way of
big data analysis). One of the most welcome new developments in APD,
indeed, is the insight that placing the US in a comparative historical frame-
work may provide additional explanatory leverage for understanding the
American political tradition (King and Lieberman, 2009; Morgan, 2016;),
as clear an invitation to Canadianists as one could imagine.

The Future of History in Canadian Political Science

We do not intend to argue that Canada's homegrown historical tradition
within political science ought to be supplanted by a research agenda mod-
elled on American political development. We do believe, however, that a
more self-conscious community of historical researchers inspired by the
APD approach—a community we might call "Canadian political develop-
ment"—could provide the Canadian discipline with a much-needed
(historical) shot in the arm. We envision four particular benefits that
could emerge from such an approach: increased cross-fertilization of

historical approaches and methods; an expanded conceptual toolkit; the opportunity to contribute to an emerging community of comparative political development scholars; and, above all, a continued emphasis on enduring questions of Canadian politics.

Historical methods and approaches

Historical political science involves a distinct set of research strategies and methodological challenges, ranging from the vagaries of archival access to the time-intensive character of longitudinal dataset construction. One practical benefit of a more self-conscious Canadian political development community would be the opportunity to share knowledge about research methods for historical work and to discuss the potential utility of those approaches for other research topics and time periods.

This potential knowledge sharing is particularly important given what we discovered in the CJPS data above: the "genres" of historical research in Canadian political science are clearly sorted by subfield, meaning that historical scholars in different subfields tend to approach historical research in very different ways. This creates opportunities for fruitful exchange. Scholars of constitutions and the courts—who typically work in the "key events" genre—may find that their work can be deepened with data pooling (Radmilovic, 2013) or developmental (Cairns, 1995) approaches. Canadian election and voting scholars, typically inclined toward data pooling, may discover that more temporally sensitive approaches, focused on turning points (Godbout and Høyland, 2013; Massicotte, 1989) or long-term development (Leduc et al., 2016) prove fruitful. By stimulating interaction among historically oriented scholars in Canada both within *and* across Canadian subfields—an integrated approach recalling the discipline's older "political economy" tradition—the Canadian political development approach would increase opportunities for Canadian political scientists to consider possibilities for alternative approaches to their subfields' central research questions.

Conceptual expansion

Early research in the American political development tradition often emphasized the impact of historically constructed institutions on subsequent political development, an argument that would come to be called "historical institutionalist." Canadian political scientists, who made similar arguments themselves before historical institutionalism arrived, have welcomed these arguments in their own research. But Canadian political scientists have been less aware of, and thus less receptive to, the more recent cluster of APD concepts that we have described above, such as political order and intercurrence.

We see considerable potential for conceptual and theoretical innovation in Canadian politics by drawing judiciously on these newer APD concepts. For instance, tracking the rise and fall of distinct political orders—mutually supportive bundles of ideas, actors, and institutions—could be useful for understanding central questions in Canadian political development. The emergence and institutionalization of two competing political orders in the early twentieth century—what we might call the "Canadian nation" and "British connection" orders—appears to have been decisive in linking Catholic voters to the Liberal Party of Canada, thus contributing to that party's electoral dominance in twentieth-century federal politics (Blais, 2005; Johnston, 2015). The "layering" of successive conceptions of what citizenship entails—from assimilation to integration to multiculturalism—may illuminate patterns of national identity formation (Vipond, 2017). And the intercurrence between "Charter Canadian" and "regionalist Canadian" orders may provide a useful way to explain why organizations that we would typically place at the core of the "Charter Canadian" order, such as the National Action Committee and Égale, are often forced to accommodate regionalist tensions even within their own organizational structures (Bashevkin, 1993; M. Smith, 2005). These possibilities suggest the potential for more recent APD concepts, such as political order, intercurrence and policy feedback, to contribute substantially to important questions in Canadian political science.

Comparative contributions

By focusing more directly on Canadian political development, Canadian political scientists will also be well equipped to contribute to a growing community of scholars who are interested in comparative extensions of APD approaches and arguments. While some APD scholars have always engaged theoretically and empirically with comparative politics, a number of researchers have recently begun to advocate for deeper and more sustained engagement between APD and the broader comparative politics field (Morgan, 2016). Meanwhile, historically oriented scholars in other countries, such as Britain and Canada, have begun to recognize the potential for APD approaches to illuminate the study of political change in other countries as well (Spirling, 2014). By engaging directly with this emerging community, Canadian scholars have the opportunity to place themselves at the centre of a new historical research agenda, focused on questions including democratization and citizenship, the historical development of political parties and legislatures, and long-term trajectories of public policy.[8]

Big questions in Canadian politics

Above all, we believe that Canadian political development holds out the promise that Canadian political scientists can continue to engage in research

on large-scale, long-term, big-picture questions of Canadian political science. This ambition to tackle the big questions—a focus, as Paul Pierson has put it, not only on the slices but on the whole pizza pie—has always been central to the American political development approach. By focusing our attention on political development itself–the processes through which "politics in time" durably shape and reshape the Canadian political experience (Mettler and Valelly, 2016; Orren and Skowronek, 2004) — Canadian scholars will be compelled to tackle vital questions in Canadian politics. Was Confederation a moment of genuine political transformation or did it merely entrench the "liberal order" that had already been established earlier in the nineteenth century (McKay, 2000)? What caused the Catholic-Liberal connection to lock into place early in the twentieth century? How have policy and governance challenges in Canada's largest cities shaped, and been shaped by, the broader development of the Canadian state (Lucas, 2016; Taylor, 2014)? Did the Charter transform Canadian politics or is it merely an especially brilliant signpost along a much longer road (Cairns, 1995; Nevitte, 1996)?

As in Britain and the United States, research on these important questions can and should incorporate all of the technological and methodological advances in recent political science: large-scale text-as-data methods, including Canada's recently digitized Hansard (Beelen et al., 2017; Spirling, 2015), longitudinal policy coding efforts (Jennings et al., 2011), advances in ecological analysis (Corder and Wolbrecht, 2016) and natural experiments (Achen and Bartels, 2016). In many cases, however, data limitations will require researchers to combine sources and methods, each of them rather partial, into a single, larger argument. As Eric Schickler, a leading APD scholar, has recently argued, pluralist research strategies are essential for addressing substantively important questions that are not well suited for experimental or quasi-experimental research designs. "Even in the absence of a single, decisive test," Schickler argues, "wide-ranging and systematic data collection and analysis can yield insight into big, complicated questions regarding the sources of political change" (2016: 17). We believe that political development scholars have the opportunity to do similar work, on similarly big, complicated questions, in Canada.

Conclusion

Our purpose in this essay has been to describe a longstanding tradition of historical research in Canadian political science and to suggest a "Canadian political development" approach that would expand and deepen this tradition. Is it likely that such an intellectual community will take hold in our discipline?

Vibrant intellectual movements do not usually follow from edicts, nor even from hortatory journal articles such as this one. Nonetheless, there are several signs to suggest that this may be a propitious moment to foster the (largely organic) growth of the approach we have described. One such sign is the attention paid to the sesquicentennial of the *Constitution Act, 1867* which, whatever its shortcomings, nevertheless carries with it promising opportunities to rethink the Confederation settlement from an explicitly developmental perspective (Russell, 2017). A second sign comes from the APD community, some of whose most prominent members have expressed a keen desire to correct what Kimberly Morgan calls APD's "scholarly exceptionalism" (2016: 178) in a way that would overcome APD's relative intellectual insulation and re-engage with comparative politics. The three areas that Morgan suggests are particularly ripe for dialogue—state building, democratization and race, ethnicity and national identity—are obvious candidates for Canadian-American comparisons. And third, Canadian political scientists (especially younger scholars) are beginning to build the sort of teaching and research infrastructure needed to support such an intellectual movement. Both authors teach undergraduate courses in Canadian political development. Several workshops that apply the political development approach to Anglo-American democracies have already been held; more are planned. And the work of creating dedicated vehicles for the dissemination of research in Canadian political development is under way.

We return full circle, then, to R.A. MacKay's 1944 observation that "without historical perspective, the social scientist misses, or wrongly assesses, the dynamic elements of his field of interest, or misinterprets the trends." We believe the need for an historical perspective in Canadian political science is as great as it was when MacKay spoke some seventy-plus years ago. And perhaps more strongly than MacKay, we believe we now have at our disposal conceptual categories and methodological toolkits that are compatible with, indeed essential to, realizing the goals of social science. In sum, for anyone who wishes to describe and explain the richness and complexity of the Canadian political experience there is no better time than now to go "back to the future."

Notes

1   The full sentence reads, "Without historical perspective, the social scientist misses, or wrongly assesses, the dynamic elements of his field of interest, or misinterprets the trends, and his 'science' tends rapidly to become a system of dogmatics, a mere mumbo-jumbo without social reality." Much as we admire MacKay's rhetorical flourish, we would suggest that no political science approach, historical or otherwise, is free of the alluring temptations of mumbo-jumbo.
2   Hereafter CJPS.
3   Publications dealing with Canadian politics or containing Canada within a comparative study.

4   Our findings below are not especially sensitive to this 15-year threshold. A 20-year threshold includes 95 per cent of the articles in the 15-year dataset, and a 25-year threshold includes 90 per cent of the articles in the 15-year dataset.

5   We searched abstracts and titles for thematic (such as history, development, long-term) and temporal (such as stems for each decade beginning with 1800) indicators. We then reviewed the title of each publication in the dataset for any missing items.

6   The first CFC articles in the 1980s illustrate this focus particularly well. Jennifer Smith's analysis (1983) of the origins of judicial review and Samuel LaSelva's reflections (1993) on federalism, the Supreme Court, and constitutional amendment follow directly from changes produced by the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

7   APD scholars and scholars in the comparative historical institutionalism tradition may once have emphasized differing mechanisms of stability and change—path dependence, drift, and so on for comparativists; political orders and intercurrence for APD—but recent APD scholarship, as exemplified by the 2016 *Oxford Handbook on American Political Development* (Vallely et al. 2016), suggests considerable convergence.

8   These comparative themes—democratization and citizenship, parties and legislatures, and public policy—were the focus of three workshops on American, British, and Canadian political development that we helped to organize in 2015 and 2016. Other themes, such as federalism, bureaucratization, or interest group politics, may prove to be equally fruitful terrain for comparative political development research.

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