

Expressing Confidence in Unions in Quebec and the Other Canadian Provinces: Similarities and Contrasts in Findings
Niveaux de confiance envers les syndicats au Québec et dans les autres provinces canadiennes : similitudes et différences
Expresión de la confianza en los sindicatos de Quebec y de otras provincias canadienses: similitudes y contrastes de los resultados

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Résumé de l'article

En se basant sur les données issues des trois plus récentes vagues du *World Value Survey (WVS)* — c'est-à-dire 1990, 2000, 2006 —, cet article examine l'évolution des niveaux de confiance envers les syndicats en comparant le Québec au reste du Canada. Après avoir constaté l'évolution contrastée des taux de confiance envers l'acteur syndical dans ces deux régions, nous appliquons le même modèle de régression logistique pour les deux régions en partant des données du WVS de 2006, de manière à mettre en évidence les déterminants de la propension individuelle à faire confiance aux syndicats. Les résultats de notre recherche mettent en exergue à la fois les similitudes et les différences entre les deux régions. Concernant les similarités entre le Québec et le reste du Canada, notons que l'engagement dans la sphère politique ainsi que le fait d'être syndiqué ont un effet positif sur la propension des individus à faire confiance aux syndicats, tandis que la plupart des variables sociodémographiques n'ont pas d'effets importants, cela tant dans une région que dans l'autre. Concernant les différences, lorsque que les répondants déclarent avoir d'importants revenus, l'on remarque un impact négatif significatif sur leur propension à faire confiance aux syndicats au Québec, tandis que l'effet de cette variable n'est pas significatif dans le reste du Canada. L'appui accordé au NPD a également un effet plus structurant sur la propension des individus du reste du Canada à faire confiance aux syndicats, alors que cela n'est pas le cas au Québec chez ceux qui appuient le Bloc Québécois. En outre, plus les citoyens du Québec s'identifient à des positions idéologiques de gauche, plus ils sont susceptibles d'accorder leur confiance au mouvement syndical. Enfin, l'effet du niveau d'éducation des individus sur la confiance envers les syndicats n'est pas significatif dans le reste du Canada, tandis que cette variable a un effet significatif et s'avère positivement liée à la confiance envers les syndicats au Québec.

Expressing Confidence in Unions in Quebec and the Other Canadian Provinces: Similarities and Contrasts in Findings

Lorenzo Frangi and Marc-Antonin Hennebert

This article examines changes in levels of confidence in unions and proposes an intra-national comparison between Quebec and the rest of Canada based on the analysis of the three most recent waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) database, of which Canada is part (i.e. 1990, 2000, 2006). After noting differences in the trends of confidence in unions in these two regions, we applied the same logistic regression model to both regions, based on the 2006 WVS wave, in order to bring out the determinants of the propensity of individuals to express confidence in unions. Similarities and contrast in findings between the two regions are highlighted.

KEYWORDS: trade unions, confidence, public opinion, Quebec, Canada.

Introduction

Many researchers have debated the question of “what unions do” (Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Bennet and Kaufman, 2007) but there is little knowledge on “how people feel about what unions do” (Givan and Hipp, 2012: 8). During the 1970s and 80s, industrial relations scholars analyzed the complex structuration process behind individual feelings (Beniger and Gusek, 1995) and achieved important and consistent insights into the determinants of union support (e.g. Bok and Dunlop, 1970; Edwards and Bain, 1988), demonstrating that public opinion is not merely a simple—and unreliable—artefact (e.g. Bourdieu, 1979; Fantasia, 1995). Since then, however, with the exception of a few contributions (e.g. Boris, 2012; Frangi and Memoli, 2013; 2014), the analysis of public opinion regarding unions has been downplayed. The industrial relations debate needs to revive its interest in public opinion analysis, since both the actual and perceived effects of unions are important with regard to the social legitimacy and sustainability of unions (Clark, 2000).

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Since the 1990s, as the mainstream media has grown increasingly hostile towards trade unions (e.g. Puette, 1992; Earl *et al.*, 2004), unions have also become an out-of-fashion subject for public opinion survey agencies. Moreover, previous analysis of Canadian public opinion regarding unions mainly focused on the perception of the social need for unions and the level of general approval of unions (see Rouillard, 2008). However, with the exception of one recent study (Frangi *et al.*, 2014), another fundamental aspect of union legitimacy and sustainability in society, namely “confidence in unions,” has remained underexplored.

To help address this lack of analysis, this article examines the determinants of confidence in unions and proposes an intra-national comparison between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Our analysis begins with a discussion of three mechanisms that structure confidence, with a specific focus on confidence in unions. The second section presents our main research hypotheses based on an analysis of the common and distinctive institutional and cultural characteristics of unionism in Quebec and the rest of Canada. Sections three and four describe the trends of confidence in unions based on an analysis of the World Values Survey (WVS) database and test our hypotheses through a logistic regression model applied separately to the two regions under study. In the fifth and last section, we discuss the similarities and contrasts in the findings (i.e. some variables were significant in one region but not in the other and vice versa) regarding the determinants of confidence in unions in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Confidence and its mechanisms

While the industrial relations debate has been enriched by insights into various dimensions of the support that unions enjoy within society—recurrent analyses have been made of the social “need for unions,” and whether unions are a “good” or “bad thing” for society (Kochan, 1979; Gomez *et al.*, 2004; Edwards and Bain, 1988; see Rouillard, 2008 for a comprehensive portrait of the Canadian case)—the confidence dimension remains underexplored. We thus draw on the wider debate on both confidence and union support to highlight mechanisms that prompt individuals to have confidence in unions.

Public opinion studies refer to trust in institutions as confidence (e.g. Hardin, 1998; Williamson, 1993). As is the case for confidence in other institutions (Tonkiss and Passey, 1999; Kaspersons *et al.*, 2005), confidence in unions is both dependent on an individual's own inclination and, at the same time, situational, that is, influenced by the specific features of unions in a given society.

The structural mechanisms that cause individuals to express confidence have been largely investigated over time and across different fields (see Misztal, 2013). Three mechanisms in particular have been the most discussed

and validated, as reported in Dietz (2004). The first is *calculus-based*. Citizens express confidence—in unions, in our case—on instrumental grounds, that is, on the basis of a strict cost-benefit analysis. Thus, individuals express confidence in unions if they feel that unions are beneficial for their own welfare. This expression of confidence is based on “good reasons constituting evidence of trustworthiness” (Lewis and Weigert, 1985: 970). The second mechanism that can structure confidence is *experience-based*. In this case, respondents express confidence in unions based on their personal “union experience,” since previous experience is important when it comes to shaping beliefs and attitudes (Gall and Fiorito, 2012). The third mechanism is identity-based, that is, based on the perception of a *common identity*. In this case, citizens trust unions because they perceive commonalities between their own values and goals and those promoted by unions.

These three mechanisms interact at different relational levels. In fact, confidence can be based on a direct personal relationship with the exponents or members of unions, a mediated relationship through other trusted persons, or simply distant relationships structured on opinions based on social institutional reputation and mass-media information. In the latter case, citizens develop general feelings toward unions based on an allegiance to the norms and values associated with perceived union goals (Godard, 2008).

Several studies on confidence in institutions have demonstrated that, in different societies, the expression of trust is primarily a consequence of an individual’s inclination or propensity to trust, generally measured through the expression of trust in (unspecified) “others.”¹ The propensity to trust thus becomes the propellant for trusting institutions (Putnam, 1995; Lewis and Weigert, 2012).

HYPOTHESIS 1 In line with these arguments, we hypothesize that individuals who are more trustful of “others,” regardless of whether they live in Quebec or in other Canadian provinces, will also show a greater tendency to express trust in unions.

Common and distinctive features in Quebec and the rest of Canada

Since confidence in unions is both dependent on individual characteristics and situational, we explore these three mechanisms in relation to the specific characteristics of unionism and, more generally, industrial relations in Quebec and the rest of Canada. For a more refined understanding of the situational influence, our analysis expands further on the different cultural schemes that characterize these two regions. This section aims to bring out some hypotheses regarding each mechanism, across or specific to the two regions.

Similarities across Canada

With regard to some fundamental aspects of industrial relations, Canada appears to be a cohesive nation. Indeed, the Canadian provinces appear to share a common model of industrial relations based on the *Wagner Act* model of union certification, an exclusive bargaining agency, and voluntarism between labour and management through a decentralized regime of collective bargaining (Bamber *et al.*, 2011; Block, 2006; Murray and Verge, 1999).²

Some scholars maintain that the many distinguishing features of the Canadian industrial relations system are rooted in specifically Canadian values and the Canadian social context. These distinctive characteristics have typically been highlighted through comparisons with the United States, demonstrating that, generally speaking, Canadian values and attitudes tend to be more liberal than those in the U.S. (Lipset and Meltz, 2004). While several studies have pointed to the generally more hostile attitudes of American employers towards unions (e.g. Fligstein, 2001; Freeman and Medoff, 1984), other studies have also emphasized that the U.S. working class tends to be fragmented and conservative (Friedman, 1998), whereas the Canadian working class has been more interwoven with significant left-wing components and social progressive forces (Palmer, 1992). In this regard, a recent study shows that Canadian unions enjoy greater confidence among respondents with a working class profile than do American unions (Frangi *et al.*, 2014).³

Studies that have sought to better understand the sources of the social legitimacy of unions in Canada also point out that unionized workers generally tend to have a more favourable perception of unions as an institution than the rest of the population (see Rouillard, 2008). These studies thus suggest that direct “union experience” may be an important factor in the propensity of individuals to trust unions.

HYPOTHESIS 2a Drawing on the evidence highlighted by this literature, we hypothesize that, in both Quebec and the rest of Canada, due to a *calculus-based mechanism*, individuals with a working class profile (i.e. blue-collar occupations and lower household incomes) will be more likely to have confidence in unions than other citizens.

HYPOTHESIS 2b Moreover, since union members have demonstrated a more positive perception of unions than non-members, due to an *experience-based mechanism*, we expect that union members will consistently express more confidence in unions.

Beyond national homogeneity: the particular situation in Quebec

Although unionism in Canada may appear, at first glance, to be a relatively homogenous entity, it goes without saying that there are also significant differences between the Canadian provinces; differences that may influence

the three mechanisms, and especially the *identity-based* mechanism, behind confidence to unions. There is no doubt that the province that stands out the most in this regard is Quebec (Grabb and Curtis, 2005). Not only is Quebec distinctive in terms of its history, culture and official language, but also its institutional, political and social structures, which give it an “unquestioned identity as a region” within Canada (Thompson *et al.*, 2003:5). Moreover, the laws regulating collective labour relations in Quebec differ from those in most other provinces in several respects (Coutu *et al.*, 2013).⁴

When it comes to unionism, Quebec appears to be even more distinctive in three fundamental ways. First, Quebec is the only region in North America that is characterized by a plurality of peak multi-sector union organizations which, moreover, compete with one another (Thwaites, 2007). Of the four major labour confederations in this province (i.e. FTQ, CSN, CSQ, CSD), three are exclusive to Quebec. Second, bargaining at plant level—the most common level of bargaining in North America—has been affected by significant centralization, due to provincial bargaining in some specific sectors (i.e. construction, public and parapublic sectors) and significant union participation in many provincial government bodies (e.g. boards, commissions, agencies and Crown corporations), where unions have fostered broader social interests beyond those of their members alone (Verge and Murray, 1999; Laroche and Barré, 2013).

The third distinctive feature concerns the relationship between unions and the political sphere. In this regard, there has been an enduring structural proximity in the rest of Canada between unions and the New Democratic Party (NDP). In fact, unions in the rest of Canada have structured their political identity with reference to class identity and socio-democratic values. Indeed, although in more recent years, in line with a “utility maximization” strategy, some unions linked to the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) have sometimes supported other parties in order to oppose the conservatives, the link between unions and the NDP is deeply rooted (Camfield, 2011; Savage, 2010). The CLC was, in fact, a central pillar of the New Democratic Party when it was founded in 1961. Since then, the CLC has encouraged local unions to support the party, not only electorally but also through financial and organizational resources. Even though the NDP’s roots in unions and the working class more broadly have grown weaker in recent years, this political party still attracts a lot of support from unionists and union staff members, and rank and file workers have often been hired as campaign managers or canvass organizers during electoral campaigns (Jansen and Young, 2009).

However, the union-party dynamics are different in Quebec. Quebec’s peak unions have never been organically linked to one party as in the rest of Canada. None of the peak unions in Quebec have thus been enamored with the NDP. Even

the FTQ—the peak union loosely linked to the CLC and thus perhaps more likely to support the NDP—has never given this party active support (Grant, 2003). In general, Quebec unions have preferred to preserve a certain degree of autonomy and independence from political parties, even though many union leaders have not hidden their party leanings (Savage, 2008). The ties between the major union organizations in Quebec and certain political parties, however, have historically been stronger during periods in which Quebec sovereignty has come to the forefront⁵ (Güntzel, 2000).

On a more fundamental level, the positions taken by Quebec union organizations on the political scene show that unions in Quebec occupy a large space at the intersection of class and “national identity” (Güntzel, 2000). Since the “Quiet Revolution,”⁶ Quebec’s peak unions, widely supported by intellectuals, have frequently put forward the idea that the development of socio-political awareness among Quebec workers is contingent upon recognition of their “national identity” (Rouillard, 2008).

This occasional proximity between the sovereignist political parties and major union organizations in Quebec took a new turn after the failure of the referendum in 1995, which also corresponded to a political shift to the right in this province. The neoliberal discourse embraced by the parties, together with their focus on reducing government spending, had the effect of distancing their political agenda from that of the main union organizations (Camfied, 2011; Collombat and Gagnon, 2003). The occasional support that union organizations have since lent to political parties has mainly been strategic and pragmatic, the goal being to avoid the election of other political parties that would be less amenable to their socio-economic agenda.

The distinctive features of unionism in Quebec thus raise several questions regarding the potential effects of this context on the propensity of individuals to have confidence in unions. With the aim of gaining a better understanding of the bases of this confidence, several hypotheses can be formulated.

Given the foregoing discussions, the following hypotheses consider how the *identity-based* mechanism may differentially affect the expression of confidence in unions in the two regions considered. While, on the one hand, it has been demonstrated that individuals for whom politics is an important value are also more inclined to have confidence in union organizations (Frangi *et al.*, 2014); on the other hand, given the preceding analysis concerning the ties between the union movement and political parties, we expected there to be significant differences between Quebec and the rest of the Canada.

HYPOTHESIS 3a Thus, we expected that, in both Quebec and the rest of Canada, confidence in political parties would enhance confidence in unions.

HYPOTHESIS 3b However, since Quebec has not been characterized by total party involvement or an organic relationship between the political parties and unions, we expected the fact of supporting the NDP in the rest of Canada to have a stronger effect on the propensity of individuals to have confidence in unions than the fact of supporting the Bloc Québécois (BQ) in Quebec.

HYPOTHESIS 4 Moreover, with respect to the influence of provincial (also referred to as “national”) identity, due to the role that unions have played in Quebec in terms of the construction of a national identity and their relative support for the sovereigntist movement, we expected that the greater the extent to which people in Quebec identified with their province, the more likely they would be to trust unions.

Data and the model

We developed a secondary data analysis based on the World Values Survey (WVS) database.⁷ Although this database is not directly intended to investigate unions and feelings about unions, it does provide a measure of confidence in unions around the world and over time, as well as important insights regarding the socio-political values and socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, which act as good proxys for addressing some of the fundamental elements that distinguish Quebec society from the rest of Canada. Moreover, the most recent waves of the WVS identify the region, within a country, where the data were collected. Nevertheless, this database also has some important limitations. Regarding the dependent variable, it does not include other questions on the respondents’ feelings about unions with which to compare the measure of their confidence in unions, which would have provided more robust results. Moreover, it is not possible to distinguish between different unions (all unions were considered to be alike) and the results must therefore be interpreted in reference to unions as a broad social institution. Regarding the set of independent variables, we had to rely on the best available proxy to measure the impact of the three mechanisms in the two regions since more refined measures were not available (e.g. party preference was only considered at the federal level, which made it impossible to identify a preference for the PQ in Quebec).

We traced the trends of confidence in unions in Quebec and the rest of Canada as revealed through three waves of the WVS (1990, 2000, and 2006). However, in order to test our hypotheses, we focused in particular on the 2006 wave. Although it remains a point-in-time sample, the 2006 wave has two fundamental advantages: it provides a more recent panorama of the determinants of confidence in unions, thus significantly updating the debate concerning the public’s perception of unions, and it includes a fundamental set of variables related to the respondents’ feelings of geographical belonging (North America, Canada,

and the province of residence) which were not included in the preceding waves.⁸ In this wave, the representative sample includes 2,164 Canadian respondents, 539 of whom were interviewed in Quebec and 1,625 of whom were interviewed in the other Canadian provinces.⁹

The dependent variable was based on a questionnaire item that asked respondents to give their opinions on various organizations, including unions. The question was: "I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all? Labour unions"

In our model, the dependent variable was considered to be dichotomous: citizens who responded positively ("A great deal" or "Quite a lot" of confidence) versus those who responded negatively ("Not very much confidence" or "None at all").¹⁰

In order to test our hypotheses, a set of independent variables was considered. This set represents the operationalization of the three fundamental mechanisms presented. To test the first hypothesis, we included the variable "trust in others" (0=can't be too careful; 1=most people can be trusted) in the model. Regarding our second hypothesis, we included three independent variables: one concerning the union affiliation status of the respondents (*experience-based mechanism*), and two concerning their socio-economic characteristics (i.e. occupation and family income) (*calculus-based mechanism*). In the first case, value 1 corresponds to union member and 0 to non-union member. With regard to occupation, we aggregated all the various categories relating to the respondent's current main occupation (or last occupation, if he or she had worked before the interview, but was unemployed at the time of the interview) into three main categories: professional or employer; white-collar worker; and blue-collar worker. We used household income as another fundamental piece of information to assess the respondents' socio-economic profile (a ten-step scale: 1=up to \$12,500 per year; 10=\$150,000 and over per year).

The following variables were the best available proxy for measuring the impact of the *identity-based* mechanism in the two regions. More specifically, with regard to the third hypothesis, we chose the five most relevant variables related to political values. First, we evaluated the impact of the respondents' confidence in political parties (0="Not very much" or "None at all"; 1="A great deal" or "Quite a lot"). Second, in order to assess the relationship between a specific party leaning and the respondents' confidence in unions, we took note of the answers to the question: "If there were a national election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?" With regard to this variable, we compared the effect of the expressed intention to vote for the NDP or the BQ to that of an expressed

preference for any of the other parties. We also included three other control variables in the model to assess the impact on the respondents' confidence in unions of their fundamental political values along a progressive-conservative continuum: their self-positioning on an ideological scale (ten-step scale: 1=extreme left; 10=extreme right), the acceptability of income inequality (ten-step scale: 1=income should be made more equal; 10=larger income differences are needed as an incentive), and lastly, their preference for private or state ownership (ten-step scale: 1=private ownership of business should be increased; 10=government ownership of business should be increased). To test the fourth hypothesis, we introduced three variables assessing the level of citizenship identity, represented by the respondents' answers to the items: "I see myself as a citizen of North America"; "I see myself as a citizen of Canada"; and "I see myself as a citizen of my province." The answers to all three items were recoded as dichotomous variables (0="disagree" or "strongly disagree"; 1="strongly agree" or "agree").

When assessing the effect of this set of independent variables on confidence in unions, we also controlled for the traditionally most relevant socio-demographic variables: age, gender, highest level of education attained by the respondents and, specific to Canadian society, the language spoken at home (0=French; 1=English).

In order to determine whether Canada can be considered a largely undifferentiated country with regard to confidence in unions, we applied the same model to both the province of Quebec on the one hand, and the other Canadian provinces on the other hand. Similar results would suggest that the underpinning determinants of confidence in unions are similar. Since the dependent variable was considered to be dichotomous, we applied a binary logistic regression model (Kleinbaum and Klein, 2002). Moreover, in order to more clearly bring out the relevance of each set of variables, the regression model introduced the different blocs of variables in four steps.

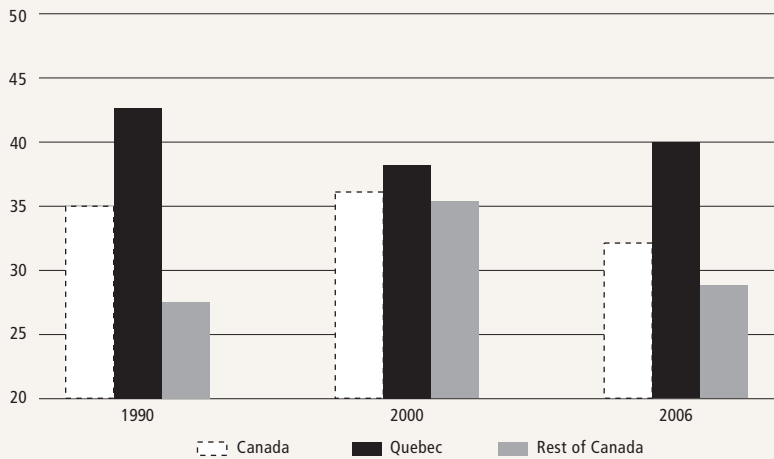
Results

Descriptive analyses

The bar chart in Figure 1 displays the percentage of people who expressed confidence in unions. Three levels of confidence in unions are shown: a comprehensive one for all of Canada (dotted line, white bars) and, considering the province where the interview was conducted, one for Quebec (black bars) and one for the other Canadian provinces (grey bars).

If we consider only the comprehensive national level, it would appear that confidence in unions in Canada has been almost flat over time, with a slight decrease in the last wave. However, this overall trend hides important regional

FIGURE 1
Percentage of Citizens who Expressed Confidence in Unions in Canada, Quebec and the Other Canadian Provinces



differences. First, in all three waves, a higher percentage of citizens in Quebec (particularly in 1990 and in 2006) trusted unions compared to citizens in the other Canadian provinces. Second, the level of confidence in unions appears to have been more stable among Quebec citizens than among citizens in the rest of Canada, through all three waves of the WVS. Third, Quebec and the other Canadian provinces showed opposite trends over time. From the 1990 wave to the 2000 wave, the number of people who expressed confidence in unions decreased in Quebec and increased in the rest of Canada. On the other hand, from 2000 to 2006, this number increased in Quebec and decreased in the rest of Canada. More specifically, in 1990, there was almost a 15% gap in confidence in favour of Quebec. By 2000, the two trends had converged and the gap was reduced to 3%. However, the divergence was clear again in 2006, when 40% of Quebec respondents expressed confidence in unions, whereas only 28% of respondents in the rest of Canada expressed such confidence.

This finding regarding the different levels of confidence in unions is important. However, further analysis was needed to ascertain whether or not the determinants of confidence in unions were similar in Quebec and the rest of the Canada.

As a first step, we analyzed the distribution of individuals who expressed confidence in unions according to the independent variables included in the model and the two regions under study (i.e. Quebec versus the rest of Canada). The empirical evidence suggests a few notable differences. With regard to the work-

TABLE 1
Confidence in Unions by Region and Independent Variable

		Quebec	Rest of Canada	
Trust in others		34.2	42.4	
Working class profile	Union member	34.7	36.7	
	<i>Income scale</i>	1st-3rd step	28.2	30.8
		4th-7th step	52.8	42.05
		8th-10th step	19	27.15
	White-collar worker	16.8	11.7	
	Blue-collar worker	39.5	26.1	
Political values	Confidence in political parties	32.8	35.8	
	NDP	4.8	30.1	
	BQ	30.9	0.4	
	<i>Left-right</i>	1st-3rd	22.4	15.6
		4th-7th	70.7	67.6
		8th-10th	6.9	16.8
	<i>Income inequality</i>	1st-3rd	30.4	27.1
		4th-7th	48.1	48.5
		8th-10th	21.5	24.4
	<i>Private-state ownership</i>	1st-3rd	21	36.9
		4th-7th	51.9	50.2
8th-10th		27.1	12.9	
Geographical identity	See myself as North American	79.6	88.4	
	See myself as Canadian	86.8	98.9	
	See myself as (citizen of Province)	95.3	98.5	
Socio-demographic characteristics	<i>Gender</i>	Male	37.2	45.7
		Female	62.8	53.7
	<i>Age</i>	15-29	25.4	23.5
		30-49	38.9	32.6
		50 and over	35.8	43.9
	<i>Education</i>	Lower	21.5	25.4
		Middle	48.2	49.5
		Upper	20.4	25.2
	<i>Language spoken at home</i>	French	97.7	5
		English	2.3	95

Source: World Values Survey

Note: entries are percentage values

ing class profile variables, we noted that, in Quebec, there was a major concentration of blue-collar workers among the individuals who expressed confidence in unions. Moreover, with regard to political values, in Quebec, there was a stronger concentration of more left-leaning citizens among individuals who expressed confidence in unions whereas, in the rest of Canada, there was a stronger concentration of citizens who were in favour of private ownership among those who expressed such confidence. Not surprisingly, the percentage distribution of citizens who expressed confidence in unions in Canada and felt close to the NDP mirrored that of citizens who expressed such confidence in Quebec and felt close to the BQ. Also, Quebecers had a slightly lower (around -10%) sense of belonging to North America and Canada, although the corresponding percentages were nonetheless quite high.

The next step was to examine, for both regions, the effect of the interaction between the set of social and political variables considered in explaining confidence in unions.

The determinants of confidence: multivariate analysis

The application of the defined model to Quebec (Table 2) on the one hand, and the other Canadian provinces (Table 3) on the other hand, brought out both similarities and contrasts in the findings.

We developed the binary logistic regression in four steps. The order of the inserted groups of variables was theoretically driven: we started with the groups related to the three mechanisms largely discussed in the literature on confidence, then the variables specific to Quebec, and lastly, the sociodemographic control variables. First, in both regions, the greatest contribution to explaining the variance in confidence in unions was largely linked to the political variables (Pseudo R-square increased by more than two times in Quebec and by almost four times in the rest of Canada).¹¹ Other similarities were also revealed, with some variables being highly significant at each step of the regression and across both regions under study.

Second, some variables were significant for one region but not the other region. This finding showed that the difference between Quebec and the other Canadian provinces was not just a matter of a gap in the percentage of people who expressed confidence in unions but that, within each region, the underlying determinants of confidence in unions were also dissimilar. In many cases, a variable was significant in one region but not the other and vice versa.

Hypothesis 1 was not confirmed since the effect of “trust in others” on confidence in unions was not significant in Quebec or in the rest of Canada.

With regard to the variables referring to the *calculus-based* mechanism, it should be noted that the data on the respondent’s occupation did not contribute

TABLE 2
Confidence in Unions in Quebec

	Exp(B)	E.S. (B)	Sign (B)	Exp(B)	E.S. (B)	Sign (B)	Exp(B)	E.S. (B)	Sign (B)	Exp(B)	E.S. (B)	Sign (B)
Quebec												
Trust in others	1.439	(0.223)		0.856	(0.28)		0.868	(0.285)		0.591	(0.109)	
Union member	3.687	(0.262)	****	3.098	(0.311)	****	3.032	(0.321)	***	3.679	(0.362)	****
Job (0=employee/manager)												
White-collar worker	1.408	(0.357)		1.186	(0.435)		1.139	(0.451)		1.848	(0.504)	
Blue-collar worker	1.568	(0.267)	*	1.326	(0.322)		1.345	(0.326)		1.791	(0.377)	
Household income	0.896	(0.045)	**	0.888	(0.056)	**	0.881	(0.057)	**	0.813	(0.7)	**
Confidence in political parties												
Party preference (0=other choice)												
NDP				0.873	(0.531)		0.778	(0.554)		0.7	(0.641)	
BQ				1.777	(0.268)	**	1.864	(0.277)		1.636	(0.492)	
Left-right				0.737	(0.086)	****	0.746	(0.087)	***	0.759	(0.098)	***
Income: equal - different				0.885	(0.054)	**	0.893	(0.056)	**	0.891	(0.061)	*
Ownership: private - state				0.997	(0.064)		0.992	(0.065)		0.945	(0.071)	
See myself as North American							1.507	(0.353)		1.311	(0.386)	
See myself as Canadian							0.828	(0.458)		1.094	(0.486)	
See myself as a Quebecker							0.554	(0.757)		0.505	(0.813)	
Gender										1.125	(0.311)	
Age										0.993	(0.01)	
Education										1.378	(0.1)	***
Language spoken at home (0=F, 1=E)										0.361	(0.708)	
R-squared	0.113			0.243			0.249			0.316		
N	401			315			310			284		

Note: * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.001; **** p<0.0001; Source: World Values Survey (5th Wave)

to explaining the variance in confidence in unions in Table 2 or Table 3, at least in the final step of the regression model. However, the impact of household income did. In fact, in Quebec, the wealthier individuals reported themselves to be, the less likely they were to have confidence in unions. However, in the rest of Canada, this relationship was non-significant in the fourth step. On the other hand, the *experience-based* mechanism proved to be highly significant in both regions. Indeed, individuals who were union members were substantially and significantly more likely to trust in unions than non-union members. Hypothesis 2 was thus partially confirmed, since the relevance of union membership in both regions was positively confirmed (Hypothesis 2b), while the working class profile of respondents was only partially significant in Quebec (Hypothesis 2a).

The *identity-based* mechanism proved to be relevant. Indeed, similarities and contrasts in the findings across the two regions emerged with regard to the effects of the political variables. In fact, in both Quebec and the rest of Canada, citizens who expressed confidence in political parties were more likely to trust unions than individuals who did not have confidence in political parties. Hypothesis 3a was thus confirmed. Aside from this common finding, the other findings were opposite across the two regions. In fact, individuals in the rest of Canada who stated that their party of choice was the NDP were more likely to have confidence in unions. In Quebec, the intention to vote for the NDP was not significant but being in favour of the BQ was also not significant in the last step of the regression. These results thus confirm Hypothesis 3b, which predicted that the fact of supporting the NDP in the rest of Canada would have a stronger effect on the propensity of individuals to have confidence in unions than the fact of supporting the BQ in Quebec. Moreover, the greater the extent to which citizens in Quebec identified with ideological positions leaning to the extreme left and with the statement “income should made be more equal,” the more likely they were to have a “great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in unions. These two relationships were not found in the rest of Canada in any of the steps. On the other hand, respondents in the other Canadian provinces who were more in favour of public ownership of business were more likely to have confidence in unions. This relationship was not significant in Quebec.

The contribution to the explanatory model of the variables related to the respondents’ perceptions regarding their identity as North Americans, Canadians or citizens of their province was marginal. It should be noted that none of these three variables was significant in Quebec whereas, in the rest of Canada, individuals who “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the statement “I see myself as a citizen of North America” were 1.5 times more likely to have confidence in unions than those who disagreed with this statement. Hypothesis 4 was thus not confirmed.

TABLE 3
Confidence in Unions in the Rest of Canada

Quebec	Exp(B)	E.S. (B)	Sign (B)	Exp(B)	E.S. (B)	Sign (B)	Exp(B)	E.S. (B)	Sign (B)	Exp(B)	E.S. (B)	Sign (B)
Trust in others	1.111	(0.131)		0.828	(0.161)		0.797	(0.163)		0.895	(0.895)	
Union member	1.997	(0.142)	****	1.68	(0.171)	***	1.665	(0.173)	***	1.877	(0.181)	****
Job (0=employee/manager)												
White-collar worker	0.932	(0.2)		0.943	(0.241)		0.947	(0.242)		0.931	(0.251)	
Blue-collar worker	1.409	(0.154)	**	1.39	(0.189)	*	1.435	(0.19)	*	1.351	(0.206)	
Household income	0.916	(0.023)	****	0.957	(0.028)		0.96	(0.028)		0.955		
Confidence in political parties				3.23	(0.174)	****	3.262	(0.177)	****	3.164	(0.182)	****
Party preference (0=other choice)												
NDP				2.591	(0.183)	****	2.574	(0.184)	****	2.544	(0.189)	****
BQ				omitted			omitted			omitted		
Left-right				0.963	(0.04)		0.962	(0.04)		0.97	(0.041)	
Income: equal - different				0.964	(0.032)		0.959	(0.032)		0.959	(0.033)	
Ownership: private - state				1.08	(0.034)	**	1.082	(0.034)	**	1.077	(0.035)	**
See myself as North American							1.364	(0.22)		1.489	(0.23)	*
See myself as Canadian							2.245	(0.81)		3.392	(0.938)	
See myself as (citizen of Province)							1.065	(0.528)		1.376	(0.599)	
Gender										0.907	(0.161)	
Age										0.994	(0.005)	
Education										0.953	(0.048)	
Language spoken at home (0=F, 1=E)										0.771	(0.541)	
R-squared	0.047			0.172			0.178			0.182		
N	1194			923			915			868		

Note: * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01; **** p<0.001; Source: World Values Survey (5th Wave)

Lastly, confidence in unions did not appear to be mainly determined by socio-demographic variables. In fact, the impact of gender, age and the language spoken at home was relevant in neither Quebec nor the other Canadian provinces. One difference, however, was notable: the respondent's education level was not significant in the rest of Canada but, *ceteris paribus*, was significant and positively related to confidence in unions in Quebec. In other words, the higher the level of education of individuals in Quebec, the more likely they were to have confidence in unions.

Unravelling similarities and contrasts in the findings

The descriptive analyses revealed, first of all, that Quebecers had more “good reasons” to trust unions in all three years considered in this study. Second, the *experience-based* (i.e. membership) and, to a lesser extent, *identity-based* (i.e. values sharing) mechanisms demonstrated their power to explain confidence in unions. The *calculus-based* mechanism however had less explanatory power, especially in the rest of Canada.

This finding regarding the positive impact of union membership on attitudes towards unions confirmed the findings of previous studies (Kochan, 1979; Givan and Hipp, 2012). This finding is understandable since employees who work in unionized units can get to know union exponents personally and experience the institutional performance of unions directly, especially with regard to collective bargaining outcomes. The perception on the part of union members that they have better working conditions and greater job security than their non-unionized counterparts can be an important experience that structures a cost-benefit evaluation, leading union members to trust unions. This finding can be further explained in light of the fact that, since the 1980s (Heshizer, 1985), public opinion surveys have indicated that some non-union members perceive unions as an institution pursuing goals that benefit members only.

It is not a new finding that individuals who are dissatisfied with wages look at unions more favourably, for instrumental reasons (Turner and D'Art, 2012; Flavin *et al.*, 2010). One explanatory factor behind this situation may lie in the relatively broad field of union action in Quebec. In fact, particularly in Quebec, unions act not only at plant level but also at the provincial level, that is, for the large number of public employees and the numerous workers in the construction sector. Unions have also actively lobbied the provincial government and “internally participated” in many government bodies (e.g. boards, commissions, agencies and Crown corporations) to promote the interests of the less fortunate in society. Quebecers may thus have more widely perceived the influence of unions, at different levels, in promoting a more equitable society and may thus have deduced

that unions have a positive effect on their welfare. Second, in Quebec, due to competition among the different unions, union actions and goals are traditionally more staged than in the rest of Canada (Thwaites, 2007; Gagnon, 1994). This may have reinforced a greater instrumental appreciation of unions among individuals with a lower income, based on a distant relationship structured on opinions on the basis of mass-media information.

All across Canada, respondents perceived some commonalities between the political sphere—of which political parties are one of the main institutions—and unions. However, when we move away from a general reference to parties and consider specific party identities, the findings are again different between Quebec and the rest of Canada. In the rest of Canada, individuals who stated an intention to vote for the NDP appeared to feel that they shared strong socio-democratic values with unions, a fundamental element for trusting unions based on a shared identity. On the contrary, Quebecers who expressed an intention to vote for the NDP or the BQ were not significantly more confident in unions. Public opinion among Quebecers reflected the fact that unionism in Quebec has not been marked by a structural link with political parties. In fact, the NDP has never been officially supported by unions in Quebec and the relationship between unions and the BQ, an independence-oriented party, has become blurred over time, especially since the 1995 referendum. Quebecers thus did not perceive clear commonalities between the values of unions and those of the BQ in 2006.

However, in Quebec, given the more loosely defined relationship between political parties and unions, a more progressive self-positioning on the ideological scale and approval of less unequal incomes were more important factors. First, more progressive individuals are more likely to trust institutions that have tended to counterbalance the intrinsically asymmetrical relationship between the seller and the buyer of labour since their origins. Second, a reference to the model of society that emerged during the “Quiet Revolution” and has been embodied by unions over time, albeit with decreasing radicalism, could help shed some light on the significance of these two variables. Thus, in addition to the usual redistributive role played by unions in the labour market, unions in Quebec have promoted a stronger government role in order to ensure more generous welfare measures and a generally more equitable society.

The fact of self-identifying as a citizen of North America, Canada or their province of residence did not generally contribute to explaining the respondents’ propensity to trust unions, in Quebec or the rest of Canada. However, some findings in this regard stood out. Although weakly significant, in the rest of Canada there was an underlying link between confidence in unions and a sense of North American identity. This link can be better understood in light of the fact that the

CLC has historically maintained structural links with the AFL-CIO and that several unions in the rest of Canada have quite strong links with their U.S. counterparts or cross-country sector associations. This may have influenced respondents in this region. On the contrary, in Quebec, since the 1960s, unions have moved in the opposite direction. In fact, they have emphasized their provincial identity and independence from the rest of Canada and North America. In any case, it is important to note that, for Quebecers, the fact of considering themselves to be citizens of Quebec did not have a significant impact on the likelihood that they would express confidence in unions. Some considerations could help explain this quite unexpected finding. Although unions have historically been among the major protagonists promoting Quebec identity, they have not embodied total, consistent and unconditional support for Quebec's separation from Canada. This may have raised some enduring feelings of mistrust towards unions among some individuals who wish to strongly affirm Quebec's identity through independence. Moreover, it should be pointed out that, in more recent years, Quebec separatism has enjoyed less public support, a fact that was also evident in the downturn of the BQ federal electoral results (Clarke *et al.*, 2011). Lastly, it should also be noted that the sovereigntist movement in Quebec enjoys support from voters across the political spectrum, including, notably, those with more conservative leanings, who are thus far from espousing the progressive economic goals of unions.

Contrary to the findings of several studies on social attitudes, the socio-demographic control variables did not have a relevant impact in Quebec or the rest of Canada. The respondents' age was not relevant. Moreover, the gender difference was not significant with regard to confidence in unions, confirming previous findings (Rouillard, 2008). However, an opposite finding regarding the socio-demographic control variables did emerge for the two regions. Education was significant in Quebec but not in the rest of Canada. Moreover, the finding for Quebec—i.e. the higher the level of education attained, the greater the likelihood that the respondent would express confidence in unions—seems counterintuitive given that an income progression usually accompanies a rise in education. This finding can be partially explained in terms of the values that emerged from the Quiet Revolution, their subsequent reverberations over time, and union involvement in them. Over time, these values have found support among many progressive intellectuals and more educated citizens in Quebec—leading to an expression of confidence in unions that appears to be primarily identity-based.

Thus, confidence in unions in Quebec may benefit from double-edged support: from below, among the lower income classes, and from above, among more educated individuals. This may help explain the higher level of confidence in unions in Quebec compared to the rest of Canada.

Conclusion

In order to analyze confidence in unions—hitherto unexplored in the industrial relations debate—we drew on the confidence and union support debates. Three explanatory mechanisms (*calculus-based*, *experience-based*, and *identity-based mechanisms*) appeared to be the most significant. We tested their importance, comparing Quebec with the rest of Canada. *The experience-based* (i.e. union membership) and *identity-based* (i.e. values sharing) mechanisms demonstrated stronger explanatory power, whereas the *calculus-based* (i.e. lower socio-economic status) mechanism had a marginal explanatory effect, especially in the rest of Canada. This analysis brought out two main findings: in all three waves of the WVS considered, the level of confidence in unions was higher in Quebec than in the rest of Canada; moreover, in 2006, both similarities and contrasts in the findings emerged with regard to the determinants of confidence in unions in these two regions. As for the similarities, all across Canada, involvement in politics and the fact of being unionized had a positive effect on the respondents' propensity to have confidence in unions. These were key determinants, especially given that, across the country, the socio-demographic profile of the respondents was not particularly relevant. As for the differences, our study confirmed that the relationship between the NDP and unions was structural in the rest of Canada, whereas the relationship between the BQ and unions in Quebec was looser. In Quebec only, reporting a low income and leaning to the left ideologically were significant factors. However, an unexpected finding was the lack of evidence of a positive impact of the perception of "being a Quebecker" on the expression of confidence in unions.

Our analyses explored confidence in unions, highlighted and tested three possible explanatory models, and produced important insights concerning differences between Quebec and the rest of Canada. However, our research has two main limitations. First, the proposed explanatory model of confidence in unions was limited to 2006, due to data availability. Future research should replicate our model using future WVS waves (or general social surveys containing the same variables) so as to provide more updated analyses. Moreover, scholars should assess the degree of consistency in the public's confidence in unions over time in these two regions. Due to the importance of the identity-based mechanism, particular attention should be given to the impact of the different federal political landscape that emerged after the 2011 election, especially in Quebec (notably, the collapse of the Bloc Québécois and the dramatic rise of the NDP).

Second, this article is based on an inter-regional analytical perspective comparing Quebec and the rest of Canada. While this perspective fits into a rich social science research tradition in Canada (e.g. Nadeau and Seckin, 2010;

Bothwell, 1995), it nevertheless presents some limitations that should be addressed in future studies. In fact, aggregating data on a regional basis always raises the question of the homogeneity of the areas under study in social and political terms, and, in particular, in terms of the specific characteristics of the industrial relations systems in place. In this sense, while this article, in line with many other studies, is based on the assumption that Quebec presents specific features that distinguish it from the rest of Canada, it nevertheless does not presume that there is complete homogeneity among the other Canadian provinces. One avenue, among others, that could be explored to unfold the rest of Canada is that suggested by Thompson *et al.* (2003), who distinguish two major regional spaces, one consisting of Canadian provinces that adhere to a “confirmed system” of industrial relations, wherein labour institutions, including unions, play a greater role, and the other consisting of Canadian provinces that come under a “dependent system” of industrial relations, in which these institutions play a less significant role.

Notes

- 1 In the wide debate on “trust,” this type of trust is referred to as “generalized trust.” In public opinion surveys, “generalized trust” is surveyed across societies using the question “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?”
- 2 It should be noted that Canadian employees only gain access to union representation following official recognition of majority support for a union in the company or a segment of the company. This majority union, through a specialized tribunal, is thus given a monopoly over the collective representation of employees for the purposes of negotiating a collective agreement regarding their effective conditions of employment and their application (Murray and Verge, 1999).
- 3 Due to the constraints of the World Values Survey data, Frangi *et al.* (2014) used lower income and blue-collar occupation as the best possible proxy for a “working class profile.”
- 4 These laws include, in particular, an automatic union certification system following the signing of membership cards, strike regulations which limit the right to vote for strike action to card-carrying union members and a law prohibiting employers from using strikebreakers (Bélanger and Trudeau, 2007).
- 5 For example, following the failure of the Meech Lake Accord in June 1990, the three main labour confederations in Quebec lent their support to the sovereignist cause, which brought them closer to both the Parti Québécois (PQ) and a new nationalist party that emerged on the federal scene, namely, the Bloc Québécois (BQ).
- 6 The “Quiet Revolution” refers to a period in the recent history of Quebec, mainly in the 1960’s, during which the Catholic Church and the state underwent a separation in Quebec, and a new “national” Quebec identity was constructed, which moved away from the traditional French Canadian nationalism to propose important social reforms and a stronger welfare state.

- 7 The World Values Survey (www.worldvaluessurvey.org) is a database on socio-political attitudes and values, implemented by a worldwide network (in more than 50 countries) of social science researchers.
- 8 Unfortunately, more recent data (after 2006) are not available for Canada.
- 9 The three territories of Canada (i.e. *Northwest Territories*, *Nunavut*, and *Yukon*) are not included in the WVS. However, the population of these territories is very small and union activities are limited. All Canadian provinces are represented in the sample proportionally to their population. Accordingly, respondents were more numerous in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. For further information on the sampling techniques used by the WVS, see: <http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSDocumentation.jsp>.
- 10 Running the proposed regression models with the variables in four categories or recoded as dichotomous variables had a trivial influence on the results. Thus, for the sake of simplicity, we chose the dichotomous recoded variables.
- 11 We also ran the model inserting the political group of variables last. We consistently found that these variables had a high impact on the model performance in terms of explaining the variance in the dependent variable.

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SUMMARY

Expressing Confidence in Unions in Quebec and the Other Canadian Provinces: Similarities and Contrasts in Findings

This article examines changes in levels of confidence in unions and proposes an intra-national comparison between Quebec and the rest of Canada based on the analysis of the three most recent waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) database, of which Canada is part (i.e. 1990, 2000, 2006). After noting differences in the trends of confidence in unions in these two regions, we applied the same logistic regression model to both regions, based on the 2006 WVS wave, in order to bring out the determinants of the propensity of individuals to express confidence in unions. The results show both similarities and differences between the two regions. As for the similarities between Quebec and the rest of Canada, it should be noted that involvement in politics and the fact of being unionized had a positive effect on the respondents' propensity to have confidence in unions whereas most of the socio-demographic variables had no significant effects. As for the differences, the fact of reporting a higher income had a significant negative impact in Quebec, but was not significant in the rest of Canada. The fact of supporting the NDP in the rest of Canada had a more structuring effect on the propensity of individuals to have

confidence in unions than the fact of supporting the BQ in Quebec. Moreover, the greater the extent to which citizens in Quebec identified with left-leaning ideological positions, the more likely they were to have confidence in unions. Finally, the respondent's level of education was not significant in the rest of Canada but, *ceteris paribus*, was highly significant and positively related to confidence in unions in Quebec.

KEYWORDS: trade unions, confidence, public opinion, Quebec, Canada.

RÉSUMÉ

Niveaux de confiance envers les syndicats au Québec et dans les autres provinces canadiennes : similitudes et différences

En se basant sur les données issues des trois plus récentes vagues du *World Value Survey (WVS)* — c'est-à-dire 1990, 2000, 2006 —, cet article examine l'évolution des niveaux de confiance envers les syndicats en comparant le Québec au reste du Canada. Après avoir constaté l'évolution contrastée des taux de confiance envers l'acteur syndical dans ces deux régions, nous appliquons le même modèle de régression logistique pour les deux régions en partant des données du *WVS* de 2006, de manière à mettre en évidence les déterminants de la propension individuelle à faire confiance aux syndicats. Les résultats de notre recherche mettent en exergue à la fois les similitudes et les différences entre les deux régions. Concernant les similarités entre le Québec et le reste du Canada, notons que l'engagement dans la sphère politique ainsi que le fait d'être syndiqué ont un effet positif sur la propension des individus à faire confiance aux syndicats, tandis que la plupart des variables sociodémographiques n'ont pas d'effets importants, cela tant dans une région que dans l'autre. Concernant les différences, lorsque que les répondants déclarent avoir d'importants revenus, l'on remarque un impact négatif significatif sur leur propension à faire confiance aux syndicats au Québec, tandis que l'effet de cette variable n'est pas significatif dans le reste du Canada. L'appui accordé au NPD a également un effet positif structurant sur la propension des individus du reste du Canada à faire confiance aux syndicats, alors que cela n'est pas le cas au Québec chez ceux qui appuient le Bloc Québécois. En outre, plus les citoyens du Québec s'identifient à des positions idéologiques de gauche, plus ils sont susceptibles d'accorder leur confiance au mouvement syndical. Enfin, l'effet du niveau d'éducation des individus sur la confiance envers les syndicats n'est pas significatif dans le reste du Canada, tandis que cette variable a un effet significatif et s'avère positivement liée à la confiance envers les syndicats au Québec.

MOTS-CLÉS: organisations syndicales, confiance, opinion publique, Québec, Canada.

RESUMEN

Expresión de la confianza en los sindicatos de Quebec y de otras provincias canadienses: similitudes y contrastes de los resultados

Este artículo estudia los cambios de los niveles de confianza en los sindicatos y propone una comparación intra-nacional entre Quebec y el resto de Canadá basado en el análisis de las tres más recientes versiones de la base de datos *World Values survey* (WVS), al cual Canadá participa (1990, 2000, 2006). Después de notar las diferencias en las tendencias de confianza en los sindicatos en estas dos regiones, nosotros aplicamos el mismo modelo de regresión logística a ambas regiones, utilizando los datos WVS 2006, de manera a resaltar los determinantes de la propensión de los individuos a expresar su confianza en los sindicatos. Los resultados muestran similitudes y diferencias entre las dos regiones. Entre las similitudes entre Quebec y el resto de Canadá, se debe enfatizar que la implicación en políticas y el hecho de ser sindicalizado tiene un efecto positivo en la propensión de los participantes a tener confianza en los sindicatos mientras que la mayoría de variables sociodemográficas no tienen efectos significativos. En cuanto a las diferencias, el hecho de declarar un nivel de ingreso más elevado tiene un impacto negativo significativo en Quebec, pero no fue significativo en el resto de Canadá. El hecho de apoyar el Partido neo democrático en el resto de Canadá tuvo un efecto más estructurante en la propensión de los individuos a tener confianza en los sindicatos que el hecho de apoyar el Bloque quebequense en Quebec. Más aún, más los ciudadanos del Quebec se identifican a posiciones ideológicas de izquierda, más ellos son susceptibles de tener confianza en el movimiento sindical. Por último, el efecto del nivel de educación de los individuos sobre la confianza en los sindicatos se revela poco significativo en el resto del Canadá, mientras que esta variable tuvo un efecto significativo y positivamente asociado a la confianza en los sindicatos en el Quebec.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Organizaciones sindicales, confianza, opinión pública, Quebec, Canadá.