

WHY DOESN'T CANADA HAVE AN AMERICAN-STYLE CHRISTIAN RIGHT? A COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF EVANGELICAL SUBCULTURAL IDENTITY

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Abstract. Political commentators have asked if Canada could see the rise of an American-style “Culture War,” where evangelical Protestants are rallied by moral issues to support the Conservative party. This paper argues that even though Canadian evangelicals are just as morally conservative as American evangelicals, they work from very different understandings about the relationship between religious morality and national identity. We predict that rank-and-file Canadian evangelicals will be less responsive to political mobilization around moral issues because they construct their *subcultural identity* differently than American evangelicals. This paper uses a multimethod strategy to analyze the political impact of evangelical subcultural identity, a cultural mechanism that mediates the political effects of moral attitudes. We illustrate this multidimensional concept of subcultural identity through survey data, in-depth interviews, and comparative-historical data. This comparative framework for studying subcultural identity helps explain why the content of evangelical Protestant morality becomes linked to political behaviour in some national contexts and historical periods but not others.

Résumé. Les commentateurs politiques se sont demandé si le Canada pouvait voir l'émergence d'une « Guerre culturelle » de type américain, qui verrait les

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Protestants évangéliques soutenir le parti conservateur sur la base de questions morales. Dans cet article, nous soutenons que bien que les évangéliques canadiens soient tout aussi conservateur sur le plan moral que les évangéliques américains, ils comprennent de façon très différente la relation entre morale religieuse et identité nationale. Nous prédisons que la base des évangéliques canadiens est peu susceptible de répondre à une mobilisation politique sur des questions morales, parce que son identité sous-culturelle est construite différemment de celle des évangéliques américains. Cet article mets en œuvre des méthodes croisées pour analyser l'impact politique de la sous culture évangélique, comprise comme un mécanisme culturel qui influence l'effet politique de dispositions morales. Nous illustrons le concept multidimensionnel d'identité sous-culturelle en mobilisant des données quantitatives, des entretiens approfondis, et des données historiques comparatives. Une utilisation comparative du cadre de l'identité sous culturelle permet d'expliquer pourquoi le contenu de la morale évangélique protestante n'affecte les comportements politiques que dans certains contextes nationaux et périodes historiques.

KEY WORDS: Religion and politics; evangelicals; Conservative Protestants; Canada and the United States; subcultural identity; nationalism

INTRODUCTION

Canadians often define themselves as “un-American,” a diverse people joined by their common opposition to American values. The influence of religion in politics is an area in which these differences appear most stark: American politicians openly espouse their religious beliefs, whereas Canadian politicians generally avoid discussing religion. While the salience of religion in politics has grown in the United States over the past few decades (McGirr 2001; Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2004; Nesmith 1994; Smith 2000; Wilcox and Larson 2006; Wuthnow 1989), it has become ever more taboo in Canada, particularly after the landmark failure of the Reform Movement of the late 1990s, when western Canadian evangelical politicians such as Preston Manning and Stockwell Day were severely punished by voters for referencing religious issues in their campaigns (Hexham 2002).

This difference was dramatized in 2004, when the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that same-sex marriage legislation was constitutional under the Charter and under the jurisdiction of the federal Parliament. After Conservatives mounted a failed opposition to same-sex marriage legislation, the Liberal Party attacked Stephen Harper and his party as right-wing extremists in the 2004 election (Clarke et al. 2005). Conservative leader Stephen Harper won a fragile victory in the 2005 election, but only by campaigning on the vague promise to bring same-sex mar-

riage to an open vote while safeguarding the rights of gays and lesbians (Clarke et al. 2006). By comparison, 11 American states banned same-sex marriage in 2004 (Campbell 2007). This period energized US evangelical Christians within the Republican Party coalition (Campbell and Monson, n.d.), but demoralized Canadian evangelical groups like Focus on the Family Canada, who failed to influence public debate or defeat same-sex marriage (Smith 2008).

In Lipset's account of the "continental divide," he argues that the United States has been predisposed since the American Revolution towards the populist, moralistic values of evangelicalism, while Canada has been predisposed to more hierarchical, collectivist values in politics and religion (Lipset 1990). Lipset's account ignores the fact that Canadian evangelicals have a long history of political engagement (Lyon and Van Die 2000; Van Die 2001). For example, Alberta's Social Credit party was founded by Fundamentalist radio preacher "Bible Bill" Aberhart (Elliott and Miller 1987), while the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation was founded by Baptist minister Tommy Douglas, also known as the father of medicare (McLeod and McLeod 1987; Shackleton 1975; Stewart 2003). During the same period, the American "New Deal" coalition was comparatively secular.

Given this complex reality, could Canada see the emergence of a "culture war" around issues of abortion, homosexuality, and the role of religion in public life? Religion is still an important predictor of partisanship and voting in Canadian elections (Guth and Fraser 2001), and Canada's current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, identifies as an evangelical Christian (Mackey 2005). While "moral issues" have not become a basis of partisan conflict, the Canadian public is privately divided in their attitudes toward abortion and gay marriage (Haussman 2005; Tatalovich 1997). Evangelical Protestants are a smaller minority in Canada (generally estimated to compose 10–12% of the total population, compared to 25–33% in the United States.) Since the 1980s, Canadian evangelicals have mobilized in political interest groups to fight legal abortion and gay rights in the courts and in legislation (Hoover and den Dulk 2004). Would Canadian evangelicals readily vote in a bloc if the Conservative party favoured their moral concerns? Or are they inherently less driven by issues like abortion and gay marriage than American evangelicals?

This is related to a larger puzzle in the study of religion and politics: why does evangelicalism have such different political consequences over time and across national contexts? The distinctive power of religion in political life arguably flows from beliefs, symbols, and practices that make moral claims to organize and guide human life (Smith 2003a:98). If religious morality is more than epiphenomenal, why does the evan-

gical tradition fuel such diverse political practices in different contexts (Bruce 1998; Hoover 1997; Rawlyk and Noll 1994; Reimer 2003; Soper 1994)? We find that Canadian evangelicals are just as morally conservative as American evangelicals, but they have different understandings about the relationship between religious morality and national identity. Because rank-and-file Canadian evangelicals construct their *subcultural identity* differently than American evangelicals, they are harder to mobilize politically around the “moral issues” of abortion and gay marriage, even though evangelicals in both countries hold the same *attitudes* on these issues. We advance a comparative framework for studying the role of subcultural identity in politics that builds on emerging research on how morally orienting group identities interact with overarching national identities (Brubaker 2006; McFarland and Pals 2005; Muldoon et al. 2007; Shamir and Arian 1999; Simon and Klandermans 2001; Todd 2005).²

This study uses a multimethod strategy to assess the political impact of evangelical subcultural identity. First, quantitative survey data from the late 1990s is used to compare the political attitudes and identities of evangelical Protestants in Canada and the United States. We find that the same moral attitudes have different significance for political preferences in these two nations. This shows the need to better theorize the mechanisms that connect religious identity, moral attitudes, and political behaviour. Second, we draw on qualitative interview data from a small sample of Christian pastors, parishioners, and politicians from the Canadian province of Alberta to show how subcultural identity mediates the relationship between morality and politics. Finally, we examine comparative historical data on the development of evangelical *subcultural identity* in Canada and the United States, to show how the process of identity construction creates different linkages between moral beliefs, religious group life, and political preferences in the two countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing frameworks suggest three ways that religious groups connect to political behaviour for mass publics: 1. Through *religious socialization* in moral attitudes, worldviews, beliefs, or cultural schemas. 2. Through *political mobilization* by social movement activists, advocacy groups, and religious and political elites. 3. Through *social cleavages*, or the

2. For the sake of simplicity, we use the terms “collective identity” and “subcultural identity” interchangeably. “Subcultural identity” is used more commonly in the sociology of religion, so we refer to the broader construct of “collective identity” to engage literatures in social movement research, social psychology, and anthropology.

path-dependent ways that historical religious divisions structure the development of party competition in a democracy. However, none of these three frameworks solve a central puzzle: if the moral content of a religious tradition affects political behaviour, why do these effects vary so dramatically across historical periods and national contexts? Below, we summarize these three frameworks and show how they leave this puzzle unsolved.

1 Religious Socialization

Much research on evangelicals and politics assumes a direct correspondence between religious beliefs and political preferences: political preferences are rooted in evangelical theology, worldview, and cultural repertoires. For example, Hunter has famously argued that American politics are locked in a “culture war” between “orthodox” and “modernist” moral visions. In this account, evangelicals increasingly support the Republican party because they subscribe to an “orthodox” worldview that privileges transcendent truth and individual responsibility, while Democrats subscribe to a “modernist” worldview that privileges the individual as the arbiter of truth and puts greater responsibility on the collectivity (Hunter 1991; 1994). Other scholars argue that white evangelicals draw on a cultural repertoire that makes it hard to think in terms of communal responsibility instead of individual responsibility, because their theology of salvation focuses on personal relationships and the choice to accept or reject Christ as one’s personal saviour (Emerson and Smith 2000). This moral individualism differentiates them from the moral communalism of mainline Protestants and Catholics, who sustain teachings about social justice and collective responsibility (Barker and Carman 2000; Hall 2005; Hart 1992).

However, public opinion research suggests two problems with assuming any natural correspondence between religious beliefs and political preferences. First, the US general public does not appear to be polarized around two rival worldviews or systems of moral understanding (Davis and Robinson 1996; Wolfe 1998).³ Second, comparative research shows that evangelical religion is not always correlated with conservative political preferences. For example, Hoover et al. (2002) use a crossnational survey to compare the political attitudes of Canadian and American evangelicals to their nonevangelical counterparts. They find that American and Canadian evangelicals are significantly more opposed

3. A recurring finding in voting research is that only the most politically sophisticated voters make choices in terms of coherent worldviews or political ideologies, and even then inconsistently (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Miller and Shanks 1996).

to abortion and gay rights than comparable nonevangelicals and similar to each other in the strength of their opposition on these moral issues. However, Canadian evangelicals (and nonevangelicals) are more concerned about economic inequality and supportive of government's role in alleviating them than are their American counterparts. The "political socialization" framework fails to explain why the same religious tradition can have such different political consequences in different countries and over time, which makes it difficult to argue that religious beliefs and practices play a causal role in politics. A complete explanation must also identify the historical and institutional processes by which religion and politics are linked for evangelicals.⁴

2 Political Mobilization

A second approach is to look at how the strategic actions of candidates, political parties, and social movements shape which issues and identities get politicized (Schattschneider 1960). There is considerable evidence that the United States' "culture war" is driven by entrepreneurial politicians, religious activists, and advocacy groups, mobilizing the mass public around alleged cultural threats and moral conflict (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2006; Layman 2001; Legee 2002). Interest groups and networks of Christian activists work within evangelical churches to distribute voter guides and emphasize the differences between the two parties on the "moral issues" of abortion and same-sex marriage (Regnerus, Sikkink, and Smith 1999; Wuthnow 1988). Since the 1980s, evangelical pastors have embraced the mandate of a new "civic gospel" to influence public life by giving political cues to their congregation (Beyerlein and Chaves 2003; Guth et al. 2003; Guth et al. 1997; Rozell and Wilcox 1997; Welch et al. 1993).

When parties and candidates emphasize and take distinct stands on policy matters related to morality and religion, the mass public is more likely to connect their religious identity and moral attitudes with their political preferences (Layman 2001; Layman and Green 2005). For example, Andersen and Heath (2003) find that religious participation is associated with morally conservative attitudes in all regions of the United

4. Political scientists describe the linking of religion and politics in terms of horizontal and vertical constraint. *Horizontal constraint* connects different elements of beliefs, values, and policy preferences to one another in a socially constructed package. *Vertical constraint* links people's values, beliefs, identities, and experiences to their policy preferences and evaluation of political parties and candidates, and ultimately to their political behaviour (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Converse 1964). Political sociologists call these "cognitive" and "relational" mechanisms, respectively (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Tilly 2001).

States, Canada, and Britain; however, these attitudes are only associated with distinct voting patterns in the United States.

Why, then, do parties mobilize the electorate around religion in some countries but not others? Demographic differences clearly set parameters for party strategy; Canada has a smaller proportion of evangelicals than the United States, and lacks a regional stronghold like the South. Moreover, the median voter in the United States is more religious and morally conservative than in Canada (Grab and Curtis 2005). However, Layman and Carsey argue that these strategic calculations do not determine whether or not new “moral issues” get put on a party’s agenda; rather, party activists drive polarization around new issues. While small groups of evangelical activists have tried to get moral issues onto party platforms in both the United States and Canada, these activists have been helped or hindered by different institutional rules of parties and of party systems. In Canada, the federal parties command the allegiance of affiliated Members of Parliament in a way the American national parties do not. American Congressional representatives have more flexibility in adopting controversial identities. American evangelicals were thus able to infiltrate the Republican Party in the 1970s and 80s in ways not possible under the Canadian system (Smith and Tatalovich 2003; Studlar and Christensen 2006; Tatalovich 1997). While both Canada and the United States are federal systems, Canadian political development has systematically made it more difficult for party activists to get “moral issues” onto their party’s platform (Smith 2008; Staggenborg and Meyer 1998).

Christian Right activists in Canada have been further disadvantaged because political conflict was already organized in ways that suppressed new conflicts over morality and national identity. In the United States, the new moral conflicts over abortion and gay marriage could be symbolically linked to earlier conflicts over national identity, which started in Vietnam, and white backlash against the Civil Rights movement. In the United States, conservative activists achieved *conflict extension*, by connecting their moral issues to pre-existing lines of political division that already resonated with the electorate (Layman and Carsey 2002). When abortion and later gay marriage emerged as political issues in Canada, it wasn’t as easy to overlay this conflict onto pre-existing battle lines linking religion and morality to national identity (Smith 2008). Canadian public debates had already moved away from religious antagonism between Catholics and Protestants and toward wrangling over linguistic, cultural, and provincial rights (Laporte and Lefebvre 1995; Portes 1994). Thus, Canada’s three main parties have not mobilized voters using religious rhetoric, despite longstanding religious cleavages between Cath-

olics and Protestants, and between liberal Protestants, evangelical Protestants, and secular Canadians. Since mainstream political parties do not distinguish themselves on the basis of religion and morality in Canada, this “values divide” is not expressed in partisan conflict and therefore is less likely to shape the political consciousness of rank-and-file evangelical Christians.

Nevertheless, one limitation of the “electoral mobilization” framework is that it treats evangelical morality and identity as if it were infinitely malleable by strategic politicians and social movement entrepreneurs. Evangelical identity is not primarily produced in the course of political mobilization, but in more distinctively *religious* settings: congregations, family life, religious media, parachurch networks, denominational politics, and personal networks (Bartkowski 2004; Gallagher 2003; Hendershot 2004). Evangelicalism is a dynamic social movement in its own right, organized entrepreneurially around distinctively *religious* goals (Lindsay 2008; Smith et al. 1998; Young 2002). Hence, it is important to explore how the dynamics of the religious field itself can drive continuity and change in politics, setting parameters for political strategy.

3 *Social Cleavages*

A third approach is to look at the role of religious groups within party coalitions. There is considerable evidence that an individual’s political preferences are anchored by social group memberships (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002); therefore, demographic or institutional changes within the religious field can have large-scale consequences for electoral politics. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) argue that party systems are organized around different lines of group-based conflict, or social cleavages, which emerged from historical conflicts over industrialization, the consolidation of a national identity, urbanization, and church-state relations. Once party conflict is organized around one or more social cleavages, this cleavage shapes the construction of group identities, party competition, and linkages between major social institutions (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Brooks and Manza 2007).

Scholars are divided on how to interpret new religious and moral conflicts within advanced capitalist democracies. Some scholars argue that religious cleavages are less salient in modern Western democracies; secularization segregates religion from public life, reduces the prominence of religious identity, and replaces “traditional” values with “self-expressive” values (Bruce 2003; Inglehart 1990). At the same time, this shift towards “postmaterial” culture can politicize traditional religious groups who oppose these trends (Norris and Inglehart 2004). Other scholars argue that the older “ethnoreligious” cleavage between Cath-

olics and Protestants is being replaced by a new cleavage between religiously “orthodox” and “modernist” camps within all religious traditions (Wuthnow 1988).

In both Canada and the United States, there is a history of party conflict around the ethnoreligious cleavage between Catholics and Protestants. Catholics have historically voted Democratic in the United States and Liberal in Canada, while Protestants have favoured the Republicans in the United States and the Progressive Conservatives in Canada (Guth and Fraser 1998). Brooks and Manza (2004) argue that the greater political weight of evangelicals since the 1970s is not necessarily because evangelicals have shifted their political preferences in a conservative direction, but simply that there are more of them, in absolute numbers and as a proportion of American Protestants. Mainline Protestants, who once comprised the Republican base, experienced a precipitous population decline during this same period, even as they became less loyal in their Republican partisanship (Greeley and Hout 2006).

Looking at the Canadian case, we observe a similar process of religious restructuring gradually transforming established partisan cleavages. In Canada, a new “culture war” cleavage (between “orthodox” religious people and secular or “modernist” religious people) operates simultaneously with the older cleavage between Catholics and Protestants. Guth and Fraser (2001) found that evangelical Protestants were drawn toward the now-defunct Reform Party, mainline Protestants tended toward the Progressive Conservatives, Catholics remained the bulwark of the Liberal Party, and the New Democratic Party appealed to secular Canadians.

The “social cleavage” framework has trouble accounting for the different political effects of “traditional” or “orthodox” morality in Canada and the United States, because it has a thin understanding of collective identity and meaning-making (Haller 2002). For example, Inglehart and his collaborators assume that religious morality is either authoritarian or privatized, ignoring the internal complexity of “traditional” religious morality (Burdette, Ellison, and Hill 2005; Munson 2002). Evangelicalism is not just a source of beliefs and moral attitudes, but also a resource for mapping one’s *identity* in a shifting civic field (Ammerman 2007; Lichterman 2008). Evangelicals construct their religious identities in multidimensional ways that cannot be predicted solely from the content of their religious beliefs. Hence, research on social cleavages can benefit from a richer understanding of this multilevel mapping of identity (Brubaker 2006; McFarland and Pals 2005; Muldoon et al. 2007; Shamir and Arian 1999; Simon and Klandermans 2001; Todd 2005).

A CROSSNATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUBCULTURAL IDENTITY

Each of these three frameworks offers a comprehensive explanation of the different role of religion in US and Canadian politics. However, none of them solves the puzzle of evangelical morality's different political effects across historical and regional contexts.

We argue that *subcultural identity construction* is a critical process that links religious and moral beliefs to political preferences in different ways across time and space. We propose that in both Canada and the US, evangelical Protestants hold similar moral beliefs and believe that their morality has public relevance for everyone. In the US, evangelicals are more likely to interpret moral tension with their environment as a political grievance that requires collective action. Canadian evangelicals have developed a very different kind of *subcultural identity*, or nested identification with a moral community within a larger national community.

Subcultural identity theory posits that religions can survive and thrive in pluralistic environments by offering morally orienting collective identities that provide their adherents meaning and belonging. This subcultural identity allows individuals to sustain moral community within cultural diverse contexts while generating both engagement and tension with relevant out-groups and the society at large. For example, American evangelicals refuse to privatize their morality, without becoming authoritarian (imposing their values coercively on the society) or sectarian (withdrawing from society to protect their culture from corroding influences). They see Christian morality as universally authoritative, yet practically limited in scope, so Christians must be prepared to engage constructively with people who do not share their morality (Smith et al. 1998; Wolfe 1998; Wuthnow 2005; Wuthnow 2007).⁵

For our purposes, the key insight of subcultural identity theory is that “[r]eligious traditions have always strategically negotiated their collective identities by continually reformulating the ways their constructed orthodoxies engage the changing sociocultural environments they confront” (Smith et al. 1998:97). What matters for a religious group's politics is not how “orthodox” they are, but rather how they make sense of the tension between their group's particular orthodoxy and the diverse out-groups and institutions in their sociocultural environment (Niebuhr 1951).

Our contribution is to build on the subcultural identity framework to generate hypotheses about crossnational variation in evangelical politics.

5. This interpretation of evangelical moral claims-making builds on a larger body of theory that challenges the dominance of secularization theories (Casanova 1994; Smith 2003b).

We propose that Canadian and US evangelical subcultural identities vary along two dimensions in their cultural content: 1. the *symbolic boundaries* that delimit evangelicals as a category, and 2. the *narratives* that relate evangelical identity to national identity.⁶ We propose two mechanisms by which Canadian evangelical identity constrains, rather than enables, political mobilization.

Proposition 1: Canadian evangelicals draw symbolic boundaries to define themselves as a category for both in-group members and external audiences. Because Canadians define their identity in opposition to American-style moral politics, Canadian evangelicals face a dilemma; either embrace the stereotype of the “un-Canadian” Christian Right activist or differentiate themselves from these stereotypes. Canadian evangelicals are less responsive to political appeals to their religious identity, because they define themselves as evangelical, yet authentically “Canadian.”

Proposition 2: Canadian evangelicals lack a widespread and resonant narrative that links evangelicalism to a long history of Christian civil religion in Canada. They have embraced a widespread understanding of Canada as a “post-Christian nation” which cannot be returned to a glorious Christian past. This narrative construction of the *past* and *present* motivates Canadian evangelicals to envision a *future* where they treat Canada as a “mission field” and engage the society as a cultural minority within a multicultural society.

We make a case for the political effects of subcultural identity by leveraging the “degrees of freedom” that crossnational comparison can provide. This comparative study draws on three types of data on evangelicals in Canada and the United States: public opinion survey data; in-depth interview data; and comparative-historical institutional analysis. First, we operationalize evangelicalism as a latent group in order to analyze how group membership correlates with political attitudes. Second, we illustrate the content of subcultural identity by drawing on qualitative in-depth interviews with key informants from Canadian evangelical churches. We identify two dimensions of subcultural identity, symbolic boundaries and group narratives, to show how they can be compared crossnationally. Third, we provide a short comparative-historical overview of the religion-politics connection in both countries, to show how these social-psychological differences in subcultural identity are rooted in different historical trajectories.

6. We do not claim that these are the only relevant dimensions of evangelical subcultural identity, only that these are the dimensions that vary crossnationally with political consequences. Collective identity has multiple dimensions, only some of which are relevant to any given research question (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004).

DATA AND METHODS

Below, we conceptualize evangelicalism as a latent group category and show how this group membership correlates differently with political attitudes in Canada and the United States. This supports our hypothesis that although American and Canadian evangelicals belong to the same religious category and share the same moral attitudes, how they map their evangelical identity varies crossnationally.

We draw on the Religion II module of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) to examine differences in the relationship between evangelical beliefs and political attitudes in the United States and Canada. Administered in 1998, the module was designed to supplement national survey data in 32 countries and provide nationally representative data on: (1) general attitudes toward social issues such as government, the legal system, sex, and the economy; (2) religion; and (3) various population demographics. Sampling techniques and data collection varied by country. All respondents were limited to individuals age 18 or older. In total 1,284 American and 974 Canadian respondents completed the module.

Survey Sample and Measures

To address our primary research questions we first defined Protestants as members of any Christian-based religious sect excluding Catholics (United States N=580, Canada N=200).⁷

We identified evangelical Protestants in Canada and the United States by drawing on both the American and comparative literature on evangelicalism. Woodberry and Smith (1998) observe that the most common strategies to identify evangelical Christians, or what they term “Conservative Protestants,” are by denominational affiliation, religious belief, and self-identification. Unfortunately, the ISSP only offers very basic data about Protestants’ denominational affiliations, thus limiting our ability to identify evangelical Christians by denominational family, as recommended by Steensland et al. (2000). Given this limitation, our

7. Since black Protestantism is widely recognized as a distinct branch of American Christianity (Emerson and Smith 2000; Steensland et al. 2000), we further break our sample down by race in order to assess the degree to which African-American evangelical Protestants might have political views notably different than their non-black counterparts. In most cases, we find that the exclusion of African-Americans from our analyses has relatively little effect on the overall results, but it does significantly reduce the percentage of American evangelicals who identify as left-of-centre and favour government income redistribution schemes. We report the results with respondents of African descent removed from the sample and report the results that include people of African descent in footnotes attached to the relevant text.

strategy was to identify evangelicals as a latent group (Hackett and Lindsay 2004), identified by a combination of beliefs, behaviours, and belonging that historians and sociologists have identified as distinctive to evangelical Christianity (Kellstedt et al. 1996).

As measures of evangelical beliefs, we rely on the typology of British historian David Bebbington (1989), who identifies evangelicalism's four theological emphases: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Of these four criteria, the ISSP provides measures of biblicism, conversionism, and activism.

Conversionism is measured by the question: "Would you say that you have been 'born again' or have had a 'born-again' experience — that is, a turning point in your life when you committed yourself to Christ?" According to the Baylor Religion Survey, the self-identification as "born again" is actually better suited to identify evangelicals than the term "evangelical," since only 15% of the US population identifies as "evangelical," and only 2% say it is the best description. Rather, "born-again" is the most common religious label claimed by those with ties to evangelical Protestant religious groups (Bader et al. 2006).

Biblicism is measured by a question about respondents' "feelings about the Bible." Four responses are possible: a. The Bible is the actual word of God and it is to be taken literally, word for word; b. The Bible is the inspired word of God but not everything should be taken literally, word for word; c. The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by man; and d. This does not apply to me. We coded either of the first two responses as an indicator of evangelical beliefs about biblical authority.

As a measure of activism or the expression of the gospel in effort, as opposed to belief, we rely on a threshold of religious commitment, as measured by regular church attendance. Attending church almost every week is considered normative by a majority of evangelical Christians, more than by mainline Protestants or Catholics. Mockabee et al (2001) report that, among those who identify with an evangelical Christian denomination, 60.6% attend church almost every week and 67.4% consider it "very important." While it is certainly possible to identify with an evangelical denomination or hold evangelical beliefs without attending church, we choose to identify a population of people who hold evangelical beliefs *and* report normative behaviours for regular church attendance within their faith community.

Recognizing that each of these factors represents a qualitatively different aspect of what it means to be "evangelical," we chose to exam-

ine how they function in tandem. Specifically, we define evangelicals as those who reported that they were born again (conversionism), believed that the Bible is the inspired or actual word of God (biblicism), and attended church more than 3 times a month (activism). We contend that this definition is not only consistent with previous research, but offers a more nuanced, multidimensional view of “evangelicalism.” We analyze two composite measures based on this definition.

Our first composite measure of evangelicalism is dichotomous and used solely for descriptive purposes. Employing the definition listed above, we coded all individuals who stated that they were born again, believed that the Bible is the inspired or actual word of God, and attended church more than 3 times a month “1” and those who met none, one, or two of our three criteria “0.”

We constructed our second composite measure using STATA’s ALPHA command. This procedure first estimates the intercorrelation reliability between a given set of variables, documenting how well they measure a particular latent concept. It then structures that information along a standardized scale to produce a new variable that approximates the effect of the aforementioned variables in tandem. The newly created variable captures all potential variation within each of the underlying variables used to define it, offering a more sensitive, less stringent measure of the latent concept of interest (Cronbach 1951; Raykov 1998). Respondents who met none of the criteria we use to define evangelicalism were assigned a “0” and those who met all criteria were assigned a “3.”

Applying this procedure, we found that our key indicators of evangelicalism — respondents’ “feelings about the Bible,” how often they attended church, and whether they identified as “born-again” or not — were only modestly related in both our American (Cronbach’s Alpha = .39) and Canadian Protestant (Cronbach’s Alpha = .52) sub-sets. While these findings constitute only limited statistical support for our latent concept of evangelicalism, previous research and theory suggest that we have employed an optimal analytic strategy (Green et al. 1996; Woodberry and Smith 1998).

Though this proxy is limited by our inability to account for differences in denominational affiliation, we suggest that even in the absence of this information our measure significantly improves on those used in previous crossnational research, which generally rely on only one of the aforementioned three indicators used to identify theologically conservative Protestant groups (Woodberry and Smith 1998). Since our focus is on crossnational differences, rather than interdenominational differences, we feel this is an appropriate analytic move.

Dependent Variables

Political ideology

Our key indicators of political ideology centre on two notoriously divisive issues: same-sex relationships, and government social spending on income inequality. We constructed a continuous measure of people's attitudes toward same-sex relationships based on the following survey instrument: "What do you think about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex? (1) It is always wrong, (2) It is almost always wrong, (3) It is wrong only sometimes, and (4) It is not wrong at all." Aside from adjusting its response scale from "1–4" to "0–3," no changes were made to this variable.

We also constructed a continuous measure of people's attitudes toward government social spending on income inequality. Respondents were asked: "On the whole, do you think it should or should not be the government's responsibility to reduce income differences between the rich and poor?" Response options were: "(1) Definitely should be, (2) Probably should be, (3) Probably should not be, and (4) Definitely should not be." We reverse coded these values and adjusted the response scale from "1–4" to "0–3."

Political identification

The ISS Religion II module provides two measures of political identification: respondent's self-reported political attitudes from left to right and stated political party affiliation. We examined the relationship between these variables and found that they were perfectly correlated.⁸ For conceptual clarity, we use respondent's self-reported political attitudes from left to right to document how they identify politically.

To account for the possibility that the distance between each of the political identification categories captured within this measure are not the same, we constructed two dummy variables, *Leftist Political Attitude* and *Rightist Political Attitude* for use in our OLS regression models. The base group for both variables is "centre, liberal," the largest political category in the United States and Canada according to the survey.

Religious practice

Though we account for differences in respondents' church going patterns in our composite measure of evangelicalism, we are also interested

8. That is, all Canadians who reported being "left, centre left" were also NDP voters. All those who reported being "centre, liberal" were members of either the PC, Liberal, or Bloc Quebecois parties, and all those who reported being "right, conservative" were members of the Reform party, an avatar of the earlier Progressive Conservative and contemporary Conservative parties. Similarly, in the US, "left, centre left" respondents reported voting for the Democratic Party; "centre, liberal" respondents said they were "Independent/close to Democrat"; "Independent," or "Independent, close to Republican"; and "right, conservative" respondents reported voting Republican.

in how more fine-grained variation in levels of church attendance relate to differences in both evangelical and nonevangelical respondents' patterns of religious belief and self-identification. We constructed a separate measure of church attendance for use in our statistical models where evangelicalism is our dependent variable. Responses were coded on a six-point scale (0= *Never attend church*; and 5= *Once a week or more*). Because our measures of evangelicalism and church attendance are linearly dependent, they are never used as explanatory variables in the same model.

Control variables

All analyses contain five demographic controls: sex, age, married, education, and income. *Sex* is a dichotomous variable coded "0" for male and "1" for female. *Age* is a continuous variable, wherein one unit is equivalent to one year of age. We assign a "0" to respondents who stated they were single, separated, divorced, and/or widowed and a "1" to those living as married. *Education* is a continuous variable, wherein a one unit change is equivalent to one year of education. *Income* is based on yearly income midpoints in the relevant currencies.

Model Specification

We use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to gauge the influence of evangelicalism, religious practice, and political identification on our measures of political ideology. We also use OLS to examine the effect of religious practice, political identification, and each of our control variables on our composite measure of evangelicalism. We ran separate regression models for each country so as not to assume that our independent and control variables functioned the same way across national contexts. To account for differences in sampling techniques, all models are weighted and provide Huber-White robust standard errors

SURVEY RESEARCH RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

First, are there fewer evangelical Protestants per capita in Canada than the US? Though other scholars have already answered this question in the affirmative (Hoover et al. 2002; Reimer 2003), it is important to know if our definition of "evangelical Protestantism" turns out similar percentages as other studies who have delimited this group differently. Of the 1,170 Americans and 966 Canadians who responded to ISS questions about religion, 18.5% of Americans showed religious belief and

self-identification patterns consistent with our three-point definition of evangelicalism, whereas only a little less than 9% of Canadians reported the same. There are also fewer self-reported Christians in Canada than the US (63% v. 79%), as well as fewer Protestants (29% v. 50%). Of those respondents who claimed to be Protestant, however, similar percentages meet our definition of evangelicalism: 29.7% in the United States and 28% in Canada — a difference which is not statistically significant. Thus, while evangelicals compose a smaller percentage of the Canadian population overall, they compose the same percentage of the Protestant population.

The next logical question is whether the ISSP data reveal consistent differences in the political goals and ideology of Canadian and American evangelicals, as we would expect from popular depictions of church-state relations in both polities. Here, we find some surprising results.

Many evangelical Christians have mobilized around the issue of same-sex marriage in both the US and Canada. Among Protestants who report a born-again experience, hold the two strictest views of biblical authority, and attend church regularly, Canadian and American respondents' views of same-sex marriage are statistically indistinguishable: 91.5% of American evangelicals say same-sex relations are “always wrong,” as do 90% of their Canadian counterparts. Thus, we have reason to conclude that in the aggregate, *Canadian evangelicals are at least as opposed to homosexuality as American evangelicals.*⁹ It should be noted, however,

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of American and Canadian “Evangelical” Protestants Attitudes toward Same-sex Relationships

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>
Always Wrong	91.52	90.20
Almost Always Wrong	3.03	3.92
Wrong Only Sometimes	1.82	5.88
Not Wrong at All	3.64	0
Total	100	100
<i>n</i>	165	51

Pearson $\chi^2(3) = 4.2740$ Pr = 0.233

that in the years since this data was collected, numerous American states have passed legislation *banning* same-sex marriage while same-sex marriage is now legal *throughout* the Dominion of Canada.

Turning next to evangelical Protestants' views of governmental income redistribution programs, we find differences that are substantively large, but not statistically significant. Thus while it appears that Amer-

9. We find virtually the same results when respondents of African descent are included in the sample. (Results available upon request.)

ican evangelicals are more likely to oppose government income support than their Canadian counterparts — for example, 13% more American

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of American and Canadian “Evangelical” Protestants’ Attitudes toward Government Social Spending on Income Support Programs

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>
Definitely Should Not Be	33.55	20.75
Probably Should Not Be	23.03	26.42
Probably Should Be	25.00	33.96
Definitely Should Be	18.42	18.87
Total	100	100
<i>n</i>	152	53

Pearson $\chi^2(3) = 3.4767$ Pr = 0.324

than Canadian evangelicals think government “definitely should not be” spending more on income support — these differences cannot be confirmed statistically.¹⁰

Where we *do* find significant differences between Canadian and American evangelical Protestants’ political views is in their self-reported political party affiliation: When asked to characterize their political views along a general right-left spectrum, most (53%) Canadian evangelicals referred to themselves as “centre/liberal,” whereas American evangelicals were more evenly distributed across the political spectrum, with a notable plurality of 43.6% identifying as right/conservative.¹¹ Note too that only 9% of the Canadian evangelical Protestants in this study portrayed him or herself as “left/centre left,” whereas almost 27% of Americans did. This would seem to indicate that the place in which evangelical Protestants situate themselves within the political party system is vastly different in Canada and the United States. Fewer Canadian evangelicals identify as conservative, but fewer also identify as left-of-centre — far fewer. The centrist Liberal Party appears to have a virtual “lock” on their vote. Despite reports of the ideological hegemony of the American “Religious Right,” moreover, a substantial proportion of American (White) evangelicals identify as left-of-centre, evidence consistent with Chris-

10. We also find no significant difference in nonevangelical Protestants’ views of government income support when respondents of African descent are included in the sample.

11. When respondents of African descent are included in the sample, American evangelicals’ political affiliation tips slightly to the left, reducing the percentage in the “right/conservative” category from 43.6% to 38%, and increasing the percentage in the “left/centre left” category from 27% to 34%. This is consistent with the findings of Greeley and Hout (2006) that many black Protestants meet a theological definition of “evangelical,” while ascribing to different political ideologies than their white evangelical counterparts.

tian Smith’s observation (2000) that American evangelicals are not all of a piece when it comes to politics. Note, however, that the term “left-of-

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of American and Canadian “Evangelical” Protestants’ Self-reported Political Attitudes from Left to Right

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>
Left, Centre Left	26.74	9.30
Centre, Liberal	28.49	53.49
Right, Conservative	43.60	30.23
Other, No Specific	1.16	6.98
Total	100	100
<i>n</i>	172	43

Pearson $\chi^2(3) = 17.4230$ Pr = 0.001

centre” means radically different things in Canada and the United States: the Democratic Party is well to the right of Canada’s New Democratic Party (NDP).

We thus have reason to believe that the intersection of religion and politics is more complicated than most current accounts would have it. Canadian evangelicals appear at least as conservative as their American counterparts in terms of their moral attitudes. When it comes to party affiliation, however, they are far more centrist, and far less skewed, than American evangelicals.

One question that remains is whether the same sorts of people are drawn to Protestant evangelicalism in both polities. We also consider the role of evangelicalism and politics *in concert* with a host of other sociodemographic factors that might covary with religious and political preferences. Our aim here is to see whether evangelicalism has an independent correlation with conservative political views net of other factors that might relate to both.

Multivariate Regression Results

A first logical question is whether the same sociodemographic profile describes evangelical Christians in the US and Canada. We use our second composite measure of evangelicalism to examine what factors predict patterns of religious belief and self-identification within our American and Canadian Protestant subsamples. Looking at all self-described Protestants, the following variables significantly “describe” respondents who meet our criteria (Table 4). In the United States (n=494), years of education is negatively correlated with evangelicalism whereas frequency of church attendance is positively correlated with it. In Canada (n=162), church attendance is also positively correlated with our proxy

of evangelicalism, but education is not. In Canada, married respondents and younger respondents are both more likely to be evangelical; neither variable is significant for American respondents. Income also matters in Canada but not in the United States. Differences in income inequality and college enrollment rates across these two polities may account for the disparate results with regard to the correlation between education

Table 4. Results from OLS Regression Models Predicting “Evangelicalism” amongst Protestants by Country

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>
Sex	.003 (.028)	.011 (.043)
Age	-.001 (.001)	-.003* (.001)
Married	.037 (.030)	.127* (.052)
Education	-.024*** (.004)	-.007 (.007)
Income	-7.17e-07 (5.90e-07)	-2.31e-06* (9.99e-07)
Leftist Political Attitude	.032 (.035)	-.028 (.069)
Rightist Political Attitude	.048 (.031)	.038 (.042)
Church Attendance	.398*** (.008)	.430*** (.011)
<i>Intercept</i>	1.10*** (.078)	.677*** (.129)
<i>R</i> ²	.8654	.9054
<i>n</i>	494	162

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients (Huber-White robust standard errors).

p*<.05; *p*<.01; ****p*<.001

and income and religious belief/self-identification, though they may also signify actual sociodemographic differences in the evangelical Protestant population of both countries.

Based on this survey sample from 1998, the only strong sociodemographic predictors of evangelicalism among Protestants are education and church attendance in the United States, and church attendance, marital status, and income in Canada. Interestingly, just as in our American sample, neither of our measures of political identification is a significant predictor of evangelicalism among Canadian Protestants. These results lend support to our supposition that differences in political ideology are the result of different processes that link various demographic factors to

religiosity and not just compositional differences.¹² This begs a striking and important question: Beyond basic ideology, how do religious differences relate to actual policy preferences in these two contexts?

Referring back to our same-sex marriage variable, we can assess the contribution of religiosity alongside several prominent sociodemographic variables with respect to this highly controversial legal issue (Table 5).

Table 5. Results from OLS Regression Models Predicting Protestants' Attitudes toward Same-sex Relationships by Country

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>
Sex	.270** (.095)	.397* (.176)
Age	-.005 (.003)	-.020*** (.005)
Married	-.121 (.105)	-.212 (.225)
Education	.114*** (.017)	.028 (.027)
Income	2.63e-06 (2.07e-06)	2.65e-06 (4.13e-06)
Leftist Political Attitude	.246 (.128)	.042 (.371)
Rightist Political Attitude	-.179 (.107)	-.010 (.170)
Evangelicalism	-.578*** (.060)	-.776*** (.098)
<i>Intercept</i>	.360 (.316)	2.59*** (.599)
<i>R</i> ²	.2936	.4159
<i>n</i>	453	141

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients (Huber-White robust standard errors).
*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Among Protestant Americans, women and better-educated respondents are more likely to be accepting of same-sex relations. Evangelicals are significantly less accepting of same-sex relations. The same is true of evangelicals in Canada, but there, education is *not* significant — support for same-sex marriage crosses the socioeconomic spectrum among Canadian Protestants. Age, however, does matter, older Canadians being progressively less tolerant of homosexuality.

These results are quite interesting, for they show that, *controlling* for religiosity, attitudes toward same-sex marriage are: a) *not* politic-

12. The ISSP Canada data is too thin to allow robust regional comparisons, which would be instructive.

ally circumscribed among American and Canadian Protestants; b) *not* educationally circumscribed in Canada, unlike in the US, where tolerance and education are significantly related; and c) *are* generationally circumscribed in Canada, meaning that Canadian Protestant attitudes toward homosexuality should continue to skew toward acceptance as time passes (assuming, of course, that younger Canadians do not become less tolerant as they age).

Referring next to our dependent variable reflecting respondents' views of government income support for the poor (Table 6), our results are again rather surprising *vis à vis* conventional wisdom: Among (non-black) American Protestants, being evangelical is *not* correlated with attitudes toward government income support programs.¹³ A number of

Table 6. Results from OLS Regression Models Predicting Protestants' Attitudes toward Government Social Spending on Income Support Programs by Country

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>
Sex	-.035 (.105)	-.041 (.173)
Age	-.007* (.003)	-2.4e-05 (.006)
Married	-.025 (.119)	-.087 (.222)
Education	-.031 (.018)	-.055 (.030)
Income	-7.41e-06*** (2.15e-06)	-7.81e-06* (3.71e-06)
Leftist Political Attitude	.215 (.127)	.939* (.360)
Rightist Political Attitude	-.258* (.114)	.209 (.174)
Evangelicalism	.006 (.061)	.004 (.099)
<i>Intercept</i>	2.44*** (.315)	2.45*** (.599)
<i>R</i> ²	.1114	.0989
<i>n</i>	450	154

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients (Huber-White robust standard errors).
p*<.05; *p*<.01; ****p*<.001

scholarly studies have found similar results, which increases our confidence in the accuracy of this finding (Davis and Robinson 1996; Iannaccone 1993).

13. This holds true with African-American respondents in the sample.

At the national level, American Protestant respondents who report right-wing political views are significantly less likely to support government income redistribution plans. This suggests that there is some division within the American evangelical community regarding its political affiliations and ideology. Note again, however, our earlier finding (above, Table 4) that there is no statistically significant correlation between right-wing political affiliation and evangelicalism among American Protestants. American evangelicals are about as likely to characterize themselves as “left/centre left” as “right/conservative.” In Canada, our proxy for evangelicalism is not significantly related to opinions about governmental responsibility for income redistribution. Of the variables assessed, only income and leftist political affiliation are significant.

In sum, our descriptive analyses show that when evangelicalism is operationalized as a latent group, it is strongly correlated with morally conservative attitudes in both countries, but with different political attitudes and identities in Canada and the United States. This leaves us with a puzzle: what cultural mechanisms sustain these crossnational differences in the relationship between evangelical group membership, moral attitudes, and political preferences? We propose that, even though Canadian evangelicals are just as morally conservative as American evangelicals, they work from very different understandings about the relationship between religious morality and national identity. In the next section, we illustrate these crossnational differences in subcultural identity using key informant interviews in Canadian evangelical churches.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS: THE CONTENT OF CANADIAN EVANGELICAL SUBCULTURAL IDENTITY

To get a more nuanced view of the different political meanings of moral attitudes in the two countries, we conducted key informant interviews with a variety of pastors and lay leaders in the Canadian province of Alberta, one of Canada's most politically conservative regions. Because these interviews were conducted with a nonrandom sample of only a dozen respondents, we present this data for the purposes of illustrating a new framework for measuring crossnational variation in subcultural identity. Our theory-building analysis was informed by a comparable set of interviews with evangelical clergy and laypeople in Dallas, Texas; however we include only the Canadian results here. While the small sample size does not allow us to make confident claims about crossnational differences, we note that our findings are consistent with large-scale surveys that compare the evangelical subculture in Canada and the United States

(Hoover et al. 2002; Reimer 2003), as well as large-scale surveys on the political outlooks and identities of American evangelicals (Smith 2000; Smith et al. 1998).

Based on our analysis of these interviews, we propose that Canadian and US evangelical subcultural identities vary along two dimensions in their cultural content which makes Canadian evangelicalism harder to politicize: 1. the *symbolic boundaries* that delimit evangelicals as a category, and 2. the *narratives* that relate evangelical identity to national identity. Simon and Klandermans (2001) argue that to mobilize for political action, political entrepreneurs need to rally the rank-and-file around the nested identity of “loyal opposition”: to heighten group-based distinction, threat, and grievances, while simultaneously affirming their overarching identification with the nation of United States or Canada.¹⁴ We argue that sustaining this tension makes evangelical identity harder to politicize in Canada than in the United States, in ways that we will illustrate below.

1—Boundary-work of Evangelical Subcultural Identity

A growing literature on “boundary processes” explores how people define social categories like “evangelical Christian” by drawing symbolic boundaries between “us” and “them,” which are invested with moral meaning (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007; Turner 1987). For example, conservative stands on abortion have become increasingly central to the boundaries of evangelical identity since the 1970s. In 1973, evangelical Christians were divided or indifferent in their response to *Roe v. Wade*, but since 1980, pro-choice Christians like President Jimmy Carter have been stripped of their “evangelical” credentials (Martin 1996). While opposition to divorce has become less important as a subcultural distinctive for evangelical Christians since the 1970s, opposition to abortion has increased among evangelicals since the 1970s (Evans 2002).

This means that evangelicals in both Canada and the United States may place themselves in the same religious category, but draw on different cultural meanings to draw the symbolic boundaries of evangelical identity. Crossnational research has found that, since symbolic boundaries are invested with moral meaning, people in different countries draw

14. “[P]oliticized collective identity is always also nested identity in that it presupposes identification with the more inclusive social entity that provides the context for shared grievances, adversarial attributions, and the ensuing power struggles for social change (or resistance to such change)” (Simon and Klandermans 2001:326). We use the term “nation” where Simon and Klandermans use the term “society,” since national identity is central to our explanation (Calhoun 2007).

these boundaries in response to different cultural discourses about what it means to be a good member of the larger society (Lamont 2000). We find that evangelical Christians in Canada and the United States draw on different moral meanings to draw religious boundaries, even though they define themselves as part of the same religious category. Evangelicals in Canada must wrestle with the fact that Canadian national identity is defined in opposition to the United States, and particularly in opposition to American nationalism and religious moralism. Hence, they struggle to draw symbolic boundaries to define themselves as evangelical, yet authentically “Canadian.”

Our Canadian evangelical informants talked explicitly about this identity dilemma, and argued that it creates a tendency to depoliticize their religious identity. As a Christian and Missionary alliance pastor named Greg¹⁵ adds, “*There is no moral majority in Canada, there is no Religious Right in politics.*” John, a Charismatic pastor, says that when any Canadian speaks publicly about the relationship between his or her faith and politics, “the media will immediately work very hard at branding them as a Right-wing bigot or a Fundamentalist. And to be called a Fundamentalist evangelical in Canada is to be demonized.” John referred specifically to the case of Stockwell Day, an evangelical Protestant who was elected leader of Canada’s new Reform Party in the 1990s. “The Canadian media gets ahold of it and just butchers him. Just has him for lunch. To the point where he gets branded as ‘The Most Dangerous Man in Canada.’” John added, in a precautionary tone, “You will not get a lot of small-c conservatives, especially not Christian conservatives, to talk to you about political stuff in Canada. *It’s too dangerous.*” John refers to this as “a crisis of democracy,” though most of his counterparts seemed more resigned to their relative lack of influence in Canadian politics.

Our respondents also noted that it is not generally acceptable to discuss matters of faith in the Canadian political arena. A Baptist lawyer named Edward said,

I cannot name one leader whose Christian faith would be seen to be a guiding principle. Whatever moral views you may have which may be formed by your faith are to be suppressed. The Prime Minister [Paul Martin] describes himself to be a Catholic, but he did not take a Catholic approach with relation to the recent debates on gay marriage. The media took the view that anyone having a moral objection to gay marriage was a religious bigot.

In this respect, Canadian evangelicals are like their American counterparts in their combative rhetoric of threat and distinction from the larger

15. All names have been changed and identifying information removed to protect the identity of the respondents.

cultural climate. But in the United States, evangelicals are not perennially accused of being inherently “un-American” in the same way that Canadian evangelicals are accused of being “un-Canadian.” Coupled with their relatively small numbers, this “un-Canadian” stigma puts great limitations on Canadian evangelicals’ ability to influence public debate.

In her comparison of lesbian and gay rights in Canada and the United States, Miriam Smith (2008) shows how the particularities of Canadian political development helped gay marriage to become quickly rooted as a basic human rights issue, which was integrally linked to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This made it much easier for supporters to frame “marriage equality” as central to Canadian national identity, and to marginalize opponents of gay marriage as uncivil and un-Canadian. Our informants protest that this civil discourse of tolerance tends to brand them as the “enemy” if they oppose gay marriage. Ben, a Mennonite Brethren pastor, said,

Discrimination is never good. But this same group that talks about intolerance so much, you’ll find that they’re the most intolerant group on the planet. Intolerant of any belief system that is not validating who they are or what they do, they are intolerant of it. For me to express any disagreement with their standpoint warrants them to get aggressive or almost abusive. This is quite a reversal. Who is painted with the brush of intolerance? Christianity is painted with brush of intolerance. But when you study it academically, except for a few strongly activist Christians who are out of line, it’s gay rights activists who do not value free speech, do not value freedom of religion, of beliefs.

All of our informants described this marginalization of evangelicals as a source of grievance, threat, and tension with Canadian society at large.

While Canadian evangelicals draw moral boundaries against homosexuality, they also struggle to define themselves as “good citizens” who adhere to Canadian standards of tolerance and civility. As Steven, a Baptist insurance industry worker, told us,

It’s wrong. It’s not very controversial in my opinion. [laughter.] Again, I can’t speak for this sector of society which thinks that that is an appropriate way of acting. I have some very good friends who are homosexuals, I have a neighbour who is a homosexual, I have worked with homosexuals.... But from a moral perspective, my position on that is that they’re no different from alcoholics ... they have a problem, understandably ... I don’t profess to understand why a person is a homosexual, and why others aren’t. But I can say that from a scriptural perspective, regardless of whether you are or you aren’t, you have to live with that. And the way you live with it, which would be acceptable to God, is that you abstain from that. So, I don’t agree with it.

Our informants are careful to show tolerance for homosexual people and same-sex relationships, while reserving the right to disagree publicly with the redefinition of marriage.

This illustrates the dilemma of constructing a nested identity as an evangelical within Canada: Our informants draw symbolic boundaries against homosexuality, while simultaneously distinguishing themselves as “good Canadians.” In our interviews, these efforts to construct an identity as the “loyal opposition” tended to depoliticize rather than politicize evangelical identity. For example, John noted his frustration with the current system, but emphasized the need for grassroots resistance, as opposed to political lobbying:

If we had every clergyman in Alberta turn in their license and say, ‘No, I’m not doing it anymore,’ the government would be forced to hire literally thousands of marriage commissioners to solemnize marriages. Well, that would send an enormous message. So I think there are things we can do, we just have to do them with great thought and great care. Because the problem is if we do that as a movement en masse, then the press can characterize as a bunch of redneck right-wing radicals and look at this bunch of idiots and look what we’re doing, and see we told you they were a bigoted bunch. But if we do it one by one based on our own convictions, and it’s a quiet grassroots movement that just quietly says, ‘No, I am simply not prepared to continue down this path any further. . . .’

All of our respondents experienced the legalization of gay marriage as a political grievance, but their struggle to construct a nested identity as the “loyal opposition” constrained the politicization of their religious identity.

One way that Canadian evangelicals deal with this dilemma is to claim the identity of “moral minority” — as opposed to the American Religious Right’s “moral majority” stance. Several of our respondents drew symbolic boundaries between Canadian and American evangelicalism by emphasizing that Canadian Christians are more devoted to their faith while American Christians are more concerned with status and power. For example, Greg referred to the experience of one of his evangelical friends living in the United States:

His comment was that his girls said to him that they looked forward to going back to Canada. Because . . . being a Christian in Canada for them was entirely different than Christians in the United States at their age level; in the sense that they [Americans] didn’t act like Christians, there was no demarcation between a Christian thirteen-year-old in the school and a non-Christian thirteen-year-old. *There seemed to be a lot more dichotomy between what you did on Sunday and what you did Monday through Sat-*

urday in the United States than in Canada. Now that might have been that one experience, but that always kinda stood out to me. He just felt that his daughters looked forward to getting back to Canada because the people they associated with from their own church were more clearly Christian than Christians in the US at their age.

Greg adds,

There's a lot less people in Canada, about 9% who go to church, so you've got to really be intentional about going to church in Canada, because you're definitely in the minority, it's not culturally acceptable, it's not ... you're almost, more so, tolerated or ... pitied [laughs a little], to a degree by going to a church on Sunday, than you are in the States.

These responses are supported by Reimer's finding that evangelical identity and belief is more closely correlated with behaviour and practice in Canada than the United States (Reimer 1995; 2003). Greg concludes:

The church is far more inculturated in America, therefore people in the church are far more politically oriented. We don't have a congregation of say, conservatives. Or liberals. Whereas I believe in the United States, there are congregations of Republicans, where a majority of your congregation is a Republican congregation, your pastor's Republican, everybody else, a majority are Republican. And if you're a Democrat, you don't say a whole lot about politics. That doesn't happen in Canada.

Because being evangelical is relatively rare in Canada, Canadian evangelicals take their faith quite seriously. They draw symbolic boundaries against their American counterparts by claiming that they are more sincerely religious, while American evangelicals have become too involved with politics while conforming to the larger culture in their everyday lifestyle. By drawing these symbolic boundaries of religious and national identity, Canadian evangelicals define themselves as both devoutly evangelical and authentically Canadian. However, this sub-cultural identity does not lend itself to political mobilization.

2 *Narratives of Subcultural Identity*

It is commonly argued that Canada lacks an American-style "civil religion" (Bellah 1975); that religious symbolism plays a much weaker role in national identity in Canada than in the United States (Bibby 1987; Kim 1993). Steven, one of our respondents, notes these differences in US and Canadian nationalism:

... one of the things that the Americans do, and this is because of their culture, is that they invoke God's name very actively in the political pro-

cess, but in everyday life as well. And that's not done in Canada at all ... to some extent to my disappointment ... when it's used frivolously, of course it doesn't matter, but if it's used sincerely, then I think that would be a significant difference between us and them.

What is less appreciated is that nationalism also plays a weaker role in Canadian *evangelical identity*, while American evangelical identity is shot through with nationalistic symbolism. Collective identities are not just constructed by drawing boundaries between “us” and “them,” but also by telling stories that cast a group within an unfolding plot that relates them to other characters, forces, and challenges (Polletta 2006; Sewell 1992; Smith 2003a; Somers 1994). For ethnic or subcultural minorities like evangelicals, these public narratives often elaborate the story of the group's relationship to the nation's story (Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004; Eyerman 2004). Smith (2000) describes how American evangelicals rally around the public narrative of America as a chosen nation which must be rescued from “moral decline.” This myth of a Christian nation (Morone 2003; Noll, Hatch, and Marsden 1989) helps evangelicals build a strong subcultural identity by mobilizing commitment and reinforcing group boundaries. By comparison, we find that Canadian evangelicals lack a widespread and resonant narrative that links evangelicalism to a long history of Christian civil religion in Canada. They have embraced a widespread understanding of Canada as a “post-Christian nation” which cannot be returned to a glorious Christian past. This narrative construction of the *past* and *present* motivates Canadian evangelicals to envision a *future* where they treat Canada as a “mission field” and engage the society as a cultural minority within a multicultural society.

Edward, a Baptist lawyer, said,

I think that we live in a post-Christian society in Canada. Christians are a threatened minority. We have situations where people quoting scripture have been convicted of hate crimes. I am very uneasy about the future of the evangelical church in Canada.

As John remarked,

Me? I don't worry about the political climate, because I happen to believe that there's a much bigger issue that's behind it all. I put it this way: there isn't a Hell #2 for homosexuals and abortion doctors, there's only one Hell. And people go there because they don't have a relationship with God. So I'm not going to get distracted by a bunch of stuff going on behind the scenes. Now, having said that, does that stuff concern me? Well, of course it does. *I'm far less concerned about gay marriage or anything*

else than I am about systematic discrimination against evangelical Christians in Canada. I'm very concerned about that."

In describing his approach to political issues as a pastor, John adds,

I do deliberately downplay a lot of the political stuff [in church]. Again, not because I don't think it's important, but because I don't think it's a winnable battle. And I'd rather go for the wins, go for the stuff we can win, than waste an awful lot of time on the stuff that I don't think we can.

Greg notes Albertan evangelicals' similar lack of political action with regard to the issue of teaching evolution in secondary schools, a major source of controversy and evangelical political action in the United States:

I don't think they [Canadian evangelicals] are concerned about evolution being taught in the school... What's different than when I grew up, is that people have taken more conscious effort to buy videotapes or DVDs to instruct their children at a young age about Creation and about how God created them. So that when they hit school, evolution isn't something that they haven't already heard about or considered, but the whole aspect that God created them is the dominant truth to them. So when you say concern, no I don't hear a lot about people lobbying to get books removed or curriculum removed. I see them taking *individual action*, proactive on their part to teach them what their values are about Creation.

In this respect, Canadian evangelicals sound much like their American coreligionists, who generally prefer to influence society through individual action and personal relationships than through political mobilization (Smith 2000). What is different is that Canadian evangelicals lack a sense of being disinherited from a past age of Christian hegemony in public schools and the public construction of national identity. While Canadian evangelicals protest that they are an increasingly persecuted minority, they gladly accept their position as one of many cultural minorities within a multicultural nation. If this is the dominant public narrative within evangelical congregations, it will be difficult for political entrepreneurs to rally evangelicals to reclaim their cultural hegemony in Canadian public life.

Above, we describe two dimensions of evangelical subcultural identity that vary between Canada and the United States: the content of the *symbolic boundaries* and the *public narratives* that they use to construct a nested religious identity within their national context. This helps explain how the same "moral attitude" variable has different effects on political behaviour in different countries, depending on how evangelic-

als think about the relationship between religious identity, morality, and national identity. While Canadian evangelicals are similar to American counterparts in their opposition to abortion and homosexuality, they have different understandings about the relationship between their religious morality and national identity. This motivates us to ask why Canadian and American evangelicals have different ways of constructing their relationship to public life. Canada has a long history of church-state cooperation and politically engaged evangelical Protestantism. Why then have evangelicals come to exert so much sway in American politics and so little in Canadian?

COMPARATIVE-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Why have evangelicals developed such a different understanding of the relationship between morality and national identity in United States and Canada? Following Grabb and Curtis (2005), we argue that political culture in Canada and the United States has developed along distinct trajectories in four regions: the Southern US, the Northern US, English Canada, and Quebec. These subcultural identities were constructed through a path-dependent series of interactions between religious movements, political institutions, and various challengers within the public sphere.

Political institutions have created different opportunity structures for evangelicals to gain power in public life, but they have also shaped how evangelical movements perceived their own identity and goals. Ironically, for example, the formal legal separation of church and state in the United States has fomented repeated conflicts over that very separation, thus providing multiple “points of entry” for evangelicals concerned about the religious indirection of public institutions. In Canada, by contrast, where the English conquest of New France resulted in formal recognition of French-Catholic institutions, there is much less debate about the role of religion in public life. There is no formal separation of church and state in Canada, so contemporary Canadians are less apt to make this a point of contention in political debate.

The contrasting religious origins of Canada and the United States also provide would-be religious leaders with different cultural resources for political rhetoric: Having been founded, in part, by Protestant dissenters fleeing religious persecution in Great Britain, American political culture often spins around the axis of its Christian-evangelical origins. The territories that became Canada, by contrast, were settled early on by Catholic missionaries, and Catholics constituted a significant portion of the Canadian population through the mid-20th century. This strong Cath-

olic presence complicated Canadian Protestants' efforts to define national identity in ways that excluded Catholics (Murphy and Stortz 1993). Canada's history of religious accommodation made it difficult for Canadian evangelicals to mobilize to defend the nation's Protestant heritage (Kim 1993), even though evangelicalism shaped the political development of many Canadian provinces (Airhart 1992; Christie and Gauvreau 1996; Cook 1995; Gauvreau and Hubert 2006; Grant 1988; Westfall 1989).

Theologically, Canadian evangelical churches began to diverge from their American counterparts in the 1830s, when the Canadian Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches realigned with their British counterparts. As a result, these churches, which had originally been founded by American itinerant preachers in the barnstorming "fire and brimstone" tradition, began to temper their theological and congregational practices. Though American evangelicals continued to emigrate to Canada, their potential influence on Canadian churches was mitigated by the new British-oriented clergy and denominational infrastructure (Clark 1948; Semple 1996).

In Canada, the Fundamentalist controversy was more muted, and there was less polarization between the mainline and evangelical wings of Protestantism around the Social Gospel (Christie and Gauvreau 1996; Murphy and Perin 1996; Rawlyk 1990). By comparison, the American Protestant consensus behind social service, evangelism, and foreign missions was shattered when Fundamentalists rejected the "Social Gospel" because of its association with Modernism. When a more moderate American "neoevangelical" coalition emerged in the mid 20th century, it had lost touch with its 19th century roots in social engagement, and was also influenced by Dispensationalist beliefs that the world would inevitably get worse until Christ returned (Carpenter 1997; Marsden 1980; Moberg 1972).

The history of American sectionalism and slavery is also critical to understanding the antistatist mentality of many contemporary American evangelicals (Nesmith 1994; Wilcox and Larson 2006). Mid-19th century American evangelicals entered the political arena with renewed force (Noll and Harlow 2007): in the Northern States, evangelicals helped spearhead the abolition movement, while Southern evangelicalism increasingly suppressed this reformist impulse. Evangelical social theology therefore developed along two different tracks, with Northern evangelicals preaching a blend of individual transformation and democratic reform, and Southern evangelicals preaching the God-given virtues of slavery and a brand of piety that propped up their hierarchical social order.

Long before the mobilization of the Religious Right in the 1960s, the symbols of evangelical Christianity became central to a distinctly white Southern civil religion that exalted private property rights, military strength, limited government, and racial hierarchy (Manis 1987). After the Civil War, the region rallied around the Southern Baptist convention to make sense of the "Cause Lost": a righteous remnant oppressed by "Godless heathens" from the North (Ammerman 1990; Hill 1980). Because white evangelical Christianity had long been co-opted by this Southern civil religion, it was readily available as a symbol of opposition to "big government," racial integration, and the Liberal establishment (Martin 1996; Wilcox and Larson 2006). After 1960, this cultural formation diffused to other regions of the United States as Sunbelt evangelicals assumed greater leadership in the national political scene (McGirr 2001; Wuthnow 1988), and Southern churches expanded to other regions of the country (Applebome 1996; Miller 1997).

These historical factors help explain how the subcultural identity of evangelical Protestants evolved differently in the Canadian and American contexts. In Canada, political accommodation, theological moderation, and demographic weakness created an evangelical identity that was *publicly engaged* but rarely *politicized*. In the United States, politics and religion were easily and often fused around contentious issues of national identity and public policy.

CONCLUSION

Our comparative investigation helps account for how religious morality can matter for political behaviour in ways that vary across countries and over time. Moral attitudes can have different effects on political preferences depending on how evangelical Christians make sense of the relationship between religious identity, morality, and national identity. Our account of Canada-US differences thus builds upon Layman and Green's proposition (2005) that religious divides become relevant to mass political behaviour when three conditions hold: 1. when religious perspectives are logically related to policy issues; 2. when communal experiences encourage these connections; and 3. when electoral actors emphasize and differentiate themselves on such matters. We propose that the construction of evangelical *subcultural identity* in Canada and the United States is a path-dependent process that creates durable micro-level linkages between beliefs, religious group life, and political identification in the two countries.

Our strategy for analyzing subcultural identity has broader usefulness for studying the role of culture, morality, and identity in politics.

Since the 1960s, political scientists have privileged religious and moral attitudes as proximate causes of political preferences (Achen 1992; Carmines and Huckfeldt 1996; Franklin 1992). However, our analysis suggests that researchers should also look at the historical processes that create the social environments where voters connect their religious concerns to political preferences (Brooks 2006). Our analysis also addresses a longstanding puzzle within cultural sociology: how does analyzing the content of culture help explain material outcomes, when cultural traditions like evangelicalism seem to fuel such diverse political practices across time and space? Within cultural sociology, proponents of the “strong program” have gone to great lengths to demonstrate that culture has its own structure, with a degree of relative autonomy from social relationships (Alexander and Smith 1993; Kane 1991). Our analysis shows that it is also important to trace how the “cultural structures” of evangelicalism are themselves transformed in the course of political contention and coalition formation (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Mische 2008; Tilly 2001).

Evangelical churches in both Canada and the United States imbue a shared moral conservatism, but these attitudes only produce “moral values voting” when religious group experiences and the political context encourage people to connect their moral attitudes to their political choices. Using crossnational survey data, we found that Canadian and American evangelicals share similar attitudes about issues like same-sex marriage and abortion, yet Canadian evangelicals do not appear markedly different than nonevangelical Canadians in their voting habits or political goals. To understand how different evangelical social environments connect religion and politics, we compared differences in how American and Canadian evangelicals construct subcultural identities. Then we traced the development of these identities from different historic relationships between evangelical religious organizations and movements and the state in Canada and the United States, and particularly in the American South.

It seems likely that church-state relations in Canada and the United States will continue to travel down different paths. In the United States, the increasing presence of evangelical Protestants in the higher echelons of the Republican Party has vast potential for reversal, particularly given the ideological diversity of evangelical Protestants themselves. By attaching themselves to several Presidential administrations, American evangelicals have had to bear the costs of power, accounting for Republican mistakes and miscues in upcoming elections. New American evangelical leaders might respond to all this scandal by distancing themselves from political parties, much as their Canadian counterparts have done.

However, political commentator E.J. Dionne argues that this will require a major reconstruction of evangelical subcultural identity: "Evangelical Protestantism in the United States is going through a New Reformation that is disentangling a great religious movement from a partisan political machine" (Dionne 2007). Based on this subcultural identity framework, we predict that this disentangling process will require American evangelicals to articulate new public narratives about the relationship between their religious identity and national identity. This process will likely be led by postboomer evangelicals, who are less committed to civil religion than older generations (Wuthnow 2007).

In Canada, it is still possible that evangelical Christian activists might be able to integrate their morally conservative concerns more firmly into the agenda of the Conservative Party. Canadian evangelicals may find new opportunities for political mobilization, especially in the increasingly disgruntled Western province of Alberta, where new money, a vital evangelical minority, and "western alienation" provide a fertile mix of resources and resentment. Laycock (2002) has documented the increased collaboration between religious conservatives and economic conservatives in the Reform Party, networks which continue to shape the development of the unified Conservative Party in Western Canada. It remains to be seen whether Conservative Party activists can elaborate a distinctly Canadian narrative or ideology that can unite antigovernment, antitax conservatism with the moral conservatism of evangelical Christians (Mackey 2005). Religious rhetoric from the Conservative party could alienate wealthy secular supporters and make it more difficult to reach out to voters in Quebec.

Canadian evangelicals have their own reasons to be wary of a closer political alliance. As a self-described minority in an increasingly "post-Christian" culture, Canadian evangelicals view Canada as a mission field (Bibby 2004; Bowen 2004; Bramadat 2000). Many of our respondents were concerned that getting involved in unpopular American-style moral crusades could harden non-Christians against the Gospel and thwart the "Great Commission." The political effects of evangelicalism will continue to change in Canada and the United States, as evangelicals find new ways to engage their rapidly changing societies.

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