The Impact of Institutions on the Politics of Canadian Evangelical Christians

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In May 2004 full page ads appeared in newspapers across Canada from an organization called Focus on the Family Canada (FOTFCanada). The ads, featuring a heterosexual couple with a child surrounded by a smiling and multiethnic crowd, proclaimed "We Believe in Mom and Dad. We Believe in Marriage." Brief text below further affirmed a commitment to "a father and a mother" and directed readers to the organization's website. While not directly stated, the ad obviously opposed same-sex marriages and parenting by same-sex couples. FOTFCanada is an organization founded by and strongly associated with evangelical Christians, who generally reject homosexuality as unbiblical. Its website includes a list of MPs and their votes on recent same-sex issues, and promises an upcoming "voters' guide" for the current federal election.[2]

Another interesting recent event was the revelation in April that Liberal Party pollsters were asking voters whether they would vote for the Conservative Party "if you knew they had been taken over by evangelical Christians."[3] This reflected a possible Liberal strategy to marginalize the Conservatives as right-wing, religious ideologues. Relatedly, when asked about the question in the House of Commons, Prime Minister Paul Martin said his party was not targeting people's beliefs, and went on: "Let me say that faith, religion has no room in politics." (He later elaborated that "..faith and religion will certainly influence the way that people look at the world. But faith and religion should not be the subject of partisan politics.")[4]

Both these incidents are about the politics of evangelical Christianity in Canada. They reveal different things, however. The first is an example of an expensive, well-produced lobby campaign by evangelicals to mobilize opinion on a key public policy issue. While FOTFCanada does not explicitly endorse a political party, it obviously suggests how its supporters should vote. Such campaigns are not new in Canada, but they are rarely so comprehensive and, by evangelical standards, slick and subtle.

Yet the second item illustrates the tricky and controversial nature of introducing religious faith into Canadian politics. For many Canadians, ads such as the "Mom and Dad" campaign represent an ominous trend. They fear the growth of religiously-driven politics and public policy, affecting issues of reproduction and sexuality in particular, but also social policy, artistic expression, and the general content and tone of political debate. While Mr. Martin may have muddled his words, his intention was presumably that religious beliefs should not be associated with specific parties, and vice versa.

Compare this with the United States. President George W. Bush has been explicit about his religious beliefs and the role of faith in his decisions and policies. Religious political advertising and campaigning - both implicit and explicit - is widespread. While there is some question about its precise impact and popularity, evangelical Christianity is certainly a prominent and significant aspect of American politics. And though specific organizations have grown and faded, like the Moral Majority, the

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[1] Research for this paper is supported by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

[2] http://www.fotf.ca/familyfacts/takeaction/MPs_Marriage_C-250.pdf and http://www.fotf.ca/familyfacts/election/votersguide.html. (Last viewed May 26, 2004).

[3] Jane Taber, Campbell Clark, "Key Martin aides debate June election" *Globe and Mail,* April 20 2004, A1.

[4] Bill Curry, "Don't mix partisan politics and faith, Martin tells Tory", *Ottawa Citizen*. May 13 2004, A3

Christian Coalition and FOTFCanada's own parent (sic), Focus on the Family, evangelical Americans are prominent and established actors in American politics.[5]

Why has religion and more precisely evangelical Christianity become so much more widespread in American than Canadian politics? Are evangelicals becoming more politically prominent in Canada, as the FOTF ad campaign might suggest? If so, in what ways?

There are two broad answers to the question of why evangelicals are more prominent in American than Canadian politics. The first is a societal explanation - there are simply more evangelical believers in the U.S., and they also stand out more in a country that has fewer regional and linguistic cleavages than Canada.. For most this is a strong and adequate explanation, particularly if one relates it to other differences in Canadian and American sociey and political culture. I explore these further in a moment.

However, the second explanation points to Canadian political institutions. Our system is different, and this affects evangelical political activity. Institutions such as responsible government, party discipline, career public servants, fluid party memberships, non-partisan local politics, automatic voter registration and others have all created a different political terrain in Canada for evangelicals. What works in the United States does not necessarily work in Canada. A simple example is the "Mom and Dad" campaign, which cannot be continued during the current election in accordance with the recently upheld restrictions on third-party advertising during elections.

In this paper I want to explore further some of these ideas for an institutionalist explanation of Canadian evangelical political behaviour. My goal is not to dismiss the societal explanation, but to argue that it is insufficient and may lead us to overlook the full extent of Canadian evangelical political activity. Looking at evangelicals from only a societal point of view does not give us a clear picture of how they affect or attempt to affect Canadian politics. Taking a more institutional approach allows us to better understand the actual activities and impact of evangelicals, and may partly explain why evangelicals seem to be less prominent in Canada. It also gives us insights into how future changes to Canadian political institutions may affect evangelical political activism.

This is a beginning project, rather than a full research report. The objective of this paper is to stimulate discussion and understanding not only of this institutionalist explanation, but more generally of an area that remains surprisingly neglected by Canadian political scientists. The paper unfolds as follows. We begin with a general definition of evangelicalism and its profile in Canada, and its role as both a religious and a social and political movement. We then review some of the existing literature, and the gap that exists in Canadian political science on the subject. The paper then examines five different Canadian political institutions and how their structures and norms likely affect evangelical political activism. It concludes with some future avenues for research and likely ways to test conclusively this approach.

Don't You Mean "Fundamentalist"?

What is an evangelical Christian and how does this differ from the more commonly heard "fundamentalist"? This is a key issue for social scientists in both Canada and the U.S. and indeed for the movement itself.

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[5]Among many sources, see Clyde Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers? The Religious Right in American Politics* Boulder: Westview. (2nd edition) 2000; John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox, eds. *Marching to the Millenium: The Christian Right in American Elections, 1980-2000* (Georgetown University Press, 2003).

Precise and yet workable definitions of "evangelical" are difficult because they often reach deep into theological doctrine and people's beliefs, creating unwieldly and nuanced definitions.[6] However, evangelicalism is typically defined by core beliefs and/or social and lifestyle choices. Defined by beliefs, evangelicals believe in the primacy of Christianity over other faiths, the basic inerrancy of the Bible (although with varying degrees of literalness), and an ongoing personal relationship with God that is usually defined by a pivotal conversion or "born again" experience. In terms of social behaviour, evangelicals are regular and involved churchgoers, identify with their church's lifestyle rules, and to varying extents try to convert others to their beliefs. This last point of proselytization is especially important and of course gives evangelicals the name by which they most commonly identify, and key figures such as the American mass preacher Billy Graham.

Fundamentalists are generally understood as either a subset of evangelicals or a related group, and inevitably as more radical and militant than evangelicals. In this analysis I consider them a subset of the larger evangelical group. Fundamentalists are characterized by particularly strict beliefs, less tolerance of alternative interpretations of the Bible or the Christian faith generally, and greater willingness to separate themselves from the world and those with whom they disagree. However, they remain linked to evangelicals by strong historic and theological traditions. The connection is described by Stackhouse, who argues that "...evangelicals retained the doctrinal orthodoxy of their fundamentalist forebears, but denounced the insularity of this community, its fear of modern learning, and its abandonment of social responsibility."[7]

What appear to be minor distinctions from the outside are quite crucial in distinguishing fundamentalists from non-fundamentalist evangelicals. While fundamentalists tend to interpret the Bible in the most literal ways possible, other evangelicals may entertain some degree of interpretation as long as it does not reject the basic concept of inerrancy. (A fundamentalist likely believes the world was created in seven days and dismisses all contrary evidence as inaccurate; a non-fundamentalist evangelical may search for ways to reconcile bibilical accounts with scientific evidence). Similarly, non-fundamentalist evangelicals usually display somewhat greater willingness to interact in ecumenical fashion with other Christian denominations and even non-Christian faiths. Another category, that of "charismatics," overlaps both groups. Charismatics stress expressive, physical worship, but may not display the strict focus of fundamentalists, and may not even identify as evangelicals (particularly if they are members of the Roman Catholic church).

The difference between evangelicals and fundamentalists can be illustrated by returning to the Focus on the Family advertisement. While linked to strong opposition against same-sex marriage and gay and lesbian rights, the ad is more evangelical than fundamentalist. Fundamentalist messages tend to be direct, explicit, and closely linked to Christian beliefs. The "Mom and Dad" ad, in contrast, avoids any mention of Christianity (or religion at all) and its negative message is only implicit. While clearly intolerant of same-sex rights, by fundamentalist standards it is mild and vague.

Even if the differences seem minor to external observers who use the terms interchangeably, the distinction between the two groups is important for a discussion of their role in Canadian politics. If we focus purely on self-identifying fundamentalists, we see a radical but very marginal portion of Canadian

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[6] Many studies of evangelicals do not even define the term. However, see the beginning of John G. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century: An Introduction to Its Character* (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 1993) or Christian Smith, *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2000) for careful nuanced discussions and definitions..

[7] Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, p 11.

society. Their role and effect in politics is on the very fringe. In contrast, evangelicals are more involved in the mainstream of Canadian politics and public debate, as evidenced by the "Mom and Dad" ad. One of the more prominent religious figures in recent Canadian politics, Preston Manning, consistently identifies himself as an evangelical rather than fundamentalist, even though he is often called the latter.[8] Looking more broadly at evangelicals, along with the other fluid category of charismatics, gives us a larger and more heterogeneous picture than a focus on "fundamentalists." Evangelicals are a more heterogeneous and flexible group, even though they share the same core beliefs as fundamentalists, and are more politically organized and observable than fundamentalists.

Evangelicals in Canada

What is the status of evangelicals in Canada? For a start, how many are they?

Even discussing the number of evangelicals in Canada is contentious. Rawlyk asserts that "a surprising number of evangelicals do not want to refer to themselves or be referred to as evangelicals"[9] because of the controversial nature of the term, and hence most estimates have relied on surveys of beliefs rather than self-identification to determine whether respondents are evangelical. This can be criticized for drawing too strict a boundary around evangelicalism, rather than seeing it as a more gradual affiliation,[10] and the lack of absolute criteria lead to uneven evidence. For example, a major 1993 survey found 15% of Canadians agreeing strongly or moderately that they had a born-again experience, while 30% agreed strongly or moderately that "...the Bible was God's Word and is to be taken literally word for word." 26% said they agreed strongly or moderately that "it is very important to encourage Christians to become non-Christians." Finally, 13% said that they were "awaiting the Rapture" - the end of the world and the precursor to the second coming of Christ.[11] While the first and last are strong aspects of evangelical doctrine, the others also reflect strong Catholic beliefs, reflecting the difficulty of establishing evangelical numbers.

Rawlyk and his associates constructed a scale based on these and other questions, and concluded that 16% of Canadians met the threshold of "evangelical."[12] On the other hand, Hoover *et al* suggested in 2000 that "Evangelical Protestants" comprise about 10 to 12 percent of the Canadian population "depending on the measurement criteria employed" while they are about 25 to 33 percent of the population of the U.S.[13] In short, there is no firm agreement on the number of Canadian evangelicals or

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[8] See Preston Manning, *Think Big: Adventures in Life and Democracy* (McClelland and Stewart: Toronto, 2002), especially pp 147-153. Stockwell Day is also an evangelical more than a fundamentalist, although he is probably closer to the latter than Manning.

[9] G.A. Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour? In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990s* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal and Kingston, 1996), p 138.

[10] Christian Smith, *Christian America?*, p 12.

[11] Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?* p 86, 95, 109, 115.

[12] Rawlyk, p 118.

[13] Dennis R. Hoover, Michael D. Martinez, Samuel H. Reimer and Kenneth D. Wald, "Evangelicalism Meets the Continental Divide: Moral and Economic Conservatism in the United States and Canada" *Political Research Quarterly* 55:2 (June 2002).

how to measure this. However, it is widely agreed that there are more evangelicals in the United States than in Canada.

Tracking evangelicals by organizational membership is also difficult. While evangelicalism is associated with particular Christian denominations, links between denominations can be limited, many evangelicals are associated with independent churches, and others may be members of denominations that are generally not considered evangelical. Membership in lobby groups and associations is also unreliable since only a small minority of evangelicals hold individual membership. As well, Mormons and others may be associated politically with the evangelical movement but are not accepted by other evangelicals on doctrinal grounds.

Canadian evangelicals are also generally spread out regionally. Rawlyk's research found that evangelicals do not appear to be strongly clustered in any particular province or region, although they are slightly more predominant in southern Alberta and the B.C. Lower Mainland as well as in the Maritimes. Under his belief-based criteria, evangelicals were also equally distributed between Quebec and the rest of Canada.[14] However, evangelical political *activism* may be less noticeable in French-speaking Canada, for various reasons. An obvious one is English-Canadians' heavy reliance on American English-language resources, for which there is no French-language counterpart. Additionally, the longstanding association of the Quebec state with Roman Catholicism prior to 1960 may have created different orientations toward religion and politics than in Canada outside Quebec.

Evangelicals as a Social Movement

Evangelicals are clearly a religious movement that emphasizes active worship and conversion efforts. Are they a social and political movement as well - that is, a group working for social and political change?

The cognitive centre of evangelical identity assumes not only that their interpretation of the Christian faith is superior to all other interpretations and faiths, but that it is their duty to share these beliefs in order to convert others. Furthermore, evangelical spiritual beliefs are closely linked to particular lifestyles and social behaviours. A dense evangelical subculture of churches, educational institutions, businesses, media and other organizations reinforces their identity and contrasts it with the outside world.[15]

However, the proselytization orientation of evangelicals is not automatically linked to demands for larger social and political change. The subcultural boundaries can in fact encourage detachment from the outside world, and this is particularly the case for fundamentalists, who are more likely to withdraw from external society and separate themselves as much as possible. For many evangelicals and fundamentalists, it may be more important to focus on spiritual and theological discussions and conversions, rather than actively working for social and political change in the non-evangelical world.

However, it is clear that most or many evangelicals in Canada, the United States and elsewhere do seek to influence public policy and social behaviour in the larger society. Most scholars see this as

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[14] Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?*

[15] Reimer, Sam (2000) "A Generic Evangelicalism? Comparing Evangelical Subcultures in the Canada and the United States"in Lyon, David and Van Die, Marguerite, eds. (2000) *Rethinking Church, State and Modernity*:*Canada Between Europe and America* (University of Toronto Press: Toronto).

reactionary activism, responding to external shifts in recent decades that increase the contrast between evangelical beliefs and lifestyles and mainstream society. For example, Buss and Herman define the "Christian Right" as a range of organizations and actors that "cohere around a shared conviction that conservative Christians must form a bulwark against encroaching liberalism and the chaos it represents."[16] In this sense, the political activism of evangelicals is a somewhat newer phenomenon, caused by changes in external society rather than evangelicals themselves.

What social and political changes do evangelicals seek? Since the 1970s activism in both Canada and the U.S. has been most noticeable on issues of **sexuality and reproduction**. To illustrate, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada - the leading umbrella organization of Canadian evangelicals - lists on its website the following as the "social issues" on which it has a current focus:

[16] Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2002), p xix.

- •Abortion/Fetal Rights
- •Abuse
- •Age of Consent to Sexual Activity
- •Education
- •Environment
- •Euthanasia & Assisted Suicide
- •Gambling
- •Marriage & Family
- •Marriage & Religious Freedom
- •Media Regulation
- •Pornography
- •Poverty & Homelessness
- •Prostitution
- •Refugees
- •Religious Freedom in Canada
- •Religious Freedom Internationally
- •Reproductive and Genetic Technologies
- •Sexual Orientation [17]

There is an obvious emphasis on issues of reproduction, sexuality and family relationships. However, we might note other issues such as poverty and homelessness, and refugees (along with gambling, which can be viewed as either a moral issue or a social problem). In fact, while their efforts may be most visible in areas of sexuality and reproduction, evangelical activism can also be found in other areas. This may be particularly true for Canadian evangelicals, as survey research has found differences between the political views and outlooks of American and Canadian evangelicals, with Canadians more supportive of state intervention in the economy and attempts to alleviate economic equalities.[18] This divergence is of course also found between the general populations of the two countries. This suggests that Canadian and American evangelicals have somewhat different political outlooks as well as different levels of political activity and visibility, although American outlooks are also broader than sometimes supposed.[19]

The Study of Evangelicals

Evangelicals remain relatively understudied as a political and social movement in Canada, particularly by political scientists. Historians, sociologists and scholars of religion have produced a growing body of interdisciplinary literature on various facets of Canadian evangelicals, [20] including some studies of their political activities and interaction with the state.[21] But few studies are available that look at evangelicals in the overall context of Canadian politics, comparing their activities with other political actors and attempting to measure the extent of their actual effectiveness.

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[17] Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, "EFC: Social Issues: Issues" http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/social/issues.asp (Last viewed May 26, 2004)

[18] Hoover *et al*, "Evangelicalism Meets the Continental Divide."

[19] Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1998); Smith, *Christian America?*

[20] Among the leading works and scholars are G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal and Kingston, 1997); George A. Rawlyk and Mark A. Noll (eds.) *Amazing Grace: Evangelicalism in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal and Kingston, 1994); David Lyon and Marguerite Van Die, eds., *Rethinking Church, State and Modernity*: *Canada Between Europe and America* (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 2000).

[21] Stackhouse, John G. (1997) "'Who Whom?' Evangelicalism and Canadian Society" in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal and Kingston); Stackhouse, John G. (2000) "Bearing Witness: Christian Groups Engage Canadian Politics Since the 1960s" in Lyon, David and Van Die, Marguerite, eds. *Rethinking Church, State and Modernity*:*Canada Between Europe and America* (University of Toronto Press: Toronto)

Scholars have tended to take a survey-based approach to determine evangelical political activity.[22] This work asks what evangelicals believe and do, but inquires less into what other factors might affect their behaviour. In particular, there is little sustained reflection on the role of *institutions* in affecting evangelical political activism. While some authors such as Bruce and Hoover have suggested that institutional differences may explain differences between Canadian and American evangelical politics, this has not been explored or tested in any detail.[23] The existing scholarship also does not look from the other side and ask how other political actors and institutions are affected by or seek to affect evangelical political activism.

Canadian political scientists in particular have spent very little time thinking about evangelical politics. This is somewhat surprising given the close association of the Reform Party/Canadian Alliance with evangelicalism, and the beliefs of Preston Manning and Stockwell Day. While evangelical activity in Reform/Alliance is widely recognized, it has received limited systematic attention in leading studies of the party.[24] Most political science research on religion and politics has stemmed out of a longer tradition of measuring the effect of Catholic/Protestant cleavages on voting behaviour;[25] and we have almost no qualitative studies or work on behaviour outside of voting, such as lobbying and demonstrations.

Canada is not the only understudied country; evangelicals outside the United States rarely receive much attention. There are few comparative studies of evangelical politics,[26] although there are some discussions of evangelical involvement in American foreign affairs and international development.[27] Furthermore, even American studies tend to focus primarily on voting behaviour and political party activism[28] with less discussion of non-electoral activities.[29] The question I am asking - how institutions

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[22] Guth, James L. and Fraser, Cleveland R. (2001) "Religion and Partisanship in Canada" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40:1.

[23] Steve Bruce *Conservative Protestant Politics* (Oxford University Press: London, 1998); Dennis R. Hoover, "The Christian Right Under Old Glory and the Maple Leaf" in Corwin E. Smidt and James M. Penning, eds., *Sojourners in the Wilderness: The Christian Right in Comparative Perspective*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman Littlefield, 1997).

[24] Tom Flanagan, *Waiting For the Wave: The Reform Party and Preston Manning* (Stoddart: Toronto, 1995); Trevor Harrison, *Of Passionate Intensity:Right Wing Populism and the Reform Party of Canada* (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 1995); David Laycock *The New Right and Democracy in Canada: Understanding Reform and the Canadian Alliance* (Oxford University Press: Toronto, 2000).

[25] Richard Johnston "The Reproduction of the Religious Cleavage in Canadian Elections" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (1985); William P. Irvine "Explaining the Religious Basis of the Canadian Partisan Identity: Success on the Third Try" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 7 pp 560-63 (1974) and Brenda O'Neill "A Simple Difference of Opinion? Religious Beliefs and Gender Gaps in Public Opinion in Canada" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* XXXI:2 (2000).

[26] But see Bruce, *Conservative Protestant Politics* and Smidt and Penning, eds., *Sojourners in the Wilderness*.

[27] See Buss and Herman, *Globalizing Family Values*; Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford, Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (Routledge: London, 1996); Paul Freston, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America* (Cambridge University Press: London, 2001).

[28] See particularly the series of studies by Green, Rozell and Wilcox; John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox, eds. *Marching to the Millenium: The Christian Right in American Elections, 1980-2000* (Georgetown

may shape this activism - has received less reflection and attention.

The Role of Institutions

This approach is rooted in the theoretical framework of sociological institutionalism.[30] It does not argue that institutions explain all, or are even the primary explanation for phenomena. Rather, it focuses on the complex interactions between institutions and social forces and how each is influenced by the other. I am particularly interested in how institutions affect the political opportunity structure for social and political movements, such as evangelical Christians.

I have stressed that Canadian evangelical politics cannot be understood without reference to Canadian political institutions, as these institutions present different opportunity structures than in the U.S. I will illustrate some of these differences below, and suggest that Canadian structures offer fewer openings and opportunities than American ones. This, rather than societal factors alone, may explain the limited prominence of evangelical political activity in Canada.

The relationship between institutions and social forces may work both ways, however. While institutional opportunities may shape evangelical behaviour, evangelicals may also have contributed to the shaping of institutional norms themselves. For example, the norm of free parliamentary votes on same-sex issues may be linked to the lobbying efforts of evangelicals, among other groups. However, I suggest that institutions shape evangelicals more than vice versa, and that institutions have often stymied the efforts of evangelicals entirely. Much of the Canadian evangelical subculture is linked to American resources - not just church materials but books, media and educational resources as well.[31] There is evidence that political strategies and tactics may also be imported from the U.S., even though these may be less effective in the Canadian context. Thus it is interesting to ask to what extent Canadian evangelicals have actually adapted to the institutional opportunities before them.

This remains only a preliminary discussion, but it has important links for the study of social movements and political opportunities more broadly. It is also nteresting to ask whether self-identifying conservative social movements, such as evangelicals, display the same patterns of institutional interaction as self-identifying progressive movements, such as feminism, and whether institutional variables then have differing effects on movements. For example, a lively debate exists over the extent to which the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as an institutional variable has affected the thinking and strategies of progressive movements. But how does this work for evangelicals? It may be significant that most evangelical Charter-related efforts are defensive and in resistance to Charter challenges by others, such as challenges to heterosexist marriage laws. To what extent have evangelicals turned to the Charter to advance, rather than defend, their causes? How does evangelical Charter activity challenge the

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University Press, 2003). John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell, Clyde Wilcox, eds., *Prayers in the Precincts: The Christian Right in the 1998 Elections* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000) Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox,, eds. *God at the Grassroots: The Christian Right in the 1994 Elections* (Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, MD, 1995).

[29] But see Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers* and John C. Green, James L. Guth, Corwin E. Smidt and Lyman A. Kellstedt *Religion and the Culture Wars: Dispatches From the Front* (Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, MD, 1996).

[30] Miriam Smith, <<L'heritage institutionaliste de la science politique au Canada anglais>> *Politique et Societes* 21:3 (2002).

[31] Reimer, "A Generic Evangelicalism?.

parameters of the existing debate about the effects of the Charter?

This point is not limited to one set of institutions like the Charter and the courts. By taking a broad approach and looking at different public institutions, we can build an overall understanding of how Canadian evangelical efforts compare to American activity, as well as compared to other social movements entirely. Again, the objective is not to show that institutions explain everything, but to investigate how activism differs according to institutional paths, and how it may be shaped by different political opportunities. This provides an important new way of viewing evangelical politics in both Canada and the U.S., and contributes more broadly to the existing debate about the effect of institutions on movement behavior.

In the following section I examine five sets of Canadian political institutions - legislatures, executives and bureaucracies, the party and electoral systems, local government, and the courts - and review the possible effect of these institutions opportunities and paths on evangelical political activity. The discussion is more hypothetical than conclusive, since we lack data on many aspects. However, the central point is that the institutional context is often very different for Canadian than American evangelicals, and this may explain the vastly different levels of evangelical political activity in the two countries.

Legislatures

Canadian legislatures are built on the foundations of responsible government and party discipline, while American legislatures are separate from government and with much more fluid parties. Thus American evangelicals spend a great deal of time lobbying individual legislators, pressuring their votes and working for or against their reelection. Canadian evangelicals also focus on individual legislators (as the Focus on the Family voting guide shows). But this may be less effective in a system of party discipline.

Currently, party discipline tends to work as a centrifugal force against evangelical objectives, because except for the now defunct Reform/Alliance party, evangelicals do not have a strong presence in most or all Canadian political parties. Decisions are made by party leaders with varying input from members, after which discipline is normally imposed. This makes it difficult for evangelicals to pressure individual MPs to change their vote, or even for evangelical legislators themselves to vote differently. There are simply fewer openings other than targeting party leaders themselves. The most notable relaxations of this restriction were by the Reform/Alliance, which was already orie

Still, as noted above, party discipline is often relaxed by the major parties precisely in those areas of greatest concern to evangelicals - issues of reproduction and sexuality. It is interesting to note that the parties most distanced from the evangelical agenda - the NDP and Bloc Quebecois - are more likely to retain the party whip in these votes, while the more moderate or conservative parties - particularly Reform/Alliance - usually free their MPs. It is difficult to establish how much evangelical pressure and other religious lobbying have established this norm of free votes, but it may be an example where evangelicals have helped to shape institutional norms. Overall though, we can see quite clearly how differences in the Canadian and American legislative systems produce different paths and opportunities for evangelicals.

Executives and Bureaucracies

In the United States it is not uncommon to find evangelically-minded appointees at the cabinet table or in senior government positions. In Canada it is exceptionally rare for cabinet ministers or senior public servants to discuss their beliefs in any detail. However, the obvious instiiutional difference is

Canada's elected cabinets and career senior public service, as opposed to the system of outside political appointments in the U.S. This means a much greater influx of outsiders in the U.S., drawn from a much wider pool. In Canada, the pool is restricted and the public service remains non-partisan and strongly based on the merit principle. Thus both ministers and public servants are respectively part of fairly interwoven groups, rather than collections of recently-arrived outsiders with divergent origins.

The closed entry to these ranks is accompanied by more closed decision-making processes than in the United States. In addition to the more limited influence of Canadian legislators, much of Canadian political negotiations and decision-making occurs through the relatively closed processes of *executive federalism*. These are often criticized by non-governmental actors as difficult to penetrate and influence, and there certainly is little evidence of evangelical influence here. Again, the political opportunity structure is more closed in Canada and leaves fewer openings for evangelicals to focus their efforts. Intergovernmental relations in the U.S., while important, do not have the same level of significance as in Canada, especially if agreements must be ratified by state and congressional legislators.

Again we can see familiar institutional differences between Canada and the United States that leave fewer opportunities and openings for evangelical political influence in Canada. But one institutional aspect that remains interesting is the increasing devolution of administrative and governance responsibilities to non-governmental actors. Whether viewed as the privatization of public services or "alternative service delivery," these are common trends in both Canada and the U.S. However, the role of religion in them varies. In the United States President Bush has emphasized his "faith-based initiative" that involves religious organizations more directly in the delivery of public services (although this initiative has not been as widespread as originally planned). There is no such push to involve Canadian religious organizations so broadly. While the difference may be partly attributable to the unusually explicit beliefs of George W. Bush, it is worth studying these institutional trends and asking why and how they diverge in this new and growing area. Will they produce more opportunities and roles for Canadian evangelicals than at present, and perhaps display more convergence between the two countries?

Parties and the Electoral System

As mentioned, there is some research on how Canadian evangelicals vote. But there is very little systematic study of their involvement in political parties - whether the Reform/Alliance or others. In contrast, the degree of evangelical activism and influence in the Republican Party is a central question for American scholarship.

Again there are significant institutional differences linked to the party and electoral systems. In the United States the two are closely linked; Americans generally register as belonging to one or the other major party, and publicly-run primary elections help parties select their candidates. In Canada the party and electoral system are more separate; parties sell individual memberships and run their own internal elections. The effect is again a more closed system in Canada. Most Canadians do not belong to political parties, as it involves additional effort, modest cost, and memberships usually expire after a year. In contrast, American party membership is concurrent with registering to vote.

The one area of potential mobilization for Canadian activists is the heavy reliance on membership drives to win Canadian nomination races (analogous to American voter registration drives among likely supporters). This does present an important political opportunity for evangelicals and we can observe occasional examples of this, the most high profile probably being Tom Wappel's anti-abortion candidacy in the 1990 Liberal leadership race. But it is striking that the party most closely associated with evangelical views, the now defunct Reform/Canadian Alliance, was the most resistant to the "instant member" phenomenon, particularly for constituency nominations. Evangelicals do appear to have been more involved with leadership races, usually in support of Stockwell Day, but not on the competitive

scale seen in Liberal and Progressive Conservative leadership races. Generally speaking, Canadian evangelicals do not appear to have grasped this opportunity as much as they might.

The Reform Party/Canadian Alliance warrants specific attention here. As mentioned, its first two leaders - Preston Manning and Stockwell Day - both hold evangelical beliefs, the presence of evangelicals in the party is well-noted, and its policies have generally either reflected explicit evangelical views or at least avoided conflict with them (e.g., its stress on allowing MPs to vote freely on abortion and same-sex issues). But how effective was Reform/Alliance for evangelicals? Certainly not all evangelicals are found in the party; the Liberal party has a number of self-identifying evangelical MPs.

We have limited research evidence here, but it is reasonable to suggest that evangelical tilting toward a specific political party like Reform/Alliance may not have been very effective in a system of responsible government. While the party was central to Canadian political debate in the 1990s, its actual influence and power were marginal. This could be an example of how adopting an approach suited to the American political opportunity structure may not be appropriate for Canada. The different institutional structure may have helped sustain a small but continuing evangelical movement within the Liberal party rather than polarizing it entirely in Reform/Alliance.

What would be the effect of some form of proportional representation in the Canadian electoral system? Would Canadian evangelicals be more likely to support their own parties? The most explicitly evangelical/fundamentalist party in Canadian politics, the Christian Heritage Party, has had little success in its two decades and in recent years has only put up a handful of candidates. A PR system might increase evangelical interest in a political party of their own. But institutional and other variables might intervene; not only would a small party be unlikely to have much influence in a legislature still based on responsible government, but evangelicals may decline to support a specific partisan entity at all.

Local Government and School Boards

Although some school boards in B.C. have undergone tremendous pressure over gay-positive textbooks and related issues, evangelical activism also appears generally low at the local government level in Canada. Admittedly it is difficult to make assertions here given the large number of jurisdictions and limited evidence, but evangelicals do not appear to be major factors in local politics in Canada compared to the United States.

Here the institutional context is different not only from the U.S., but from other levels of Canadian government. Canadian municipal politics are generally non-partisan (except for some NDP organizing), and Canadian municipal government tends to be more consensus based and certainly quite different from the centralized power of responsible government. In contrast, American local politics generally reflect the system found at other levels, with partisanship and strong mayors (executives) separate from councils (legislatures) that display partial party discipline.

It is more difficult to assert the role of institutional differences here, especially without adequate data. But it is interesting that Canadian local politics are still largely based on individuals rather than parties. This should allow opportunities for evangelical mobilizing since they do not have to contend with other party actors. The low levels of voter turnout in municipal elections may also allow evangelical organizers to create a small but significant evangelical voting bloc. In short, the institutional framework suggests that we pay close attention to evangelical activity at the local level to see to what extent political opportunities are more favourable and put to use by evangelicals. Is there activity going on? If not, why?

The Courts

A final set of institutions is the judiciary. Again this is an area of great politicization in the

United States between evangelicals and their opponents, as judicial appointees are carefully scrutinized for their views on reproductive rights and similar issues. This is not the case in Canada. The process of legislative scrutiny in the United States presents an opportunity for evangelical mobilization, as judicial appointments are reviewed and legislators are pressured to support or oppose them. While Canada has been moving in the direction of some sort of prior review of appointees, there is strong opposition to having legislators approve appointments, precisely because of the American experience.

What effect might the arrival of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 have had on Canadian evangelicals? Evangelicals have launched or participated in some Charter challenges such as those relating to the public funding of religious education. But most evangelical legal activity seems to be more in opposition to Charter challenges by other groups, particularly feminists and gays and lesbians. A possible hypothesis is that the institution of the Charter has had its own effect on evangelicals by provoking them into reactionary responses of existing laws, especially related to reproduction and sexuality. However, even without the Charter these social and political trends may have continued to evolve and to generate evangelical opposition.

Evangelical legal activism appears to be centred on attempts to participate in court cases themselves as interveners. Evangelical organizations have sought to present arguments in a variety of recent court cases involving same-sex rights, euthanasia and other issues of interest, although they are often not granted status. It is unlikely that these interventions play a significant role in judicial decisions, but they are among the few political opportunities open to evangelicals in this set of institutions.

Conclusion

Do institutions explain everything about evangelical politics in Canada? Almost certainly not. Regardless of how they are identified and measured, evangelicals are more numerous in the United States and stand out more in its culture, its society, and its politics. But societal differences do not tell the whole story either. The significant differences in political institutions mean very different political opportunities for evangelicals, and this provides a likely and significant explanation for their very different visibility and impact in the two countries.

What is missing here is further research data that allows us to test these institutional hypotheses. I have stressed that Canadian political science has not devoted much study to evangelical politics; the research that does exist is rooted more in the humanities or sociology, with little reference to political institutions and the political context in which evangelical activism operates. Studying evangelicals in this manner does not simply shed light on one of many less-studied aspects of Canadian politics, but can also add more broadly to our understanding of institutions, political opportunities and social movements in Canada and elsewhere.