Operationalizing Evangelicals in a North American Context

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Abstract

Operationalizations used to find evangelical Christians in North American, and specifically Canadian, contexts no longer work as well as they did in the 1990s.

Growing cultural hostility towards the evangelical movement has caused many congregations and evangelical ministries to distance themselves public-facingly from the movement and its constituent parts. This has led to many evangelical members and adherents being unaware of local church denominational affiliations making *movement* operationalizations less effective. Moreover, the term evangelical has suffered semantic pollution because of American political and cultural associations.

At the same time, the meaning of beliefs has shifted from doctrinal convictions to expresssions of belonging. To the extent that this is true, *type* operationalizations relying on doctrinal questions may not be finding Evangelicals as historically understood by the movement, or according to definitions like Bebbington's.

Effective operationalizations will need to place new emphasis on behavior and on measuring the degree to which assents to statements of belief are anthropocentrically oriented.

1 The Operationalization Problem

This is a background paper for an upcoming consultation on revising Andrew Grenville's Christian Evangelical Scale (CES),[1] an operationalization for evangelical Christians. Queen's University historian George Rawlyk was the first to use the CES for his book *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?* and with a research team for the 1996 Canadian-American study "God and Society in North America."[2]

An operationalization is a tool or method of identifying a population, not necessarily according to a rigorous definition, but by measuring a minimal set of unique population characteristics. In public opinion research, a standardized set of survey questions, sometimes called a *scale*, can be used to operationalize, or identify, a population.

In this paper we will look at how Evangelicals are defined, at survey operationalizations currently used in North American public opinion including and ending with the CES, and then we will close with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of different operationalizations and some issues that would need to be addressed in a revision of the CES.

1.1 Defining "Evangelical"

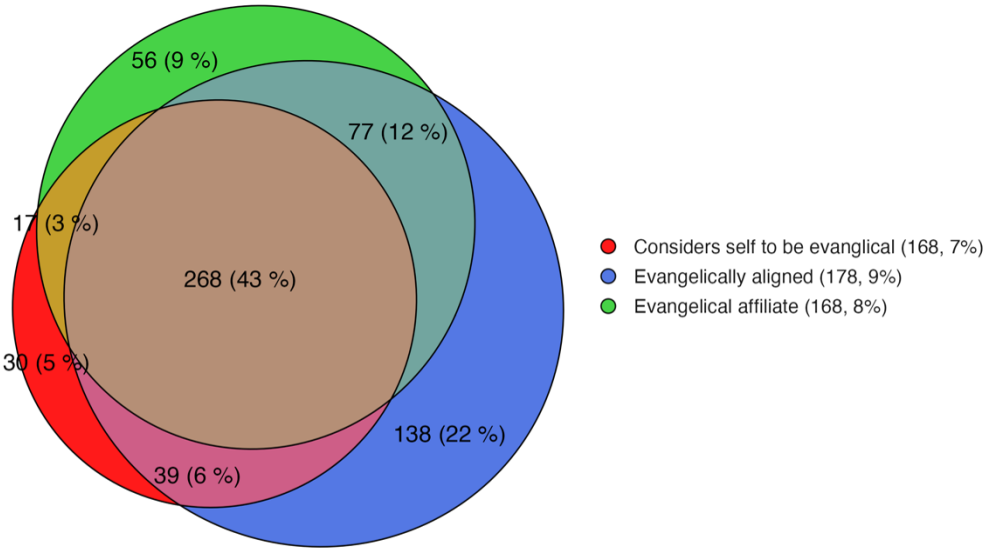
There are three common strategies for operationalizing Evangelicals used by researchers, pollsters, and scholars. The first usually involves identifying the religious tradition to which a person belongs. The second is done with a set of questions, or a scale, that measures shared traits,[3] typically beliefs and behaviours. Definitions referencing beliefs and behaviours define evangelicalism by *type,* whereas those referencing religious

1. Andrew Grenville, *Development of the Christian Evangelicalism Scale - Working Draft*, Unpublished, February 1995.

2. George A. Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?: In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990s* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, June 1, 1996), ISBN: 0-7735-1411-2; "God and Society in North America, 1996: Codebook," 1996, accessed December 17, 2012, http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/QUEENS_CB.asp.

3. George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 2, ISBN: 978-0-8028-0539-3, Google Books: 3NBLzpLP4NgC.

Figure 1: Evangelicals operationalized by affiliation (movement), the Christian Evangelical Scale (type) and self-identification, Canada, 2023



The Angus Reid Group conducted an online survey from September 20 to October 2, 2023, among a representative randomized sample of 2,007 Canadian adults who are members of Angus Reid Forum. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Another 363 Canadians who are evangelical affiliates and members of the Forum were also surveyed as a population booster. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. Evangelical alignment refers to those scoring 28 or higher on the 8 to 32 Christian Evangelical Scale.

affiliation define evangelicalism as a *movement.*[4] Finally, respondents can be asked if they *self-identify* as an evangelical Christian which is another movement operationalization but different because of the individual's self-perception about their belonging which is less connected to how they understand their denomination's relation to the evangelical movement.

Figure 1 shows the intersection of "evangelical" populations found using these three kinds of operationalizations on a 2023 public opinion poll. Although each method finds 7%–9% of the population, less than half of these three populations intersect. The CES (in blue) finds many Canadians who are not affiliated with an evangelical denomination (usually Catholic, Mainline Protestant, Latter-Day Saints or Jehovah's Witnesses). To the extent that the CES measures evangelical beliefs and behaviours there are many evangelical affiliates (in green) that don't share the beliefs and behaviours of evangelical Christians. Finally, there are those who self-identify as evangelical (in red) who do not affiliate with an evangelical denomination, nor do they share the beliefs and behaviours of Evangelicals.

Type operationalizations are only as good as their definition's ability to identify the population we want to find. Movement operationalizations work best when there is a high degree of homogeneity within the denominations identified as evangelical. In an analogous way, self-identification operationalizations work best when the meaning of evangelical is well understood and broadly shared.

Figure 1 shows that there is substantial difference in the "evangelical" populations found by these kinds of operationalizations. This means that comparative representations of Evangelicals are often misleading, and potentially false.

1.2 Grappling with Bebbington

Few have tried to trace out evangelicalism's universal characteristics, or marks. One who has is British sociologist David Bebbington, who, in *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* asserted that "there are common

4. John G. Stackhouse Jr., "Defining "Evangelical"," *Church & Faith Trends* 1, no. 1 (October 2007): 1–2, accessed July 30, 2019, https://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/getattachment/About-us/About-Evangelicalism/About-Evangelicals/Defining_Evangelical.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US.

features that have lasted from the first half of the eighteenth century to the second half of the twentieth. It is this continuing set of characteristics that reveals the existence of an Evangelical tradition."[5] Bebbington proposed four characteristics that, taken together, have become known as *Bebbington's quadrilateral.* These include:

1. ***Biblicism***, a particular regard for the Bible
2. ***Activism***, the expression of the gospel in effort
3. ***Crucicentrism***, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross
4. ***Conversionism***, the belief that lives need to be changed.[6]

It is important to point out that Bebbington's definition is a definition by *type*, and it includes both beliefs and behaviours. Also significant is the absence of religious affiliation in his definition. Religious affiliation is an operationalization by *movement* based on one's belonging to, or identifying with, an historically evangelical denomination or tradition.

Contemporary scholars of evangelicalism, whether they agree with Bebbington or not, must in some way interact with Bebbington as they try to flesh out alternative definitions of evangelical.

As mentioned above, Bebbington defines evangelicalism with respect to beliefs and behaviours, not religious affiliation. In practice, Evangelicals are sometimes defined in each of these ways.[7]

While Evangelicals are often operationalized by religious, or denominational, affiliation this approach has several problems. First, many Evangelicals belong to independent congregations with no formal denominational affiliation. Second, to the extent that evangelicalism is a question of distinctive beliefs and behaviours, Evangelicals can be found in denominations considered to be outside of the evangelical movement. Finally, in a point related to the previous one, it cannot be taken for granted that evangelical denominational adherents believe their denomination's doctrine or conform to its expected codes of behaviour.

Although Bebbington saw a set of enduring characteristics from the eighteenth to the twenthieth centuries, his quadrilateral no longer seems to capture the reality of Canadian evangelicalism that, as a movement, clings at times sheepishly or reluctantly to the name, while in many cases manifests Bebbington's marks weakly. Various theologians and historians have added nuance or supplemental points to address Bebbington's assumptions and growing inadequacy.

For example, George Marsden observes of evangelicalism that it is "a … diverse coalition … that has a fairly strong transdenominational identity."[8] Marsden's presentation of *transdenominationalism* as an evangelical characteristic is to distinguish the evangelical from the fundamentalist. Marsden says fundamentalists are typically characterized by "a fairly precise designation for a particular type of Protestant militant,"[9] typically with dispensational and Baptist leanings. If *transdenominationalism* were to be operationalized, an evangelical scale would need to test for a mark of fundamentalist exclusivity so fundamentalists could be identified as sub-category or excluded. Canada, however, did not experience the same kind of "systemic fundamentalist-modernist division"[10] as the United States which may mean the label, or its features, are less potent in a Canadian context.

Historian Timothy Larsen describes his own five-point pentagon as an attempt to add necessary context to

5. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, 1 edition (London: Routledge, September 1, 1989), 2, ISBN: 978-0-415-10464-7.

6. Bebbington, 2–17.

7. Conrad Hackett and D. Michael Lindsay, "Measuring Evangelicalism: Consequences of Different Operationalization Strategies," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 3 (September 2008): 499, ISSN: 00218294, 14685906, accessed June 12, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00423.x, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00423.x.

8. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 4–6.

9. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 4, see also; John G. Stackhouse Jr., "Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism," *Church & Faith Trends*, 2:2 2009, https://files.evangelicalfellowship.ca/min/rc/cft/V02I02/Evangelicalism_and_Fundamentalism.pdf.

10. Sam Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant Subculture in Canada and the United States* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, September 15, 2003), 27, ISBN: 0-7735-2624-2.

Bebbington's comparatively concise definition.[11] While his marks echo Bebbington's four-part framework, Larsen adds the context of evangelicalism as a movement, describing Evangelicals as both "Orthodox Protestant[s]" and as those "who stand in the tradition of the global Christian networks arising from the eighteenth-century revival movements associated with John Wesley and George Whitefield."[12] These additions firmly plant Evangelicals as "a subset of historic, orthodox Christianity … [and] also a form of Protestantism,"[13] distinguishing them from Catholics and other groups who may self-identify as evangelical or born-again.

Larsen's definition positions Evangelicals as those who not only affirm a historic articulation of the faith, but also as those who value the authority of the Bible "in matters of faith and practice."[14] Further parameters for evangelical behaviour are articulated in his fifth point where Evangelicals are described as those who "stress[] the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual to bring about … an ongoing life of fellowship with God and service to God and others…"[15] thus binding the idea of evangelical to external loci of authority with demands on their beliefs and their behaviours. Therefore, Evangelicals are those who embrace the authority of the Bible and also submit to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

John G. Stackhouse Jr. criticizes some evangelical leaders who "define evangelicalism so as to make evangelicals look as numerous and therefore politically important as possible" and other for being "so concerned about preserving the purity and rectitude of their community against threats of spiritual and organizational declension that they have defined evangelicalism restrictively and thus excluded individuals and institutions whom historians, social scientists, journalists, and other observers would otherwise have been sure would qualify as evangelicals."[16] This is an important caution that the motives of the drafters of operationalizations can compromise the integrity and usefulness of the instrument.

While maintaining that "[t]he boundaries of evangelicalism remain both fuzzy and porous," Stackhouse, nevertheless, maintains that "Evangelicals are best discerned … as manifesting *all* of the defining emphasis [listed below] in an integrated and reinforcing complex of concerns":

- Trinitarian
- biblicist
- conversionist
- missional
- populist
- pragmatic[17]

Perhaps anticipating how one might turn his "reinforcing complex of concerns" into an operationalization, Stackhouse writes, "… evangelicalism is not a matter of merely agreeing with such a checklist. It is a matter of living consistently in accordance with it."[18] In asserting this, Stackhouse is arguing that evangelicalism is as much about *orthopraxy* (right behaviour) as it is about *orthodoxy* (right belief).[19] As we will argue later in this paper, failing to account for orthopraxy is a significant weakness of most North American operationalizations of Evangelicals.

In his book, *Caught in the Current*, Reimer suggests that Evangelicals in England and Canada may be moving away from deference to the external authorities of the Bible and Holy Spirit. Instead, they are

11. Timothy Larsen, "Defining and Locating Evangelicalism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, 1st ed., ed. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier (Cambridge University Press, April 12, 2007), 2, ISBN: 978-0-521-84698-1, accessed December 18, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521846986.001, https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/CBO9781139001366A005/type/book_part.
12. Larsen, 1.
13. Larsen, 3–4.
14. Larsen, 1.
15. Larsen, 1.
16. John G. Stackhouse Jr., *Evangelicalism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, July 14, 2022), 43–44, ISBN: 978-0-19-007968-0.
17. Stackhouse Jr., 45.
18. Stackhouse Jr., 45.
19. Stackhouse Jr., *Evangelicalism*, 45; Stackhouse Jr., "Defining "Evangelical"," 3.

increasingly following the dictates of their hearts, thus moving from an external locus of authority to an internal locus of authority:

> Although there is no central institutional authority within evangelicalism, many raised as evangelicals feel free to depart from the beliefs and practices of their parents, pastors, or denominations. We have known that inward authority is typical of the "spiritual but not religious", but what is less well known, or expected, is that it is also widespread in institutional religion, including evangelicalism.[20]

Reimer observes the effect of this subjective turn on religious engagement, "most Britons and Canadians no longer feel obligated to attend churches or to hold orthodox, institutionally sanctioned beliefs."[21] Based on his findings with Evangelicals, Reimer suggests they are following similar trends and looks to sociologist Abby Day to understand how and why evangelicalism is changing.

Abby Day set out to understand why 72 percent of the UK population identified themselves as Christian on the 2001 census despite an overwhelming paradigm of secularization in the UK. In other words, the census found a population whose beliefs and behaviours did not reflect what she expected to find. She writes, "we wondered what those people really meant by 'Christian.' " Her question suggests the term "Christian" insufficiently or incorrectly described the population they found and meant something else for respondents using it.

Day discovered from her sample that Britons often used the term 'Christian' in a *performative* function, describing this as "a lived, embodied performance, brought into being through action and where the object of worship is not an entity such as a god or 'society', but the experience of belonging."[22] She designates this group as having "anthropocentric orientation"[23] because their objective for claiming a religious identity was derived from preoccupied human relationships.

Anthropocentrists who considered themselves Christian exhibited beliefs and behaviours that oriented toward human relationships, rather than those typically associated with Christian religious engagement oriented toward the divine.[24] Many in Day's sample who self-identified as Christian, "were Christian primarily because they belonged to a family that had raised them as Christian or because they understood 'Christian' as a term coded to colour, country, and culture,"[25] and had little involvement or interest in church engagement or assent to historic, Christian doctrines or creeds. Building an understanding of her respondents' seemingly contradictory claims, she concluded,

> [A] performative, anthropocentric Christian … may be someone who neither attends church, has faith in God or Jesus, accepts the creedal beliefs of Christianity, nor thinks religions is important in everyday life, but does find the institution of Christianity important when asked, usually in relation to 'others.'[26]

For Day, performative, anthropocentric Christians provided a nuanced understanding of what many in North America would call "nominalists," those who are Christian in name only.[27] Reimer found that to the extent that Evangelicals, or others, have an internal locus of authority, assent to doctrinal statements may mean they identify with a group that defines themselves by a doctrinal statement rather than an indication that they believe it.[28] Put another way, doctrinal statements function more as a flag, than a creed. Resembling Day's anthropocentrists, Reimer notes even when someone with internal authority says, "I believe in God,"

20. Sam Reimer, *Caught in the Current: British and Canadian Evangelicals in an Age of Self-Spirituality* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023), 22, https://www.mqup.ca/caught-in-the-current-products-9780228016953.php.
21. Reimer, 15.
22. Abby Day, *Believing in Belonging: Belief and Social Identity in the Modern World* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 175, ISBN: 978-0-19-957787-3.
23. Day, 157, Alternatively, those who looked to a transcendent God as "central to their lives," she designated as having a "theocentric orientation."
24. Day, 180.
25. Day, 157.
26. Day, 181.
27. Day, 174–90.
28. Reimer, *Caught in the Current: British and Canadian Evangelicals in an Age of Self-Spirituality*, 53.

it is meant in a more relational, subjective way like one might say "I believe in you" to another person.[29]

Reimer suggests "performative" belief for Evangelicals is still to say they believe in something. He explains, "By performative, I am not suggesting that pronouncements of belief are somehow disingenuous or attention seeking, but that beliefs serve the function of signalling allegiance and belonging to a group. It is a way to show and reinforce one's identity."[30] Evangelicals in Reimer's sample were happy to give assent to many of the central doctrines of orthodox Christianity, they were more likely to hedge on controversial ethics and exclusive beliefs which were unpopular relationally or did not resonate with their inner selves. Where Reimer differs from Day, however, is that his findings come from a religiously engaged sample. Lay respondents in Reimer's study were active members in their church as identified and recommended by their clergy.[31]

The significance for operationalizations that use doctrinal questions is that it is not possible to determine whether an affirmation of a doctrinal statement is performative, an indication of a deeply held belief, or both. This ambiguity potentially compromises the usefulness of a mainly doctrinal operationalization. For example, giving one's assent to "Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin," could mean I identify with a group that believes in Christ's substitutionary atonement, or it could mean I understand and believe this Christian doctrine as a stable, inner conviction, or it could mean both, or even something else.

Reimer's point is that affirmations of doctrine mean something different depending on where one finds their locus of authority. ***We recommend, then, that a revision of the CES include a question or questions that aim to measure whether a person's locus of authority is more internal or external.***

Canadian public opinion polls beginning at least as far back the mid-1990s asked the following questions which could be used to locate one's locus of authority vis-à-vis Christian religious faith:

- "My private beliefs about Christianity are more important to me than what is taught by any church."
- "I don't think you need to worship at church in order to be a good Christian."[32]

Clearly there was an awareness that this shift to an internal locus of authority was happening in the 1990s when Rawlyk *et al* included "My private beliefs about Christianity are more important than what is taught by any church" on the 1996 God and Society in North America survey.[33] A recent 2023 survey conducted by The EFC in partnership with Angus Reid Group asked a similar question, to which 57 percent of evangelical affiliates, and 69 percent of the general population responded in agreement.

If Reimer is correct in his assessment that many who affiliate with the evangelical movement have reinterpreted the meaning of 'belief' to signal belonging rather than commitment to a creed, then drafters of evangelical scales will have to decide if beliefs and behaviours are indeed marks of Evangelicals, and, if so, which ones. Moreover, if as Reimer asserts, people can assent to a doctrinal statement while giving it a different meaning than their church or denomination, then crafters of scales will need to give careful attention not just to statements of doctrinal orthodoxy but which statements of doctrinal orthodoxy that best resist private, individualized interpretation. For example, questions could be worded in such a way that respondents must assess what the question might mean rather than echo the wording of confessions and creeds so that one can't easily "perform" the assent.

In many ways, evangelicalism is a Modern movement, and Bebbington, writing about eighteenth to twentieth century evangelicalism, a period characterized by Modernity, likely found a continuity in evangelicalism that paralleled the wider, societal, Modern continuity of those centuries. At the risk of unwarranted simplification, postmodernism (and we are aware that there is no such simple undifferentiated thing) with its perspectivalism and the rise of what Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor calls the *authentic self* were challenges

29. Reimer, *Caught in the Current: British and Canadian Evangelicals in an Age of Self-Spirituality*, 55.
30. Reimer, 53.
31. Reimer, 38.
32. These questions had a response scale of: Agree strongly, Agree moderately, Disagree moderately, Disagree strongly, Don't know/Not sure.
33. "God and Society, 1996," n. BELIEF14.

evangelicalism had never faced, and was arguably unprepared for.[34] The move to a person-centred culture can be seen in the mania for all products monogrammed or personalized in the 1980s which blossomed into the personalization of other aspects of life in the early 2000s as digital technologies like smartphones and social media became widely adopted. As most other aspects of life became centred on the self, Evangelicals largely did not have an answer for why religion should not operate the same way.

In the following sections we will look at various operationalizations of Evangelicals finishing with the CES. Each scale will be analyzed for its approach to operationalization and evaluated for its strengths and weaknesses as we consider how to measure Evangelicals in our contemporary Canadian context.

2 Operationalizing Evangelicals

This section will examine the three common strategies for operationalizing Evangelicals: by *movement*, by *type* and by *self-identification*.

2.1 Movement

The Canadian census and denominations operationalize Evangelicals as a *movement*. Public opinion polls use various strategies but religious affiliation, a movement operationalization, is common. Many scholars focus on historical aspects of the evangelical movement or on sub-movements. Mark Noll suggests " 'evangelicalism' has always been made up of shifting movements"[35] and that "[a]ll discussions of evangelicalism … are … efforts within our own minds to provide some order for a multifaceted, complex set of impulses and organizations."[36]

2.1.1 Denominational Statistics

Evangelical denominations also operationalize Evangelicals through their membership or adherent counts. These are important measures against which other kinds of operationalizations can be validated. There is also a great deal of variability from denomination to denomination in how membership and adherent statistics are determined. These methodological differences make it difficult to use these statistics to produce aggregate, national representations of evangelicalism.

Perhaps the best recent, comprehensive, aggregation of denominational data was made by Bruce Guenther and Outreach Canada in 2001.[37] More recently, Bruce Guenther and Jonathan Chadwick are reprising this 2001 work, and publications from this new study are expected soon.[38] That the production of these data have not been attempted for decades is an indication of how difficult this task is. Glenn Smith produced similar tables counting French- and English-speaking congregations in the province of Quebec for 2009.[39]

2.1.2 The Census

The Canadian census has included a decadal religion question since 1871.

Census religion question responses are called religious code values (RCVs). Some RCVs identify specific religious groups while others are categorical. Census religion data is published using a set of public RCVs which are themselves a mixture of specific and categorical ones.

Some General Social Surveys (GSS) also operationalize Evangelicals by religious affiliation. From 1985 to 1993 and then from 1999 to 2011, the GSS religion question was, "What, if any, is your religion?" From 1994

34. Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, Ont: Anansi, 2003), ISBN: 978-0-88784-520-8.
35. Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of The Evangelical Mind*, 1 edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., October 19, 1995), ISBN: 978-0-8028-4180-3.
36. Noll.
37. Bruce L. Guenther and Outreach Canada, *Denominations in Canada*, Unpublished, 2001.
38. "Counting Christians," Counting Christians, accessed June 20, 2023, https://countingchristians.wordpress.com/.
39. Glenn Smith, "A Brief Socio-Demographic Portrait of French-Speaking Protestantism in Quebec Since 1960," in *French-Speaking Protestants in Canada*, vol. 11, Religion in the Americas (Leiden and Boston: Brill, September 20, 2011), 275–76, ISBN: 978-90-04-21176-6.

to 1998 and from 2012 to 2019 the question was, "What is your religion?"[40]

The 2020 GSS used the following question, "What is your religion? Specify your denomination or religion, even if you are not currently a practicing member of that group. e.g. Roman Catholic, United Church, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Muslim, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Greek Orthodox. If the religion is not listed, select "Other." The questionnaire coding notes indicate that respondents choosing "Other" will be presented with a list of 144 religions, no religion, or an opportunity to specify a religion.[41] The authors could not find an online dictionary or codebook for the GSS.

The 2004 GSS used the following question, "What, if any, is your religion? No, religion (Agnostic, Atheist), Roman Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic, United Church, Anglican (Church of England, Episcopalian), Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Islam (Muslim), Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jehovah's Witnesses, Other religion, Don't know, Refusal, Other please specify."[42] No additional religious options were provided.

The decadal, census religion question typically includes a suggested list of RCVs. See table 1 below. To some extent, these lists tend to confirm assumptions about prevalence of religious groups in that religious code values appearing in the lists tend to be overcounted and those not on the lists undercounted relative to membership and attendance data collected by denominations.[43]

Statistics Canada published a "List of Religions 2021" representing their *public* RCVs for the 2021 census. "Christian" is sub-divided into the fifteen categories in table 2 .

The 2021 census *dictionary*[44] represents RCVs approved for use in public representations of census data. The census *codebook* by contrast, contains instructions for how the more diverse set of responses received on the census should be coded into the categories found in the census dictionary. At its most granular level, the 2021 census *dictionary* only has 162 Christian RCVs, and 45 of these are themselves categorical. In 2020, church historian Bruce Guenther wrote, "The total number of [Christian] denominations in Canada now exceeds 340, an increase of more than 120 denominations since 1980."[45] From this we could deduce that about two-thirds of Christian denominations are being coded into aggregate or categorical RCVs. The 1961 and 1971 census codebooks each listed approximately 800 RCVs.[46] At the time of writing, Statistics Canada had not released a public version of their codebook for the 2021 census. At the most granular level, the 2021 census List of Religions only contains 79 non-Christian RCVs. In total, there are 241 RCVs in the 2021 census *dictionary*, well shy of the approximately 800 listed in the 1961 and 1971 *codebooks*. Given the proliferation of Christian denominations identified by Guenther, and what we assume is a growing religious diversity in Canada represented by adherents immigrating from all over the world, we would assume that there were more than 800 RCV responses to the religion question in 2021. Canada's religious diversity is hidden in these aggregate categories and the religious codebook will be needed to reveal it – at least partially.

Tables require brevity, but it is worth noting that many of the EFC's affiliate denominations conspicuously identify with Canada in their names. It is this national identification, however, which is usually dropped in the List of Religions for brevity's sake. In a culture that tends to see Evangelicals as un-Canadian, this administrative disassociation of Evangelicals from Canada, cannot help but bolster received prejudices.

Census lists, codebooks, and dictionaries notwithstanding, census respondents may not even know which

40. Louis Cornelissen, *Religiosity in Canada and Its Evolution from 1985 to 2019*, Statistics Canada, October 28, 2021, 15, accessed October 28, 2021, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00010-eng.pdf?st=nevAYPm1.

41. "General Social Survey – Social Identity," accessed June 20, 2023, https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/statistical-programs/instrument/5024_Q1_V4.

42. *General Social Survey 2003 - Cycle 17 - Survey on Social Engagment in Canada*, Statistics Canada, 2003, 112, accessed June 20, 2023, https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Instr.pl?Function=getInstrumentList&Item_Id=34088&UL=1V&.

43. Rick Hiemstra, "Evangelicals and the Canadian Census," *Church & Faith Trends* 1, no. 2 (February 2008): 6–7, ISSN: 1920-0439, accessed January 24, 2020, https://files.evangelicalfellowship.ca/min/rc/cft/V01I02/Evangelicals_Canadian_Census.pdf.

44. Statistics Canada Government of Canada, "Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021 - Complete A to Z Index," November 17, 2021, accessed June 19, 2023, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/dict/az/index-eng.cfm.

45. Bruce Guenther, "The Changing Landscape of Denominational Christianity in Canada, 1980-2020," *Historical Papers of the Canadian Society of Church History*, 2022, 51.

46. *1961 Census of Canada Population Code Book*, Statistics Canada, 1961, 32–41; *1971 Census of Canada Population Code Book*, Statistics Canada, 1971, 45–57. Faxes received from Statistics Canada's Census Helpdesk on September 17, 2007.

Table 1: Suggested lists of religions on decennial census forms, 1951–2021

Order	1951	1961[c]	1971[c]	1981	1991[d]	2001	2011[f]	2021
1	Roman Catholic	**Adventist**[b]	Anglican	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic
2	United Church	Anglican	**Baptist**	United Church	Ukrainian Catholic	Ukrainian Catholic	Anglican	United Church
3	Anglican	**Baptist**	Greek Orthodox	Anglican	United Church	United Church	United Church	Anglican
4	Presbyterian	Christian Science	Jewish	Presbyterian	Anglican	Anglican	**Pentecostal**	Muslim
5	**Baptist**	Greek Orthodox	Lutheran	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Lutheran	Traditional (Aboriginal) Spirituality	**Baptist**
6	Lutheran	Jehovah's Witnesses	**Mennonite**	**Baptist**	Lutheran	**Baptist**	Longhouse	Hindu
7	Ukrainian (Greek) Catholic	Jewish	**Pentecostal**	Greek Orthodox	**Baptist**	Greek Orthodox	**Baptist**	**Pentecostal**
8	Jewish	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Jewish	**Pentecostal**	Jewish	Lutheran	Lutheran
9	Greek Orthodox	**Mennonite**	Roman Catholic	Ukrainian Catholic	Greek Orthodox	Islam	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	Presbyterian
10	**Mennonite**	Mormon	**Salvation Army**	**Pentecostal**	Jewish	Buddhist	Jehovah's Witnesses	Sikh
11	**Pentecostal**	**Pentecostal**	Ukrainian Catholic	Jehovah's Witnesses	**Mennonite**	Hindu	Presbyterian	Buddhist
12	**Evangelical Church**	Presbyterian	United Church	**Mennonite**	Jehovah's Witnesses	Sikh	Moravian	Jewish
13	**Salvation Army**	Roman Catholic	No religion	**Salvation Army**	**Salvation Army**	etc.[e]	**Evangelical Missionary Church**	Greek Orthodox
14	Mormon	**Salvation Army**		Islam	Islam		etc.	etc.
15	Christian Science	Ukrainian Catholic		No religion[d]	Buddhist			
16	**Adventist**	United Church			Hindu			
17					Sikh			

Groups traditionally understood to be Conservative Protestant are in bold.

[b] Until recently, Seventh Day Adventists would not have considered themselves Evangelical and would not have been understood to be Evangelical, although they would be understood to be Conservative Protestants.

[c] Groups are listed in the order in which they appeared. In 1961 and 1971 the suggested list of religions was alphabetically ordered. From 1981 to 1991, the groups appeared in order dictated, at least in part, by their frequency from the previous census. From 2011 on the list and its order seems, in part, to be intended to reflect the religious diversity rather than prevalence.

[d] The format of the questions changed in 1991. In 1971 and 1981 each item on the list had its own mark-in box. Starting in 1991 there was a blank space to write in the respondent's religious affiliation, with a separate mark-in box retained for "no religion."

[e] The year 2001 was the first in which "etc." was added to the list, thereby explicitly suggesting that the list was not exhaustive.

[f] The mandatory long-form census was cancelled for 2011, and replaced with the voluntary National Household Survey.

Table 2: 2021 census list of public religious code values, Christian category and sub-categories

Religious code value	Number of religious sub-code values[d]	Identifiable EFC denominational affiliates[d]	Possible evangelical religious sub-code values[a]	"n.o.s." or "n.i.e." unexpanded religious sub-code values[b]	Categorical religious sub-code values
Christian, n.o.s.[b]	0	—	—	—	—
Anabaptist[c]	20	6	7	6	6
Anglican	5	2	2	2	2
Baptist	14	8	14	2	3
Catholic [c]	14	0	0	4	4
Christian Orthodox[c]	21	0	0	6	6
Jehovah's Witness	0	—	—	—	—
Latter-Day Saints	3	0	0	1	1
Lutheran	6	1	1	2	3
Methodist and Wesleyan (Holiness)	9	6	9	2	2
Pentecostal and other Charismatic[c]	23	8	23	4	4
Presbyterian	4	0	2	2	2
Reformed	8	2	8	2	2
United Church	0	—	—	—	—
Other Christian and Christian-related traditions	35	6	23	8	10
Total	162	39	89	41	45

Source: Statistics Canada, "List of Religions 2021." https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=1311612.

[a] As identified by the authors.

[b] n.o.s. is not otherwise specified and n.i.e. is not indicated elsewhere.

[c] This sub-division is further sub-divided. Third-level subdivisions have been aggregated for this table.

[d] EFC affiliate denominations as of June 19, 2023.

denomination they belong to. The growing cultural distance between Canadians and Evangelicals,[47] for example, has led many local congregations to change their names distancing themselves from their tradition. For example, First *Baptist* Church might become First *Community* Church.[48] To the extent that a local congregation goes out of its way to minimize its denominational affiliation, its members and adherents may not be aware of the affiliation limiting their ability to provide a specific census RCV.

Contemporary Sunday-morning congregants are less likely to see their tradition or denomination printed on a church sign or doorway, no longer hold a denominationally published hymnal in their hands, or sign worship songs from a particular evangelical denominational tradition. The ubiquity of ministry-related resources available online that have contributed to a degree of homogeneity across evangelical congregations, especially when it comes to worship music. For example, data gathered from Christian Copyright Licensing international (CCLI) indicated that the most popular songs selected for musical worship came from a limited number of megachurches and music labels.[49] This reduced distinctiveness in worship further hampers congregants' ability to identify the specific evangelical denominational their congregation is a part of.

2.2 Type

This section will examine strategies for identifying Evangelicals by *type* and examine the typological operationalizations used by NAE Lifeway, Barna, Pew Research Centre, Gallup, and Grenville's Christian Evangelical Scale to identify evangelical by their beliefs and behaviours.

2.2.1 NAE Lifeway Research Evangelical Beliefs Research Definition (EBRD)

On October 15, 2015, the American National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) Board of directors adopted the following "evangelical research definition" (EBRD) to be used in telephone and online public opinion research:

1. The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.
2. It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their savior.
3. Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin.
4. Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation.

These questions are to be randomized, presented on a single "screen" with the following Likert scale:

- Strongly agree,
- Somewhat agree,
- Somewhat disagree,
- Strongly disagree
- Refused (**Do not read**)

The "Do not read" instructions accompanying the "Refused" Likert scale value suggests this value would be available if the survey were administered electronically or in print, but not if it were administered orally.

Although the Likert scale provides for graduations of agreement, the questions themselves are superlative, absolutizing, or exclusive in their presentation; for example, the … ***highest*** authority …, … the ***only*** sacrifice…,

47. Don Hutchinson and Rick Hiemstra, "Canadian Evangelical Voting Trends by Region, 1996–2008," *Church & Faith Trends* 2, no. 3 (August 2009): 4–6, ISSN: 1920-0439, https://files.evangelicalfellowship.ca/min/rc/cft/V02I03/Evangelical_Voting_Trends_1996-2008.pdf.

48. A November 30, 2023 Charities Directorate search on the key words "Community Church" found 1,012 matches (https://apps.cra-arc.gc.ca/ebci/hacc/srch/pub/advncdSrch). For comparison, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, the largest EFC-affiliated denomination, reported having "more than 1,100" churches (https://www.paoc.org/family/who-we-are/about) (accessed November 30, 2023).

49. W. L. R. Team, "(Almost) 100% of the Top 25 Worship Songs Are Associated with Just a Handful of Megachurches.," Worship Leader Research, March 30, 2023, 8:49 p.m. (Z), accessed April 13, 2023, https://worshipleaderresearch.com/100-of-the-top-25-worship-songs-are-associated-with-just-a-handful-of-megachurches/.

Table 3: EBRD alignment with Bebbington's quadrilateral

EBRD Question	Bebbington
The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.	Biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible
It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their savior.	Activism, the expression of the gospel in effort
Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin.	Crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross
Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation.	Conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed.

Only those who trust in Jesus Christ ***alone*** … . The evangelism question (question 2) is the least absolute in asserting evangelism to be merely "very important," instead of something like "of the utmost importance."

Table 3 below shows how the EBRD scale can be seen to be addressing Bebbington's four emphases.

By activism Bebbington certainly includes evangelism, but his understanding was broader and included, for example, "Wilberforce's campaign against the slave trade" and a "host of voluntary societies embod[ying] the philanthropic urge" precipitated by evangelicals' conversions.[50] An operationalization does not need to be definitionally comprehensive to be effective, and the absence of this broader understanding of activism in the EBRD scale, rather than downplaying the importance of other activist activities, may simply reflect the EBRD's belief that evangelism is the categorical activity that best correlates with the presence of the others. Nevertheless, to the extent that the framers of the EBRD set out to create a Bebbington operationalization, the measurement of significant activist attributes seem to be missing.

Although, the EBRD seems to be a Bebbington operationalization, it is a scale of beliefs, not behaviours. Bebbington's activism emphasizes the behavioural characteristics of evangelicals, but the EBRD scale activism question, "It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their savior," substitutes a belief *about* activism for a measure of activism.

The EBRD has been adopted by Grey Matter Research for their operationalization of evangelical Christians in an American context.[51]

2.2.2 Barna

The Barna Group (Barna) was founded in 1984 and is best known for its Christian ministry research. In 2016, shortly after the NAE and LifeWay published their EBRD, Barna posted a glossary of "Theolographics & Demographics" that included definitions (but not questionnaires) which inform their operationalizations of evangelicals.[52] This glossary webpage includes two evangelical definitions: a four-point definition (Barna-4) and a nine-point one (Barna-9).

Barna defines nine-point Evangelicals (Barna-9, which they also call "Legacy Evangelicals") as a sub-set of those they categorize as "born again," such that the nine points of Barna-9 borrows its first two points from Barna's born-again definition.

Barna categorizes respondents as ***born again*** (born-again) if they:

50. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 12.
51. *Evangelicals In the Public Arena: Understanding Their Political, Moral, and Social Views*, Infinity Concepts and Grey Matter Research, March 14, 2024, 32, https://www.infinityconcepts.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Evangelicals-In-the-Public-Arena-Downloadable.pdf.
52. "Glossary of Barna's Theolographics & Demographics," Barna Group, January 20, 2016, 7:14 p.m. (Z), accessed June 2, 2023, https://www.barna.com/glossary/.

Table 4: Barna's theolographic disclaimers for select categorizations

Category	Disclaimers
Born again	Individuals were not asked to self-describe as "born again" or as "Christian."
Barna-4	Individuals were not asked to self-describe as "evangelical" or as "Christian."
Barna-9	Being classified as Legacy Evangelical [Barna-9] is not dependent on church attendance or denominational affiliation. Individuals were not asked to self-describe as "evangelical" or as "Christian."

1. have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today, and
2. believe that when they die, they will go to Heaven because they have:
    a. confessed their sins, and
    b. accepted Jesus Christ as their saviour.[53]

Leaving aside that there seems to be additional sub-points within the two-point, born-again definition, the ***Barna-9*** definition rounds out its number with the following seven points:

1. Say their faith is very important in their life.
2. Believe they have a personal responsibility to share their faith with others.
3. Believe that Satan exists.
4. Believe that Jesus Christ came to earth and lived a sinless life,
5. Assert that the Bible is accurate in all of its teachings,
6. Believe that salvation comes only through grace, not works.
7. Believe that God is the omniscient, omnipotent, creator of the universe who still rules the world today.[54]

As mentioned above, Barna has a four-point, evangelical definition (Barna-4) in addition to its nine-point definition (Barna-9). The criteria for ***Barna-4*** are:

1. Believe they will go to Heaven because they have:
    a. confessed their sins, and
    b. accepted Jesus as their savior,
2. Strongly agree the Bible is accurate in the principles it teaches,
3. Strongly agree they have a personal responsibility to share their faith with others, and
4. Strongly disagree that a person can earn their way into Heaven through good works.[55]

Curiously, while Barna-9 is a subset of born-again, Barna-4 is not described as such. Barna-4 shares the heaven criteria from the born-again definition, but omits the having-made-a-personal-commitment-to-Jesus-that-is-still-important-to-them-today criteria. One could assume that Barna-4 includes the entirety of the born-again criteria, but it seems strange that there is not more consistency across their Barna-4 and Barna-9 definitions.

These "theolographic" definitions also come with significant disclaimers about what is not included (see table 4).

53. "Glossary of Barna's Theolographics & Demographics."
54. "Glossary of Barna's Theolographics & Demographics."
55. "Glossary of Barna's Theolographics & Demographics."

Barna-4 and Barna-9 are not social definitions. Not only do they not require participation in the evangelical movement (attendance at worship services), they do not even require affiliation with an evangelical denomination or the movement as a whole. Barna's Evangelicals are not necessarily embedded in, or otherwise connected to, the evangelical movement.

"When [George Barna was] asked about the origin of the nine-point evangelical criteria that his firm has used in surveys for nearly two decades, he cited the work of the National Association of Evangelicals. 'Years ago, NAE labored long and hard to identify what an evangelical believes. Because the distinguishing attribute of an evangelical is what he or she believes, we drew criteria from the belief statement of the nation's leading association evangelicals. We probably overestimate the number of evangelicals, since we do not take into account all of the beliefs that NAE says a true evangelical holds. But our measurement approach incorporates the key elements from their statement of faith.' "[56]

The NAE Statement of Faith as of June 2, 2023, is:

- We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
- We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
- We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
- We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
- We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
- We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.[57]

Although Barna appeals to the NAE statement of faith, Barna-4 and Barna-9 differ from the NAE statement in several important ways. Barna's definitions do not measure belief in the Trinity, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the virgin birth, Christ's substitutionary atonement for sins on the cross, or the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, Barna-9 asks about the existence of Satan, and the omniscient, omnipotent rule of God in the world today, and whether individuals have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, topics not explicitly addressed in the NAE statement of faith.

That Barna's "Theolographics & Demographics" definition was released shortly after the NAE and LifeWay Research released their Evangelical Beliefs Research Definition suggests, that the former was released in response to the latter. Although George Barna¸s "key elements from [the NAE] statement of faith" was incorporated into Barna's definition, clearly Barna-4 and Barna-9 had other sources as well.

2.2.3 Pew Research

The Pew Research Centre was established in 2004 and describes itself as a non-partisan public opinion research think tank "that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world."[58] In 2007 and 2014, Pew conducted a Religious Landscape Study (RLS) with a nationally representative sample of over 35,000 Americans. Like what we observed earlier in this paper, Pew Research Centre acknowledges that when operationalizing Evangelicals, a lot depends "on how evangelicalism is being defined."[59]

56. "Survey Explores Who Qualifies As an Evangelical," Barna Group, accessed June 2, 2023, https://www.barna.com/research/survey-explores-who-qualifies-as-an-evangelical/.

57. "Statement of Faith," National Association of Evangelicals, accessed June 2, 2023, https://www.nae.org/statement-of-faith/.

58. "About Pew Research Center," Pew Research Center, accessed June 9, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/about/.

59. Gregory Smith et al., *America's Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow* (May 11, 2015), 31, accessed April 18, 2017, http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/.

Table 5: Percent who self-identify as "born-again or evangelical Christian," select traditions, Americans, 2014

Tradition	Percent
Evangelical Protestant	83
Black Protestant	73
Mainline Protestant	27
Catholic	22
Orthodox	23
Latter-Day Saints	23
Jehovah's Witnesses	24

Source: Gregory Smith et al., "America's Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow," May 11, 2015, 32, http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/.

For their 2014 study, Pew operationalized Evangelicals by affiliation with an evangelical Protestant tradition (defining Evangelicals by movement). They filtered respondents from historically Protestant denominations and congregations, and categorized them as evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, or black Protestant. With this methodology, they found "that 25.4% of U.S. adults are evangelical Protestants."[60]

In the same 2014 RLS survey, Pew also asked Christian respondents, "Would you describe yourself as a born-again or evangelical Christian, or not?" Combining them in the same question, Pew presents "evangelical" and "born-again" as synonyms which diverges from Barna who sees them as distinct, or at least one as a subset of the other (Barna-9 as a subset of evangelical, even if Barna-4 is not). Half of Christian RLS respondents self-identified using one of these terms. Representing approximately 35 percent of U.S. adults, Evangelicals identified by *self-identification* produced higher results than by *denominational affiliation*. Table 5 shows the percent of American's from select traditions who self-identified as "born-again or evangelical Christian."

This information is useful inasmuch it shows how different operationalizations find different groups. In fact, Pew was the source for the widely circulated statistic that 81 percent of White Evangelicals voted for Trump in 2016. Pew used this self-identification methodology for operationalizing Evangelicals, however, thereby including evangelical-[*self-*]*identifying* respondents from non-evangelical *movements* and non-Protestant faith traditions.[61] Key stakeholders observed that "the approach employed by Pew to arrive at this 81% statistic differs importantly from the way evangelicalism is conceived in the bulk of academic social science."[62]

A different initiative from The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life was the invitation to survey evangelical leaders at the Third Lausanne Congress of World Evangelism that took place in Cape Town, South Africa in October 2010.[63] Pew's *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*[64] stands out in conversations about operationalization because participants were identified as evangelical because they were delegates to an evangelical leader's conference. Therefore, an operationalization could be developed from a known population by identifying the characteristics of this pre-identified group. Unlike the 2014 RLS survey however, participants were selected through an in-group mechanism, where delegates were selected by a community of evangelicals, rather than merely self-identifying as evangelical.

The acknowledged weaknesses of Pew's approach are that it provided "a detailed portrait of the beliefs and

60. Smith et al., *America's Changing Religious Landscape*, 31.
61. Smith et al., 31.
62. Ryan P. Burge and Andrew R. Lewis, "Measuring Evangelicals: Practical Considerations for Social Scientists," *Politics and Religion* 11, no. 4 (December 2018): 2, ISSN: 1755-0483, 1755-0491, accessed June 12, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048318000299, https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/S1755048318000299/type/journal_article.
63. *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*, Pew Research Center, June 22, 2011, 7, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2011/06/Global-Survey-of-Evan.-Prot.-Leaders-1.pdf.
64. *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*.

practices of … global evangelical leaders"[65] rather than lay evangelicals. Pew described their sample as predominantly "male, middle-aged and college-educated … employed by churches or religious organizations [and] … half (51%) … ordained ministers." While some argue, "there is no such thing as a nominal evangelical,"[66] clergy and ministry professionals likely exhibit measurably higher levels of doctrinal precision, religiosity, and morality due to the nature of their work and roles.

Seeking to define evangelicalism through its leaders also commits what Hunter calls the fallacy of division which assumes the "properties of a whole necessarily inhere in the parts constituting the whole."[67] Whereas the leaders represent the "whole," Hunter argues, "what may be true for clergy … may not be so for their congregants." This is also a critique for operationalizing Evangelicals solely by movement.[68] In this case, the Lausanne movement functions as an organizational movement rather than a historical, denominational movement. Nevertheless, Hunter argues denominations and congregations that come out eighteenth century revivalist traditions may not exclusively consist of Evangelicals and historic protestant denominations and congregations may include them. Correspondingly, global- and Canadian-based movements that claim to represent Evangelicals, like The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada for example, bring Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, Lutheran and Presbyterian traditions into the evangelical *movement* through their affiliation with the EFC.[69]

Nevertheless, Pew surveyed 2,196 Lausanne leaders with nearly three-fifths of respondents representing regions from the Global South (57 percent) and the remaining from the Global North (43 percent).[70] Pew identified few areas of consensus among evangelical leaders across the globe, and perhaps more notably, areas of divergence.[71] Bebbington's definition for Evangelicals was developed by identifying common marks of an enculturated evangelicalism for anglosphere Evangelicals over two centuries. Holding the two observations together suggests there are contextual aspects of evangelicalism that exist alongside its universal characteristics. And marks that transcend the cultural contexts may manifest themselves more strongly or weakly within individual contexts. Understanding enculturated distinctions between Evangelicals will be an important consideration when operationalizing Evangelicals in contexts like Canada, where significant religious populations will come from immigrant communities originating in the Global South.

As stated above, Evangelicals are typically operationalized by *movement* (denominational affiliation),[72] by *type* (beliefs and behaviours) and by self-identification.[73] Pew included questions pertaining to all three but relied heavily on typing evangelicals, asking about the essentiality or compatibility of certain behaviours with being "a good evangelical Christian."

Pew tended to frame belief statements in verbal form: "working to …", "taking a …", "engaging in …", "believing in …". Respondents showed considerable consensus about the essentiality of "[f]ollowing the teachings of Christ in one's personal and family life" (97 percent) and "[w]orking to lead others to Christ." (94 percent).[74] Over half indicated that helping the poor (73 percent), taking a public stand on social issues (56 percent), and tithing (58 percent) were essential to "being a good evangelical Christian," and many deemed them "[i]mportant, but not essential."[75] Consensus was substantially weaker on the essentiality of these issues (helping the poor, taking a stand on social issues, and tithing) than with the first two statements about following Christ's teaching and leading others to Christ.

65. *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*, 8.
66. Lyman Kellstedt as quoted by Grenville, *Development of the Christian Evangelicalism Scale - Working Draft*, 2.
67. James Davison Hunter, "Operationalizing Evangelicalism: A Review, Critique & Proposal," *Sociology of Religion* 42, no. 4 (December 1, 1981): 364, ISSN: 1069-4404, accessed June 12, 2023, https://doi.org/10.2307/3711547, https://doi.org/10.2307/3711547.
68. Using Stackhouse's term, "movement" to mean identifying Evangelicals by their association with denominational groups that grew out of the eighteenth-century revivalist movement. Hunter calls this demographic operationalization, and Hacket and Lindsay call this operationalization by belonging.
69. John G. Stackhouse Jr, ""Who Whom?": Evangelicalism and Canadian Society," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 55.
70. Referring to respondents from Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.
71. *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*, 8.
72. Pew did ask respondents about denominational affiliation but offered it as an open-ended question rather than offering a drop-down list as is customary in typical RELTRAD operationalizations.
73. Hackett and Lindsay, "Measuring Evangelicalism," 500.
74. *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*, 100.
75. *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*, 101.

There was considerable agreement that "believing that miracles can take place today" (94 percent) and "believing in divine healing" (93 percent) were compatible with being a good evangelical Christian. There was also near unanimity around practices they believed were *not* compatible with being a good Christian, such as "believing in astrology" (97 percent), "believing in reincarnation" (96 percent) and "believing that Jesus Christ is NOT the only path to salvation" (95 percent).[76]

When leaders were asked about their religious identities, 90 percent identified themselves as evangelical Christians.[77] Pew noted that younger leaders under the age of forty and those in the Global South were more likely to identify themselves as Pentecostal (25 percent) or Charismatic Christians (31 percent).[78] Some sociologists of religion will make a hard distinction between Pentecostal or Charismatic Christians and evangelical Christians. However, these groups often share memberships or affiliations with institutions like the WEA, Lausanne and the EFC which necessarily must change how we think about evangelicalism as a *movement.*

There were significant minority views, such as views on evolution, the state of Israel in biblical prophecy, and the rapture of the Church.[79] The relative disagreement about these issues among Lausanne conference attendees rendered them unhelpful for identifying unifying characteristics, and likely as measures for operationalizing Evangelicals as a whole.

For many questions, Pew presented respondents statements (usually two, sometimes three or more) about which they were asked, "Which statement comes closer to your own views?" at other times adding, "even if neither is exactly right?" Questions following this format pertained to:

- religious violence,
- exclusivity of Christianity,
- biblical interpretation,
- belief in God as a prerequisite for morality,
- God's covenant with the Jewish people,
- prosperity teachings,
- homosexuality,
- abortion,
- evolution, and
- religious leaders and politics.

A few questions did not generate significant consensus among respondents (for example, belief in God as a prerequisite for morality) and other issues did (for example, abortion is morally wrong and rejecting the claims of the prosperity gospel). Many of these questions were effective in accounting for the scope of belief within evangelicalism as well the boundaries. For example, in the case of abortion, respondents were presented with the following options:

- Abortion is always morally acceptable (0 percent)
- Abortion is usually morally acceptable (2 percent)
- Abortion is usually morally wrong (45 percent)
- Abortion is always morally wrong (51 percent)
- No answer (2 percent)[80]

76. *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*, 101.
77. *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*, 41.
78. *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*, 41–42.
79. *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders*, 108–9.
80. Pew did not provide respondents with a no answer option, however some respondents refused to complete the question.

If presented with only two options, whether in absolute or normative terms, respondents may have been hesitant to answer if they felt the framing compromised their sincerely held view. Significantly, almost all respondents eschewed the belief that abortion is morally acceptable, indicating the boundary while maintaining a range of evangelical beliefs.

Similarly, in the case of measuring opinions on biblical authority and interpretation, respondents were given the following statements:

- The Bible is the actual Word of God and is to be taken literally word for word. (50 percent)
- The Bible is the Word of God, but not everything in it should be taken literally word for word. (48 percent)
- The Bible is a book written by men and is not the word of God. (0 percent)
- No answer (2 percent)[81]

The first two statements may not be the only commonly held positions Evangelicals have about scripture, but a significant majority of respondents at the Lausanne Congress chose one or the other (98 percent). The third statement received no affirmation, indicating it does not represent an evangelical view about Scripture. When a similar question was posed in early versions of the CES, biblicism was operationalized solely in terms of literalism. Canadian Evangelicals scored so low on the question of biblical literalism, that it was later changed to a different framing.[82] By way of contrast, the statements Pew provided on biblical interpretation were able to account for evangelicalisms' "remarkable fluidity in ideas about the effects of inspiration on the [biblical] text."[83] By posing their question as "which statement comes closer," Pew avoids conflating two concepts or drawing unnecessary theological lines.[84] **A revised CES should seek to capture the scope of evangelical belief without imposing unnecessary binaries or alienating scrupulous respondents who do not see their views precisely articulated. It is worth asking if and where the scope of evangelical belief has changed since the CES was created, and when do these changes cease to be evangelical?**

2.2.4 Gallup

Gallup's interest in identifying Evangelicals was largely to understand them as a voting bloc in the 1980s.[85] Before 1986, Gallup identified Evangelicals as those who affirmed the following:

- whether they have been born again or have had a born-again experience,
- whether they have encouraged other people to believe in Jesus Christ, and
- whether they believe the Bible is the actual word of God.

Presenting a born-again identity in experiential terms is an approach we have not yet encountered. This is perhaps to highlight the subjective nature of being 'born-again' and, in a way, to verify those who self-identify as such. Referring to a specific born-again experience, however, could be challenged by research that suggests conversion is often experienced as a process rather than an event.[86] A gradual understanding of conversion may undermine how "a born-again experience" is interpreted by respondents.

81. Pew did not provide respondents with a no answer option, however some respondents refused to complete the question.
82. Rick Hiemstra, "Evangelical Alignment in Canada," *Church & Faith Trends* 1, no. 3 (July 2008): 6–7, accessed January 2, 2012, http://files.efc-canada.net/min/rc/cft/V01I03/Evangelical_Alignment_In_Canada.pdf.
83. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 12.
84. Nancy Ammerman speaks to the political and theological controversy surrounding inerrancy in the 1980s and recommends terms like "authority" and "inspiration" to diffuse unnecessary division in operationalization in Nancy T. Ammerman, "Operationalizing Evangelicalism: An Amendment," *Sociology of Religion* 43, no. 2 (July 1, 1982): 170–1, ISSN: 1069-4404, accessed June 12, 2023, https://doi.org/10.2307/3710796, https://doi.org/10.2307/3710796.
85. Frank Newport, "The Thorny Challenge of Defining Evangelicals," Gallup.com, June 9, 2023, accessed June 20, 2023, https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/507062/thorny-challenge-defining-evangelicals.aspx.
86. John Bowen and Jeremy McClung, *Finding Faith in Canada Today: A Study on How Canadians Become Christians*, Unpublished, 2023.

Frank Newport, senior scientist at Gallup, is not explicit about Gallup's dependence on a Bebbington paradigm, but the first statement appears to operationalize the conversionism side of Bebbington's quadrilateral. The second statement adds activism, and arguably, crucicentrism, by measuring a behaviour that would suggest adherents must be actively sharing their faith in Jesus Christ with the goal of conversion in mind. The final statement about the nature of the Bible measures the biblicism hallmark of evangelical belief while noticeably eschewing overly precise and theological language. Measuring an experience (and by extension, eliciting a verification process for self-identification), a belief, and a behaviour attempts to capture a multi-dimensional understanding of the evangelical population. However, the operationalization was broad enough to capture Catholics and Black Protestants.[87]

Like Pew, Gallup filters out Catholics who affirm the above statements because of the evangelical movement's historically Protestant roots. Contra Pew, and largely due to their political motivation[88] for identifying Evangelicals, Gallup excludes Black respondents for political, rather than historical reasons, explaining that Black respondents are "historically identified with the Democratic Party."[89] Gallup thereby introduces a socio-political dimension to their operationalization by concluding that evangelical respondents are white with Republican, or Republican-leaning values.

Newport reports Gallup abandoned the three statements by 1986 in favour of a *self-identification* approach to operationalizing evangelicals. This is possibly because the chosen statements had little to no more identifying power than a self-identification approach and the latter was less onerous for respondents. He commiserates with the task of formulating summary statements that concisely yet accurately capture the population in question, "[t]he obvious problem with any procedure that qualifies people as evangelical based on agreement with a set of statements is the lack of consensus on what those statements should be."[90] However, Newport acknowledges the offsetting weaknesses of the self-identification approach saying, it comes at a "cost of imprecision and inaccuracy."[91]

For self-identification, Gallup employs a similar double-barrelled question as Pew, "Would you describe yourself as 'born again' or evangelical?" Pew uses the identifications as qualifiers for Christian (i.e., "Would you describe yourself as a born-again or evangelical Christian, or not?") whereas Gallup lets the terms stand on their own. The ubiquity of double-barrelled questions (asking about two topics in one question) is surprising considering they are commonly viewed as poor survey-writing methodology.[92] Pew analyzes the double-barrelled approach by using respondent affiliation as an interpretive key. In 2018, Gallup tested the efficacy of the double-barrelled question by asking about the identities individually and found that "the words 'born-again' have more universal applicability than the term 'evangelical.' "[93] Further research on the double-barrelled self-identification question revealed important differences by race, and from those who identify as 'born-again', but not 'evangelical.'[94]

2.2.5 The Christian Evangelical Scale (CES)

Andrew Grenville is executive vice president of research at Angus Reid Group and has over thirty years of experience as a pollster. In the early 1990s, Grenville developed a Christian Evangelical Scale (CES) describing it as an attempt to, "provide a measure of evangelicalism which is based on a comprehensive definition, is valued, and statistically reliable."[95]

Grenville's scale is built around Bebbington's understanding of Evangelicals and Fullerton and Hunsberger's

87. Frank Newport, "Who Are the Evangelicals?," Gallup.com, June 24, 2005, accessed June 20, 2023, https://news.gallup.com/poll/17041/Who-Evangelicals.aspx.
88. Newport.
89. Newport.
90. Newport.
91. Newport, "The Thorny Challenge of Defining Evangelicals."
92. Michele F Margolis, "Born Again but Not Evangelical?: How the (Double-Barreled) Questions You Ask Affect the Answers You Get," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (September 1, 2022): 621–2, ISSN: 0033-362X, accessed October 6, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfac035, https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfac035.
93. Newport, "The Thorny Challenge of Defining Evangelicals."
94. Margolis, "Born Again but Not Evangelical?"
95. Grenville, *Development of the Christian Evangelicalism Scale - Working Draft*, 4.

Christian Orthodoxy Scale[96] for identifying Christian beliefs more broadly. He developed an eight-question scale which took the following mature form:

1. The concept of God is an old superstition that is no longer needed to explain things in these modern times. (Reverse scored)
2. I believe that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God provided the way for the forgiveness of my sins.
3. In my view, Jesus Christ was not the divine Son of God. (Reverse scored)
4. I believe the Bible to be the word of God and is reliable and trustworthy.
5. I have committed my life to Christ and consider myself to be a converted Christian.
6. I feel it is very important to encourage non-Christians to become Christian.
7. Other than special occasions such as weddings, funerals or baptisms, how often did you attend religious services or meetings in the last 12 months?
8. I believe Jesus was crucified, died and was buried but was resurrected to eternal life.

The CES measures beliefs, attitudinal criteria, church attendance, and, like Gallup's pre-1986 scale, measures a conversion experience nuanced by commitment rather than born-again language. The scale can be divided into two subscales, one measuring Christian doctrinal orthodoxy (DO), the other measuring evangelical distinctives: "biblicism, activism and conversion" (BAC). This distinction is not always obvious and perhaps redundant. For example, consider the similarities between statements two and eight:

- I believe that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God provided the way for the forgiveness of my sins.
- I believe Jesus was crucified, died and was buried but was resurrected to eternal life.

The first statement measures the relevance of Jesus's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of personal sins, however, the cross is only inferred and those unfamiliar with the Christian story may miss the reference altogether. The second statement similarly deals with the death and resurreciton of Jesus, but recalls language from the Apostle's Creed, which would be recited and affirmed by Christians more widely than just evangelicals. We might consider leveraging one of these question for more strategic use, either to test for trends within evangelicalism (see discussion below), or to better differentiate Evangelicals from other devout religious groups that might affirm both statements (such as Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses) by asking about mariology or a trinitarian doctrinal point.

The first question about the existence of God also lands differently in a decidedly post-modern era. Sociologists have observed not so much a decrease in belief in God, but rather an increase in spirituality that "does not signal a loss of the sacred … but rather a decline in institutional religious authority."[97] Referring to God as a superstition, therefore, may not be as useful as testing for perennialism, the belief that "all major religions are basically the same at their core,"[98] or to measure whether a person's locus of authority is more internal or external.

In Sam Reimer's experience with evangelicals, "[r]espondents often tried to explain their lack of evangelism while affirming they should evangelize."[99] And as early as 1981, James Davison Hunter observed a similar dichotomy between adherence and assent: "Evangelicals tend to judge between in-group and out-group (believers and non-believers) not on the basis of whether one has encouraged others to believe in Jesus Christ, but on the basis of adherence to certain beliefs."[100]

96. "The Christian Orthodoxy Scale," accessed October 13, 2023, https://scales.arabpsychology.com/s/the-christian-orthodoxy-scale/.
97. Reimer, *Caught in the Current: British and Canadian Evangelicals in an Age of Self-Spirituality*, 31.
98. Reimer, 32.
99. Reimer, 104.
100. Hunter, "Operationalizing Evangelicalism," 366.

Table 6: Evangelism questions compared, select operationalizations

Operationalization	Evangelism Question
NAE	It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their savior.
Barna-9	[I] have a personal responsibility to share their faith with others.
Barna-4	[I] strongly agree [I] have a personal responsibility to share their faith with others.
Pew	Working to lead others to Christ (Agreement with: What is essential to be a Good Evangelical?)
Gallup (pre-1986)	[I] have encouraged other people to believe in Jesus Christ.
CES	I feel it is very important to encourage non-Christians to become Christian.

Pollsters have attempted to capture the priority for evangelism without measuring its practice in their statement formulations (table 6 below). NAE avoids asking respondents if they have personally encouraged non-Christians to trust in Jesus but seeks to measure the importance for doing so. Similarly, Barna-4 and -9 measure the agreement that evangelism is a personal responsibility, and the CES asks whether respondents "feel" it is important. Excepting Gallup's pre-1986 formulation, all formulations soften a behavioural requirement by measuring the importance of that behaviour. In most cases, Evangelicals should feel comfortable answering "yes" to the question even if they have never evangelized. This phenomenon lends credibility to Reimer's theory that for many Evangelicals their beliefs are performative, that is, they do more to signal belonging than signify a personally held conviction.

Evangelicalism's history of evangelistic activism confirms it has a rightful place in Bebbington's quadrilateral for the era he studied, from which he developed his definition. Historically speaking, Evangelicals were known for their "vast networks … mobilized for Christian missions and service"[101] organized both at home and abroad. For the majority of contemporary evangelicals, however, evangelism is not a defining behaviour for most Canadian Evangelicals despite their saying it is important on surveys, and arguably, a belief *about* a behaviour is not a measure for activism at all.

An appropriate alternative for an evangelism question depends on the objectives of the pollster. If the desire is to measure activism, other forms of activism like monetary giving or volunteering may be fitting alternatives to evangelism. If the objective is to measure an evangelical behaviour, frequency of Bible reading may be a viable alternative despite it being an outworking of biblicism rather than activism in a Bebbington paradigm. According to Cardus' 2022 Sacred Texts Survey, Evangelicals were consistently more biblically engaged than Mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics.[102] Biblically engaged Christians were defined as those who have interacted with a Bible in the last twelve months and 73 percent of Evangelicals reported doing so at least monthly. Sam Reimer indicated from his sample, however, that among younger evangelical believers, "daily Bible reading is uncommon …because devotionalism is less routine and more sporadic."[103] Like evangelism, Bible reading may become a weak or irrelevant operationalization over time.

Grenville's scale was tested and revised through interviews and validated in twenty-four samples. Significantly, only two of those validation samples were taken from evangelical congregations, both of which were associated with one church within the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination (n = 158). We wonder how the scale could be strengthened had it been validated across a more diverse cross-section of Evangelicals (defined by *movement*.) The scale did a good job at identifying Alliance congregants, however, with highly religious immigrant populations, and cultural change affecting Evangelicals in Canada as observed by

101. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 22.
102. Andrew P.W. Bennett, *The Bible and Us: Canadians and Their Relationship with Scripture*, Cardus, May 2, 2023, accessed October 16, 2023, https://www.cardus.ca/research/the-bible-and-us-canadians-and-their-relationship-with-scripture/.
103. Reimer, *Caught in the Current: British and Canadian Evangelicals in an Age of Self-Spirituality*, 88.

Sam Reimer, a more robust validation process with known Evangelicals would provide clarity on whether there are simply fewer evangelicals, or the definition is contextually lacking. The remaining samples were with university students, churchgoers from historically Protestant traditions (mainline), and a representative random sampling of Canadian adults.[104]

During validation, respondents were provided with additional identification questions (such as whether they considered themselves to be an Evangelical, Fundamentalist, or Charismatic Christian) to correlate self-identification with responses to statements measuring beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Though a scale for charismatic and fundamentalist groups did not make it to the final iteration of the CES, Grenville suggests that further subscales could be developed to test for these groups.[105] In his validity samples, the general population, leaned toward broadly Christian beliefs as measured by the doctrinal scale, and the 'evangelically aligned,' (the language adopted by the EFC to describe those identified by the CES[106]) were adequality identified using the scale measuring biblicism, activism and conversion. Grenville concluded the CES a viable scale for measuring Evangelicals at the time the paper was written, and it has been used in various forms[107] for several decades.

In comparison to other operationalizations examined in this paper, Grenville's scale signals a departure in his avoidance of 'born-again' language. He reasoned that born-again language was isolating for members of confessional traditions (such as Lutherans).[108] Grenville also understood the born-again concept as a distinctly "southern phenomenon"[109] thus making a contextual accommodation in his scale for the Canadian evangelical landscape he sought to sample.

Grenville's CES also indicates a move away from operationalizing Evangelicals solely by *movement* or *self-identification*. Respondents would still be asked about their religious affiliation but skip logic would route non-Christians and atheists away from the CES questions, and Christians toward the scale to capture a more comprehensive understanding of their self-identification by validating Evangelicals by *movement* and *self-identification* by *type*.[110]

2.3 Politics and Nationalism

In a 2024 Graphs about Religion Substack post, Ryan Burge, associate professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University, wrote about the phenomenon of the non-Christian Evangelical. Using Pew, Cooperative Election Study, and Nationscape Survey data, all studies with significant sample sizes, Burge showed that not insignificant minorities of not just those from other Christian traditions (i.e. Catholic or Orthodox), but also those from non-Christian faiths such as Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists were identifying as Evangelical.[111] Burge showed, for example, that on the 2022 Cooperative Election Study and the 2019–2021 Nationscape study that 12 percent and 20 percent of American Hindus respectively answered "Yes" to the question "Would you describe yourself as a 'born-again' or evangelical Christian, or not?"

Looking for explanations in the Cooperative Election Study data (N = 224,700), Burge noted for the non-Christian groups:

> Nine percent of Republican Jews self-identify as evangelical, compared to 3% of Democratic Jews. For Muslims, the gap is huge: 32% vs 11%. It's also fairly large for Buddhists (16% vs 6%) and Hindus (18% vs 10%). You can even see it among nothing in particulars. 19% of the Republicans are evangelicals; it's just 9% of the Democrats.[112]

104. Grenville, *Development of the Christian Evangelicalism Scale - Working Draft*, 6.
105. Grenville, 12.
106. The CES identifies many Catholics, mainline Protestants, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, all groups that would not be considered evangelical by *movement*. They can, however, be described as "evangelically aligned" in that they share beliefs and behaviours with Evangelicals (defined by *movement*).
107. Hiemstra, "Evangelical Alignment in Canada."
108. James D. Hunter (1981) as referenced in Grenville, *Development of the Christian Evangelicalism Scale - Working Draft*, 5.
109. Corwin Smidt (1986) as referenced in Grenville, 5.
110. Grenville, 12.
111. Ryan Burge, "The Rise of the Non-Christian Evangelical," Graphs About Religion, February 26, 2024, accessed February 27, 2024, https://www.graphsaboutreligion.com/p/the-rise-of-the-non-christian-evangelical.
112. Burge.

He found similar Republican-Democrat differences in the Nationscape data. Burge equivocally concluded:

> Maybe all these graphs I produced are the result of nothing more than simple survey error. Or maybe the data is suggesting that the word evangelical doesn't mean what it used to mean.[113]

If evangelical doesn't mean what it used to mean, Burge was not going to be explicit about what he thinks it has come to mean. However, his article is structured to point the reader to the conclusion that evangelical has come to mean nationalist or Republican. Whether the data shows this or not, Burge is reflecting a common contemporary understanding of the word evangelical which less circumspect authors are happy to reinforce.[114] If this is the conclusion North Americans are coming to, then we can expect that it will change how respondents answer surveys, and, if we are to find Evangelicals and not nationalists (admittedly they can be overlapping categories), then our operationalizations will have to take this into account.

While Burge writes about American data, it is clear that what is happening in the United States is affecting the experience of Evangelicals elsewhere. In a report on evangelical Christians in Northern Ireland based on a 2023 study, the Northern Ireland Evangelical Alliance (NIEA) wrote:

> Though some have conflated evangelicalism with the Christian right and fundamentalism, they are not the same. In simple terms, the Christian right often includes non-evangelicals, and many are concerned that at times it pushes a political and ideological agenda at odds with the gospel. Also, many evangelicals would identify with the political left.
>
> Fundamentalism and evangelicalism share some history, but the former tends to be more prescriptive on some 'secondary' issues which evangelicals tend to agree to disagree on.[115]

This NIEA report acknowledges the "conflat[ion]" of terms while steadfastly rejecting it. Herein lies the tension for evangelical Christians, that researchers should feel no less keenly. If Evangelicals as a research population do not recognize themselves in your findings, have you really found evangelical Christians?

Conclusion

Bebbington's quadrilateral is often held out as a universal set of evangelical marks, having identified beliefs and behaviours characteristic of modern Evangelicals in a largely western context. According to Sam Reimer, Evangelicals identify with the beliefs of their group, without holding them as deeper, stable, inner convictions,[116] which they may not personally assent to. Reimer observes evangelical beliefs are becoming "less creedal, less propositional, less generalizable,"[117] and characteristically evangelical behaviours are viewed as inauthentic because they represent a "blind[] accept[ance of] institutional (religious) beliefs and behavioural expectations."[118] Current operationalizations ask theological questions assuming respondents are theocentrics when they may not be at all.

Sharing many of the concerns outlined in this paper, historian, Kristin Kobes Du Mez, noted, "Initially, I had intended to do what pretty much every other scholar of evangelicalism does in terms of defining evangelicalism, and that is to drop in a definition drawn from David Bebbington … but at a certain point, I realized this doesn't really describe what I'm looking at."[119] Similarly for evangelicalism in Canada, Bebbington's distinctives are noticeably weak. Du Mez will make the case that evangelicalism is "a series of networks and alliances" rather than a "broad coalition"[120] of individuals representing similar beliefs and behaviours. The parameters for this paper were to explore current, operative definitions for measuring evangelicals, however

113. Burge, "The Rise of the Non-Christian Evangelical."
114. Marci McDonald, ed., *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada*, Repr (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2011), ISBN: 978-0-307-35647-5.
115. *Good News People: A Report on Evangelicals in Northern Ireland*, Northern Ireland Evangelical Alliance, February 2024, 48, accessed March 1, 2024, https://www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/Good-news-people-2024.pdf.
116. Reimer, *Caught in the Current: British and Canadian Evangelicals in an Age of Self-Spirituality*, 54.
117. Reimer, 60.
118. Reimer, 84.
119. Kristin Kobes Du Mez, "'Jesus and John Wayne' and the Evangelical Reckoning" (2022 Meador Lecture, University of Virginia School of Law, April 22, 2022), 40:20, accessed December 15, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9-0cxfmPHs.
120. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 3.

the potential for operationalizing evangelicalism as a network or alliance warrants further consideration and study.

Nevertheless, we somewhat agree with Du Mez's observation that theological doctrines may not be the best way to operationalize Evangelicals.[121] We also acknowledge there have been significant cultural events since early definitions and operationalizations for Evangelicals were created necessitating a re-evaluation. A recent study with evangelical parents in Canada revealed a significant generational shift in family faith-formation practices. Sixty-five percent of respondents said they "consciously try to do faith formation differently with their children than their parents did with them."[122] A priority for choice was also evident in the 73 percent of parent respondents who agreed, "I want my children to make their own religious choices without pressure from me."[123] The COVID-19 pandemic and its varied responses among evangelicals[124] may have had significant effects on how evangelicalism is lived out in Canada. A small but vocal reconstructionist movement in Canada[125] and increased immigration will also inevitably affect how evangelicalism in Canada is expressed and understood.

We present the following questions and recommendations in summation:

Questions:

1. Does an evangelical scale need to identify fundamentalists as a sub-category or exclude them?
2. Should an evangelical scale identify charismatic Christians who would not consider themselves evangelical?
3. Does Biblicism need to mean that all of the Bible is viewed as having equal authority, or, for example, can those who view the Gospels as kind of canon within the Canon without trying to reconcile all of Scripture with the Gospels still be viewed as biblicist?
4. Would including some corroborating measures of behaviour be the best way to know if stated beliefs are truly held?
5. Is it possible to determine whether an affirmation of a doctrinal statement is performative, an indication of a deeply held belief, or both?
6. If evangelical Christians do not recognize themselves in the population and operationalization finds, can it be said to be a good operationalization?
7. Are we looking for *anthropocentric* Evangelicals along with *theocentric* ones? Is the distinction binary or is it a question of a continuum?
8. Do groups who share memberships or affiliations with institutions like the WEA, Lausanne and the EFC change how we think about evangelicalism as a *movement?*
9. Is evangelism still a useful, representative evangelical behaviour to measure recognizing that the culture of the authentic self has made many Canadian Evangelicals reluctant to engage in propositional evangelism?
10. How has the scope of evangelical belief changed since the CES was created, and is it still evangelical?
11. Should exclusivity be expressed in the questions (as we see in the EBRD) or in the accompanying Likert scale?

121. Kobes Du Mez, "'Jesus and John Wayne' and the Evangelical Reckoning," 41:25.
122. Rick Hiemstra and Lindsay Callaway, *Parenting Faith: Faith Formation of Children in the Home*, Faith Today Publications, April 11, 2023, 42, https://www.theEFC.ca/ParentingFaith/.
123. Hiemstra and Callaway, 57.
124. Karen Stiller, "Christians at the Convoy," *Faith Today*, May/June 2022 May/June 2022, 49–51, accessed November 13, 2023, https://digital.faithtoday.ca/faithtoday/library/item/05062022/4006768/.
125. Jonathan Montpetit, "Inside the Fundamentalist Christian Movement That Wants to Remake Canadian Politics | CBC News," CBC, June 5, 2023, 8:00 a.m., accessed November 2, 2023, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/fundamentalist-christian-movement-1.6793677.

12. Is it possible to articulate evangelical doctrinal statements without using terms familiar only to those within an evangelical sub-culture? For the purposes of operationalizing Evangelicals does this matter? Will Evangelicals in mainline traditions recognize the language of movement-evangelical sub-cultures? Will New Canadian Evangelicals from non-official-language language groups recognize the turn of phrase of more established evangelical sub-cultures?

Recommendations

1. We recommend operationalizing Evangelicals primarily through beliefs and behaviours because they offer contextual and theological nuance.
2. We recommend that a revision of the CES include a question or questions that aim to measure whether a person's locus of authority is more internal or external.
3. We recommend that a revised CES give careful attention to statements of doctrinal orthodoxy that resist private, individualized interpretation or familiar cadences (i.e., resembling creedal language)
4. We recommend that linguistic and enculturated distinctions be considered when operationalizing Evangelicals in contexts like Canada with a highly religious immigrant population.
5. We recommend that a revised CES should seek to capture the scope of evangelical belief without imposing unnecessary binaries or alienating scrupulous respondents.

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About

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The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC)

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (*l'Alliance évangélique du Canada*) is the national association of evangelical Christians in Canada. Since 1964 the EFC has provided a national forum for Evangelicals, fostered ministry partnerships, conducted research on religious and social trends and provided a constructive voice for biblical principles in life and society. About the EFC.

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