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Different Worldviews, Different Morals: America's Culture War Divide

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Adults · Culture · Culture war · Moral behavior · Moral reasoning · Worldview

Abstract

In this article, it is argued that moral reasoning is premised upon more comprehensive worldviews, and it is suggested that moral behaviors in part serve to maintain these worldviews. A worldview is defined as providing an account of what it means to be human, the nature of reality, and the reasons and remedies for human suffering. Interviews with adults whose moral evaluations and reasoning place them on opposite sides of the current American culture war are used to illustrate the argument. It is argued that these adults differ in their moralities because of differences in their worldviews. A discussion is provided of how the present approach to moral psychology compares to the cognitive-structuralist approach, and of research directions suggested by the present approach.

Overview

The concept of a *worldview* is common in the sociological literature pertaining to moral issues. In psychology, however, the dominant cognitive-structuralist approach emphasizes a separation of moral reasoning from more comprehensive worldviews [e.g., Kohlberg, 1981, 1984]. Increasingly this separation has been called into question, both by scholars working within the cognitive-structuralist framework and by scholars of different backgrounds. The present aim is to argue that moral reasoning is based upon more comprehensive worldviews, and to suggest that moral behaviors in part serve to maintain these worldviews.

Research on the current American *culture war* will be used to illustrate the present argument. The culture war refers to the public division within the United States between tendencies toward *orthodoxy* and *progressivism* on moral issues such as those pertaining to abortion, family policy, and the content of education and media [Hunter,

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1991, 1994]. The division is cultural in the sense that the two groups have very different understandings of the basis of morality. Those who are orthodox hold that moral precepts are revealed to humans by a transcendent authority, whereas those who are progressivist emphasize human agency in understanding and formulating moral precepts. It is a war in the sense that the public often becomes an arena for acrimonious exchanges between representatives of the two sides.

Here, I will draw upon my own research with ordinary Americans who are divided along the lines of the culture war [Jensen, 1997, in press a, b]. Findings from this research along with qualitative interview excerpts will be presented in order to show how the division in moral reasoning between these orthodox and progressivist Americans has its basis in their different and more comprehensive worldviews. In addition, it will be suggested that different moral behaviors among the two groups help to maintain their respective worldviews.

I will begin by defining the concept of a worldview, and discuss how its relation to morality has been described by various sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists. Then, I will explain what the present conception of worldviews, moral reasoning, and moral behavior adds to the study of moral psychology. This will be followed by a description of the culture war literature, and the use of my own research as an illustration of the present argument.

Worldviews

A Definition

Different writers describe the concept of a worldview in somewhat different ways. Here, a formulation laid out by Walsh and Middleton [1984] will be used. They argue that a worldview typically answers four questions: Who are we? Where are we? Why are we suffering? What is the remedy?[1] Thus a worldview includes a description of essential humanness, for example addressing the extent of human autonomy and equality among humans (answering the question 'Who are we?'). A worldview gives an account of the nature of reality, addressing whether this world is the only one, and the moral and historical status of this world (an answer to 'Where are we?'). A worldview also provides a diagnosis of the problems experienced by human beings ('Why we are suffering?'). Finally, a worldview outlines a prescription for alleviating these problems ('What is the remedy?').

Worldviews and Moral Reasoning

The question of the extent to which moral reasoning forms part of or is separate from more comprehensive worldviews has been addressed in different ways by scholars, and the answers have tended to vary by academic discipline. Both Durkheim and Weber, the founders of sociology, linked morality to worldview conceptions. Durkheim [1893/1984, 1897/1951] argued that people who live in societies with different degrees of division of labor have different worldviews. Their different worldviews, in turn, give rise to different forms of moral reasoning. According to Durkheim, members of socie-

[1] Walsh and Middleton phrase their questions in the following way: Who am I? Where am I? What's wrong? What is the remedy?

ties with a low degree of division of labor identify strongly with each other. This 'collective consciousness' leads to an understanding of moral laws as transcendent, absolute and inviolable, and of moral transgressions as subject to 'repressive' punishment driven by the need for revenge. In societies with a high degree of division of labor, collective consciousness diminishes and members see individual differences as salient. This leads to an emphasis on individual rights, and 'restitutory' punishment primarily aimed at restoring societal order rather than inflicting painful suffering on the transgressor.

Weber reversed Durkheim's notion of the relation between the material and the ideal, emphasizing how ideas effect the economy rather than how economic structures (such as division of labor) effect ideas. However, like Durkheim, Weber also linked morality to worldviews. In his well-known book on capitalism and Protestantism, Weber [1904–5/1958] argued that capitalism was based on an ethic of hard work and self-restraint. In turn, this ethic was based on the Protestant worldview which gave prominence to the concepts of divine calling, salvation, and (in the case of Calvinism) predestination.

Contemporary sociologists continue to emphasize the relation between morality and worldviews. The much studied topic of abortion provides an example. On the basis of her research with pro-choice and pro-life activists, Luker [1984] argues that 'attitudes toward abortion rest on ... deep, rarely examined notions about the world' [p. 191]. Other researchers focusing on activists as well as nonactivists [Fried, 1988; Himmelstein, 1986], Catholic church leaders and church members [Neitz, 1981], and the American population as a whole [Emerson, 1996] similarly emphasize how more comprehensive views about the world inform moral judgment and reasoning about abortion.

In contrast to sociology, the tendency in psychology has been toward emphasizing the separation of moral reasoning from worldviews. In the early 20th century, Piaget [1932/1965] criticized Durkheim for overlooking the developmental side of moral reasoning. Piaget argued that children develop from conforming to the moral rules of others in early childhood (the 'heteronomous' stage) to arriving at moral rules by a democratic process in middle childhood (the 'autonomous' stage). At this later stage, morality is defined as a 'method' [p. 346] for arriving at rules rather than particular precepts for behavior. The method entails that autonomous individuals form their respective moral views, and then assemble to debate these views in a democratic fashion. Piaget held that autonomous moral reasoning is only possible in a child who has reached middle childhood. However, like Durkheim, he also argued that such reasoning is only possible in complex societies characterized by a division of labor. In 'primitive' societies (Piaget's term) where members share a collective consciousness, people's worldviews preclude autonomous moral reasoning. Piaget, then, did see moral reasoning as linked to people's worldviews. Still, his emphasis was upon the ontogenetic aspect of moral reasoning.

In the more recent cognitive-structuralist psychology of moral reasoning, under the strong influence of Kohlberg [e.g., 1981, 1984] and his elaboration of Piaget, the preponderant focus has been upon separating individual moral reasoning from more comprehensive worldviews. Like Piaget, Kohlberg defined morality as a cognitive method, 'a "logic" for coordinating the viewpoints of subjects with conflicting interests' [1981, p. 200]. Furthermore, he argued that moral reasoning follows a predictable ontogenetic pattern of development, and he proposed his well-known stages to describe this pattern. With age, an individual becomes capable of increasingly 'equilibrated' moral reasoning [see Kohlberg, 1981, chap. 5 for extensive explanation]. At the highest stage, an individual reasons in terms of 'reversibility', that is, the individual takes on the point of view of

every subject involved in a moral situation prior to making a decision. One might describe this reasoning process as an internalized version of Piaget's democratic forum. In Kohlberg's view, this ontogenetic pattern of moral development applies universally, and as such moral reasoning is independent of more comprehensive worldviews.

Questions and criticisms about this cognitive-structuralist account have been quite common among researchers conducting cross-cultural work and researchers who study religious groups. In their reviews of cross-cultural studies using the Kohlbergian system, both Edwards [1981, p. 513] and Snarey [1985, p. 228] mention the importance of a society's 'cultural values' in moral reasoning. Snarey also briefly mentions the concept of a worldview. He writes that 'a society's culture or world view provides each member with a rich pool of cultural values to digest cognitively. Cultural world views can, in fact, be reasoned about on any stage level' [p. 228].

Other researchers have provided more detailed descriptions of cultural and religious elements that inform moral reasoning. For example, Dien [1982] argues that Chinese moral reasoning is based on the Confucian tradition which emphasizes the cultivation of one's inherent goodness for the purpose of promoting social harmony. Huebner and Garrod [1991] describe how the moral reasoning of Tibetan monks is premised upon Buddhism, which views suffering as an inevitable part of life that only comes to an end when one is released from the cycle of rebirth. Shweder and Much [1987; see also Shweder et al., 1990] describe how the moral reasoning of Indian temple town residents draws upon the notion that the life of each person follows a divine plan, and the Hindu idea that the moral, social and material worlds are inextricably connected.

Each of these accounts of moral reasoning emphasizes elements of what I here term a worldview. They link moral reasoning to conceptions of what it means to be human, what the world is like, why we are suffering, and how to overcome suffering [see also Haidt et al., 1993; Jensen, 1995a; Miller, 1991; Miller and Bersoff, 1992; Richards, 1991; Richards and Davison, 1992]. That the authors of these accounts draw upon ethnographic research methods and/or their anthropological backgrounds is not coincidental. In anthropology, as in sociology, moral reasoning has typically been described with reference to cultural context [Levy, 1972; Mead, 1950; Whiting, 1959]. Levy [1972], for instance, argues that Tahitian moral conceptions of ha'ama (glossed as shame/embarrassment) and arofa (pity/empathy/compassion) can best be understood in the context of more comprehensive Tahitian conceptions of the self and society.

My aim here is to bring together and extend these approaches in sociology, psychology, and anthropology which emphasize the connection between moral reasoning and worldviews. My argument is that *worldviews* provide the premises underlying *moral reasoning* (explanations for why a behavior is right or wrong). The outcome of moral reasoning is *moral evaluations* (whether a behavior is regarded as right or wrong) which prescribe behaviors. In turn, *moral behaviors* in part serve to maintain worldviews (see fig. 1).

This approach to moral reasoning can be seen as bringing the following to the study of moral psychology:

(1) It places a person's moral reasoning in the context of her more comprehensive conceptions of the human condition – that is, her worldview. As explained above this is different from the cognitive-structuralist approach which emphasizes the separation of moral reasoning from worldviews.

(2) Since a given worldview is likely to inform much of a person's moral reasoning, the present approach also points to an increased understanding of how a person's moral

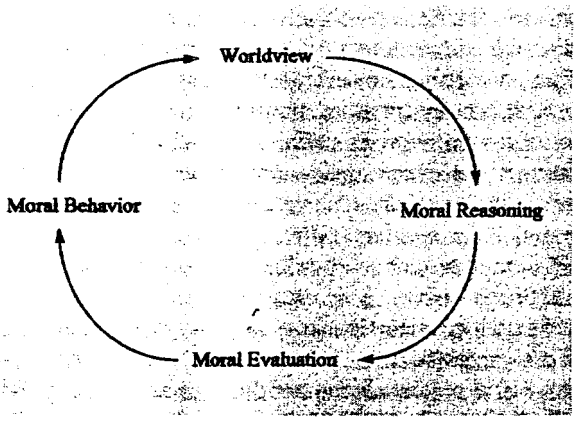

Fig. 1. A worldview approach to morality.

evaluation and reasoning about one issue, such as abortion, are related to her evaluation and reasoning about other issues, such as premarital sex, gender roles or euthanasia. The cognitive-structuralist approach also emphasizes how moral reasoning carries across moral issues. However, within the cognitive-structuralist approach the basis is taken to be the structure of individual thinking, rather than what I here describe as a worldview.

(3) Since worldviews seldom – if ever – are entirely individually formulated but rather are formulated and maintained within communities, the present approach places the individual and her moral reasoning in the context of her community. This has implications for developmental issues. It entails increased attention to the transmission of moral conceptions from adults to children (in verbal communications and behavioral practices), and the ways in which children themselves elicit, accept or resist moral lessons. More generally, the present approach leads to a focus on the transmission of moral conceptions from some members of a community to others (of any age) either within or outside of the community. Attention to such intra- and intercommunal transmission of morality has been deemphasized by the cognitive-structuralist approach, which focuses on the inherent unfolding of the structure of moral reasoning in the individual, with a primary focus on the child and adolescent.

(4) Finally, the present approach places considerable importance on moral evaluations and behaviors, and their relation to worldviews and moral reasoning. The cognitive-structuralist approach has often been criticized for not paying sufficient attention to moral behavior. One reason may be that the cognitive-structuralist focus is overwhelmingly on moral reasoning and its structure, whereas moral evaluations are regarded as much less important 'content'. Knowing that a person reasons at Kohlberg's stage 3 in response to the issue of abortion does not tell us to what extent the person thinks abortion is morally right or wrong. Hence, we do not know what standard of moral behavior the person would apply to herself and others. Here, it is suggested that moral evaluations prescribe behaviors, which in turn partly serve to maintain worldviews.

Now I will turn from a general description of the present argument to a more detailed illustration, using my research with ordinary Americans who are divided along the lines of the culture war. Before proceeding, however, several caveats are necessary: (1) the argument that moral reasoning is based on more comprehensive worldviews does not entail that all four elements of a worldview as defined by Walsh and Middleton [1984] inform a person's reasoning about every single moral issue; (2) it is not being claimed here that people's worldviews are fully elaborated and entirely consistent; (3) worldviews may be either religious or secular; (4) multiple worldviews may exist within countries; (5) while the present approach emphasizes the interrelation of moral evaluation and reasoning across diverse issues, it is recognized that given the complexity of morality and worldviews such interrelations may not always be apparent and at times may not exist; (6) while it is suggested that a person's moral evaluations inform her behavior, this does not mean that a person always conducts herself in accordance with her moral precepts; (7) finally, the present approach is proposed neither as comprehensive nor conclusive. For example, moral emotions are not included here [for discussions of moral emotions, moral cognition, and their relation, see for example Eisenberg et al., 1991; Hoffman, 1991; Shweder and Haidt, 1993]. I would speculate that among adolescents and adults there might be a forth-and-back interplay between moral emotions and reasoning. (It might be added to figure 1 above in the following way: Moral Reasoning ↔ Moral Emotions.) However, among children – especially very young ones [such as those studied by Kagan, 1984, 1993] – the picture might be quite different. Also, while the present approach to moral psychology is quite different from the cognitive-structuralist one, the two approaches may be somewhat reconcilable within a larger framework.

The Culture War

I will begin with a brief description of the sociological literature on the culture war, and then proceed to my own research. The sociologist James Davison Hunter [1991] has examined the opposing political alliances that have been forged on a wide variety of current issues in American society, such as those pertaining to abortion, family policy, and the content of education and media. He also has examined the moral and political discourse of public figures. On the basis of his analyses, Hunter argues that the old lines between religious denominations have collapsed when it comes to moral and political issues. It is no longer the case that moral debates tend to divide different religious denominations, such as Protestants, Catholics and Jews. Instead, according to Hunter, a new division has occurred within religious denominations and in American culture more generally. It is a division that is vividly seen in the political arena, but the political clashes reflect a deeper division over the sources of moral authority and the extent of individual autonomy. Hunter suggests that American people and groups are divided in terms of what he calls 'the impulse toward orthodoxy' versus 'the impulse toward progressivism' [p. 43] [see also Bellah, 1987; Hunter, 1994; Jensen, 1995b; Neuhaus, 1990; Nolan, 1996; Wuthnow, 1988, 1989].

Briefly described, those who are orthodox share a commitment to transcendent authority – an authority that is independent of, prior to, and more powerful than human experience. In the orthodox view, this transcendent authority originated a moral code and revealed it to human beings. Different religious traditions have different concep-

tions of the sources through which transcendence communicates its authority (for example, Jews look to the Torah and the community that upholds it, Protestants look to the Old and New Testaments). However, all orthodox regard moral precepts as given to humans by a transcendent being, and they regard these precepts as sufficient for all times and circumstances. Accordingly, moral precepts ought not to be altered to accommodate societal changes, or new human understandings, or individual differences. Rather, individuals and societies ought to adapt themselves in accordance with the moral precepts ordained by the transcendent authority.

In contrast to the orthodox, progressivists stress the importance of human agency in understanding and formulating moral precepts. They reject the view that a transcendent authority directly reveals itself and its will to humans. Instead moral (and spiritual) truths are expressed by humans. Progressivists vary in the basis on which they arrive at moral precepts. Some progressivists draw upon scientific evidence about the human condition. As pointed out by Hunter [1991], this approach is derived from the intellectual tradition of Enlightenment naturalism. Other progressivists draw upon their personal experiences. This approach is derived from the intellectual tradition of Enlightenment subjectivism. However, all progressivists unite in a focus upon human understanding and formulation of moral precepts. Progressivists also unite in regarding moral precepts as changeable, because human and individual understandings evolve and societal circumstances change.

As should be clear, Hunter's categories of orthodoxy and progressivism are broad and a caveat is necessary. While American culture might show a marked division between impulses toward orthodoxy and progressivism, this should not be taken to mean that all political groups – let alone all individual Americans – can be classified neatly into two camps. The categories describe two general types, and it is recognized that some groups and individuals possess characteristics of each.

The Culture War and Ordinary Americans

In his writings, Hunter [1991, 1994] primarily focuses upon the views of publicly active figures and groups who are orthodox and progressivist. He does not analyze the moral reasoning of ordinary Americans who might be expected to show tendencies toward orthodoxy and progressivism. My research has indicated that ordinary Americans also give voice to orthodox and progressivist moral outlooks.

I carried out two studies with fundamentalist Baptists (representing the orthodox side) and mainline Baptists (representing the progressivist side) from a medium-sized midwestern US City. One was an interview study with 40 midlife fundamentalist and mainline Baptists [Jensen, in press a], and the other was a questionnaire study with 120 young, midlife, and older fundamentalist and mainline Baptists [Jensen, 1997].[2] In both studies, the proportions of women and men were not statistically different. Almost all participants were Caucasian, and belonged to the middle to upper middle classes. Political self-identifications were diverse.

[2] The fundamentalist Baptists attended four independent Baptist churches that self-identify as 'fundamentalist'. The mainline Baptists attended a church that has a dual affiliation with the American Baptist Churches/USA and the Southern Baptist Convention. However, the latter affiliation is regarded as an historical affiliation. The interview study included 20 fundamentalist and 20 mainline Baptists. The questionnaire included 60 fundamentalist and 60 mainline Baptists. In each group, the 60 participants were divided evenly into three age groups of young, midlife, and older adults.

Only members of one religious tradition were included in the studies, in order to examine the extent to which the division between orthodox and progressivist views is occurring within traditions, as Hunter [1991, 1994] describes it. Also, by comparing people from the same religious tradition some aspects of theology and denominational organization were held constant, as opposed to comparing members of different traditions. However, the exclusive focus on Baptists means that groups who are more progressivist (and secular) than mainline Baptists could have been identified. Also, the exclusive focus on one Protestant tradition may limit the generalizability of the findings.

To provide a sense of the generalizability of the studies, it might be noted that mainline Protestants constitute about 33% of the American population [Roof and McKinney, 1987]. Fundamentalist and evangelical Protestants, who share very similar moral views, constitute about 20% of the American population [Reichley, 1990]. There are, of course, important differences in the theological and moral conceptions between different Protestant groups, as well as between Protestants and other religious traditions. However, Hunter's [1991] evidence indicates that the commonalities within progressivist and orthodox outlooks (respectively) carry across different religious traditions. In the following, the mainline and fundamentalist Baptists will be referred to as progressivist and orthodox, respectively, in line with the assertion that they represent a broader division in American society.

In both the interview and questionnaire studies, all participants responded to issues including suicide in general, suicide in the case of terminal illness, divorce, and abortion.[3] Differences in moral *evaluation* and *reasoning* were found between the orthodox and progressivist groups. Within all age groups, orthodox adults were more likely to *evaluate* suicide in the case of terminal illness, divorce, and abortion as morally wrong, compared to progressivist adults. Within the group of midlife adults (in both studies), orthodox participants were also more like to evaluate suicide in general as morally wrong, compared to progressivist adults. Young and older adults did not differ significantly in their evaluation of this issue (the questionnaire study).

In both studies, the participants' moral *reasoning* was analyzed in terms of Shweder's [1990] Ethics of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity. These three ethics entail different conceptions of the moral agent. Briefly described, the *Ethic of Autonomy* defines the moral agent as an autonomous individual who is free to make choices, being restricted primarily by concerns with inflicting harm on others and encroaching on the rights of others. The *Ethic of Community* defines the moral agent in terms of her membership in social groups (such as family and nation), and the obligations that ensue from this membership. The *Ethic of Divinity* defines the moral agent as a spiritual entity who aims to follow divine laws and to come closer to moral purity [see Jensen, 1997, in press a, for coding guidelines and reliabilities].

In both studies, it was found that progressivists reasoned more in terms of the Ethic of Autonomy than did orthodox adults. Orthodox adults reasoned more in terms of the

[3] The moral issues were selected so as to pertain to matters of life and death, the family, and the roles of women and men. Hunter [1991] points out that these are among the primary issues of contention between progressivist and orthodox groups. However, the nature of the issues selected may limit the generalizability of the research to some extent. In the interview study, participants also discussed a personal experience that they regarded as involving a moral decision.

Ethic of Divinity than did progressivists. However, progressivist and orthodox groups seldom differed significantly in their use of the Ethic of Community.

The results suggest that the public moral division detailed by Hunter [1991, 1994] also finds expression in ordinary Americans' moral thought. Detailed discussions of sociological and lifespan issues can be found in Jensen [1997, in press a]. Here, however, I will use findings from my research and interview excerpts to show how the moral division between the orthodox and progressivist groups has its basis in their different worldviews. It should be emphasized that the difference between the orthodox and progressivist worldviews may not entail a division in moral evaluation and reasoning about all moral issues. Here the focus is on the issues that were included in the research, and the general argument is that moral reasoning is based on worldviews.

Four Questions

Who Are We? The Question of Authority

One element of a worldview is an account of the essential characteristics of being human, that is, of who we are. The moral reasoning of the orthodox and progressivist groups indicated that their definitions of essential humanness differ in two key respects. One pertains to their views of human independence and authority. The other pertains to their views of the extent to which human relations should be hierarchical or egalitarian. Each of these two aspects will be discussed, in turn.

The divergence in the orthodox and progressivist conceptions of the nature and extent of human independence and authority was reflected, for example, in their responses to the issue of abortion. The orthodox participants emphasized that abortion involves ending a human life, and they invoked the view that life and death decisions should be made by God, not humans. Thus, 100% of the orthodox participants spoke in terms of the Ethic of Divinity; specifically, they either invoked God's exclusive authority to end human life and/or the Biblical injunction against the taking of human life.[4] For example, an orthodox man explained:

> In the Ten Commandments, [God] said that we should not commit murder ... I believe in general when a person disobeys God that it has negative repercussions. I think that's why God tells us the things that He does. He knows what's good for us, and if we'd listen to Him, we'd save [ourselves] a lot of trouble.

Thus, the orthodox adults' moral reasoning about abortion is based upon their understanding of who we are as human beings. According to this orthodox worldview, we are God's creation. God is responsible for our existence, has a plan for our lives, and determines our death. Moreover, God has created a moral order that humans can know, for example by reading the Scriptures. In the orthodox view, this moral order is not arbitrary or oppressive, rather it is for the benefit of human beings. It allows us to live in a more virtuous manner and to diminish suffering to self and others by doing what is morally right. However, humans have the freedom to decide whether or not to live in

[4] Unless otherwise indicated, all percentages given in the remainder of the article derive from the interview study [Jensen, in press a].

accordance with God's moral order. Those who do will be rewarded by God, while those who do not will be punished. In the orthodox worldview, the independence and authority of each individual is circumscribed by a divine order.

Progressivist moral reasoning about abortion was based on quite a different conception of who we are. In contrast to the orthodox adults, the progressivists often emphasized the individual's right to make autonomous choices, rather than the necessity of adhering to the commandments of a transcendent authority. In response to the issue of abortion, 90% of the progressivists spoke in terms of the Ethic of Autonomy, and 65% specifically invoked the right of a woman to decide whether or not to have an abortion. For example, a progressivist man stated, 'I think it's your choice. It's not up to me to tell you who you are ... Who am I to tell you what you can do with your body?' Speaking more generally of human independence and autonomy, a progressivist participant exclaimed:

> There really has to be some sense of rightness and wrongness that has to transcend what *God* would think, or what the *priest* would think, or what my *mother* would think. It's not up to them, it's up to you ... I ultimately believe that every individual has to do what they have to do.

Some progressivists held that an individual's right to choose should be the only or primary consideration when evaluating abortion as well as most other moral issues. Others, however, emphasized the communal responsibilities that ensue from making choices. They spoke of how we ought to make choices that take into account our obligations to family, society, and so forth. Thus, 25% of the progressivists responded to the issue of abortion in terms of the Ethic of Community, and 40–55% used this ethic in response to the other issues. [A more detailed comparison of the progressivist and orthodox participants' uses and conceptions of the Ethic of Community is found in Jensen, in press a.]

The progressivist worldview, then, focuses on human agency rather than divine agency, and upon human self-determination rather than human obedience to God. Progressivists emphasized that we must endeavor to formulate the rules by which we live. Since every human being may participate in this endeavor, every person gains considerable rights to self-determination and self-expression. What limits these rights are the responsibilities to others that come from living in the social world.

In sum, within the progressivist worldview human beings are what might be termed social individuals, and progressivist moral reasoning is based upon this view. In contrast, orthodox moral reasoning is based upon a worldview according to which being human means being subject to the moral authority of God.

Who Are We? The Question of Status

The orthodox and progressivist moral reasoning was also informed by differing views of the extent to which human relations should be hierarchical or egalitarian. This was seen, for example, in responses to the issue of divorce. Orthodox participants repeatedly emphasized that divorce occurs because spouses focus too much on their individual interests rather than on fulfilling their familial roles. In the orthodox view, spouses ought to recognize that their roles are divinely ordained and hierarchically structured. In the interviews, all orthodox participants responded to the issue of divorce in terms of the Ethic of Divinity, and 95% specifically referred to God's authority over the institution of marriage. Also, 95% of the orthodox indicated either in the interview

or in a postinterview questionnaire that they regard the relationship between spouses in hierarchical terms, with the husband being the leader of the family.[5] An orthodox woman complained,

> Husbands and wives are no longer there for the good of the other ..., but they're there for their own selfish goods. [But] God created man to be the leader of the family, the one who provides, and He created the woman to be the nurturer, the one who is there to nurture her family ... When women don't take the role that God intended for them, then things don't go as well as they should ... And, therefore, more and more women are having problems in their marriages and they're ending up in divorce.

The orthodox participants' moral reasoning about marriage and divorce was informed by their worldview. In this worldview, human relations – between women and men, wives and husbands, parents and children – are structured hierarchically. In marriage, the husband and wife hold the different roles of provider and nurturer, respectively. Husband and wife also hold different statuses as leader and follower, respectively.

In the orthodox worldview, the hierarchical relationship between husband and wife is a reenactment of the hierarchical relationship between God and humans. In particular, the husband is likened to Christ while the wife is likened to the church (i.e., Christ's followers). In the same way that Christ is the leader of the church, the husband is the leader in a marriage and family. Hence orthodox participants regarded divorce not only as a reflection of selfish failure to fulfill one's familial roles, but as a form of sacrilege. If a husband or wife abdicates a spousal role, it is akin to calling into question God's status. If spouses divorce, it is akin to severing our relationship to God. Reasoning in terms of the Ethic of Divinity, an orthodox man explained it in the following way:

> Divorce to me means [that] you slap God in the face. In other words, you bring reproach upon God. Because Jesus Christ and the church are a form of marriage. What we are saying by divorce is that the bride goes away from the husband. Think about what that means. That means that we could lose salvation. [Divorce] breaks down the very essence of our religion and that's why I think divorce is shameful.

In sum, the orthodox moral understanding of divorce was informed by the orthodox conception of who we are. It is a worldview that conceives of humans as relating to one another and to the divine in terms of a hierarchical order. [For further discussion of Christian fundamentalists' conception of gender roles and the family, see Ammerman, 1987; Hardacre, 1993.]

In contrast, the progressivist participants' moral reasoning about divorce was based upon an egalitarian conception of human relations. Not a single progressivist spoke of the spousal relationship in hierarchical terms. Instead, they focused upon the importance of mutuality and egalitarian contributions in marriage. For example, a progressivist man described the ideal spousal relationship in terms of mutual respect and mutual goals:

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[5] The responses on a postinterview questionnaire completed by the participants confirmed the crucial difference between orthodox and progressivist participants' conceptions of the roles and statuses of spouses. For example, on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree, the response to the statement: 'A husband should have the "final say" in the family's decision making', was 1.60 for the orthodox participants and 4.45 for the progressivist participants; $F(1,39) = 125.09$, $p < 0.001$. The response to the statement: 'If possible, it is best if the wife stays at home and the husband works to support the family', was 1.65 for the orthodox participants and 3.90 for the progressivists; $F(1,39) = 59.26$, $p < 0.001$.

Commitment ... has to be built on mutual respect. It has to be built on a common direction in terms of goals and ideals. Marriage ought to be for a mutual strengthening and enriching of individual lives as well as the common life.

Many of the progressivists held that if a marriage relationship ceases to promote the goals of the spouses, or if spousal contributions are unequal, then divorce may be justified. In response to divorce, 85% of the progressivists spoke in terms of the Ethic of Autonomy, and 80% specifically discussed the interests and/or psychological well-being of spouses. For example, one progressivist woman discussed her own painful and drawn out decision to divorce as an illustration. She emphasized the need for mutuality and fairness in a marriage:

My [ex-]husband is an alcoholic. Although he [was] in treatment at one time, he has not continued in sobriety. Fifteen years ago ... he went [in]to treatment, and in the meantime I had gone to Al-Anon. [For years], I've been in counseling to try to make the marriage better. After many, many years of doing it all by myself and discovering that he had not been sober when I thought he had, that really made me angry. To think that I had taken all these steps and I had done all this work, and he had done nothing!

Thus, the progressivist moral discourse on divorce was informed by their egalitarian worldview. According to this worldview, husbands and wives, men and women, and humans generally are equal. Thus we are justified in protesting roles that are hierarchical and that entail unequal opportunities.

In sum, the orthodox participants' moral reasoning about divorce reflects a worldview where humans to some extent differ in their roles and statuses. The progressivists reject this worldview. In their view, it engenders unfairness and oppression. Instead, they endorse an egalitarian worldview, and this view is reflected in their moral reasoning. [For further discussion of 'liberal' versus 'conservative' conceptions of family relations, see Lakoff, 1996.]

Where Are We?

A worldview provides an account of the nature of reality, that is, of where we are. The question of where we are pertains to whether the world we are living in is the only existing one. It also pertains to the historical status of this world. As should be evident from the above, the orthodox and progressivist adults' moral reasoning reflects different understandings of the sphere of reality that we are living in. Orthodox moral reasoning reflects a keen focus upon a world beyond this one. Human beings are living in this world with the purpose of seeking salvation that will bring them into the sacred sphere. In contrast, progressivist moral reasoning reflects a worldview where the focus is upon this world, a world in which human beings seek to fulfill individual and communal needs.

The orthodox and progressivist participants' moral reasoning also reflected a difference in their understandings of the moral and historical status of this world. This was seen, for example, in their responses to the issue of divorce. Many of the orthodox adults regarded the prevalence of divorce as both a reflection of and a contributor to the disintegration of the community. Thus, 90% of the orthodox participants responded to the issue of divorce in terms of the Ethic of Community, and 85% specifically spoke of the negative impact of divorce upon society and/or the family. In the orthodox view, divorce occurs because we are living at a point in history where we are removed from the

divine order, and divorce also creates further communal disorder here and now. For example, an orthodox man rhetorically argued,

> Think of what [divorce] does to the children. What it does is that it brings uncertainty to everything. Why do we have a welfare problem? Why do we have so much violence? It all comes back to this one thing as far as I'm concerned. If fathers took the responsibility and the parents stayed together, we wouldn't have near the problem [that we do]. I've seen it in my lifetime and I'm not that old. But I've watched the [change from the] old way of thinking to a new way of thinking, and I can guarantee [that] the new way of thinking is not good.

The orthodox adults' moral reasoning about divorce was informed by their understanding of the moral and historical status of the world. In the orthodox assessment, this world is at a point in history where it has deteriorated and decayed when compared to a golden past (as well as when compared to the glorious future of Christ's Second Coming). History has followed a path of progressive moral decline. Some orthodox adults, like the man above, spoke of a change occurring in their lifetime. Others spoke of the golden past in terms of the time of the American founding fathers when people lived according to 'Biblical principles'. Still others referred farther back in time, such as to the time when 'Jesus Christ was on earth and was our great example'. The orthodox participants' conception of history, characterized by nostalgia for the past and discontent with the present, has been found to be common among fundamentalist groups worldwide [Ammerman, 1994; Harding, 1994; Hunter, 1990].

The progressivist adults' moral reasoning on divorce was based upon a different assessment of the moral and historical status of this world. One progressivist man suggested that some divorces are a sign of the progress occurring in society:

> A lot of people my age have gotten divorced because they were almost forced into marriage. In my day and age, if a woman was not married by the time she was 21 – my God! – she might as well have slit her wrists because women didn't go out and seek employment and careers like they do now. But I think that hurt a lot of people. I mean people made a lot of quick decisions that they shouldn't have made.

In his view, the traditional sex role expectations of his youth sometimes led to early and ill-advised marriages. Divorce, in some cases, serves to rectify the mistakes of the past, and as such suggests progress. He further explained why it is better to divorce than to remain in an unhappy marriage. He argued in terms of the Ethic of Autonomy consideration that an unhappy marriage causes pain to the individual spouses:

> Again using the generation before us, a lot of those people should have gotten a divorce and didn't. They stayed together and lived miserable lives.

This progressivist man did not regard the 'new way of thinking' as indicative of societal decline, as the orthodox did. In fact, he took the 'new way of thinking' as an indication of societal progress. He was joined by a large number of other progressivists who also regarded an increasing consideration of the rights and well-being of individuals in a positive light: 85% of the progressivists used the Ethic of Autonomy in reasoning about divorce, and 80% specifically invoked the rights and/or well-being of individuals as a justification for divorce.

In sum, the progressivist moral reasoning on divorce was informed by an assessment of the world where we live that is at odds with the orthodox assessment. In contrast to the orthodox adults, the progressivists did not tend to speak of a superior past,

nor did they view the present as morally degenerate. Instead they focused much more (though not exclusively) on societal progress. In their estimation, more social roles are available to women, gender equality is increasing, and the feelings and needs of individuals receive more respect, and they regard these changes in a positive light. The orthodox detect some of the very same changes, but assess them in a more negative light.

Why Are We Suffering?

A worldview provides an account of the *reasons* for and *meaning* of suffering. As should be clear from the above discussion of divorce, the moral discourse of the orthodox and progressivist groups is based upon differing accounts of the reasons for societal ills and attendant human suffering. In the orthodox assessment, one reason we are suffering is that we are living far removed from God's truth. The 'new way of thinking' is promoting societal ills and concomitant suffering, such as poverty and feelings of insecurity. In contrast, according to the progressivist perspective, one reason we are suffering is because society is in need of more 'new thinking'. Societal injustices have been and still are inflicted upon oppressed and suffering groups of people.

The two groups also differed in their understandings of the meaning of some forms of suffering. These conflicting understandings entailed different moral reasoning about issues such as suicide in the case of terminal illness. All orthodox participants regarded suicide in the case of terminal illness as morally wrong. In explaining their reasons, 100% spoke in terms of the Ethic of Divinity, and 90% specifically invoked God's and/or scriptural authority. They emphasized that even if a person is terminally ill and experiencing pain, God lets a person live because their life still serves a divine purpose. An orthodox participant argued from this premise and suggested that a suffering person might still contribute to the community:

> Many times what happens is that [in] ... situations of pain a person will turn ever more bitter toward God, like 'Why is [God] doing this to me?' [But] ... there's been many situations where people who have been in hard times have caused others to reflect and to think about their lives. That has changed other people's lives for the better.

An orthodox woman, who was suffering from cancer herself, similarly held that God has a purpose for every person, including a person living in pain.

> I have cancer, and I have thought a lot about – even if I knew that I didn't have much time left, I still believe it would be wrong for *me* to take it on myself [to end my life] or [to] ask somebody [else] to end my life. I may get to the point some day when I would beg the Lord to take it. I don't know how I will feel if it gets to that point at some soon date, I don't know. But I *do* know that whatever time I have left is because God planned it that way ... Ultimately, however much time it is, this is in *His* hands.

A different understanding of suffering informed the moral reasoning of many progressivist adults. Sixty percent invoked the specific Ethic of Autonomy justifications that a terminally ill person should not have to experience physical pain and/or psychological pain. For example, a progressivist woman countered the orthodox viewpoint in the following way:

> Not everybody can endure suffering well. If it's one of those things like lung cancer which is just going to [result in] horrible suffering, I don't know that I have the right to say to someone that you've got to suffer this just because God hasn't called you to die yet ... I don't think I have the right to impose that on someone.

Also referring to the suffering of a terminally ill person, another progressivist participant suggested, 'try to put yourself in their position – the pain and the suffering!' Another simply asked: 'Why prolong that pain and agony?'

That question – 'why prolong pain and agony?' – shows that progressivist participants viewed some forms of suffering as meaningless. To them, some forms of suffering seemed an absurd part of the human condition. Their moral reasoning on the issue of committing suicide in the case of terminal illness reflected this view. Thus progressivist moral reasoning was based upon a different worldview than the orthodox one. In the orthodox worldview, suffering is purposeful, never absurd.

What Is the Remedy?

Finally, a worldview provides a prescription for alleviating human suffering. In concert with their markedly different understandings of who we are, where we are, and why we are suffering, the orthodox and progressivist prescriptions for overcoming suffering also differ markedly. As should be evident from the above discussion of abortion, divorce and suicide in the case of terminal illness, the orthodox outlook prescribes that each individual should seek to live in accordance with the divine order. A person should believe and trust in God, fulfill their role obligations, and strive to follow the example of Christ. When individuals live in this manner, the family thrives and, in turn, so does society. This orthodox worldview explains why the orthodox participants frequently referred to the Ethics of Divinity and Community when discussing all of the moral issues. It also explains why they infrequently referred to the Ethic of Autonomy. In their view, individual autonomy is potentially disruptive to following the divine order and to maintaining societal welfare and harmony.

In contrast, the progressivist responses to abortion, divorce and suicide in the case of terminal illness point to a different remedy for human suffering. According to the progressivist perspective, suffering is alleviated by continuing to move society along a progressive path. This entails promoting further equality and respect for human rights. It also entails seeking a balance between individual autonomy, on the one hand, and familial and societal responsibility, on the other hand. This worldview explains why the progressivists frequently used the Ethics of Autonomy and Community in reasoning about the moral issues. They were concerned with promoting the welfare of both the individual and society. It also explains why they seldom used the Ethic of Divinity. The progressivists' primary focus is upon human beings as social individuals living in this world rather than upon our relation to a transcendent authority, and on human self-determination rather than adherence to a divine will. Some beliefs about a transcendent authority are regarded as potentially stifling to individual inclinations. [See Jensen, in press a, for a more detailed discussion of the progressivists' conception of divinity.]

In sum, the orthodox and progressivist adults provided different answers to the question of what is the remedy for human suffering. They expressed these answers in different moral reasoning. Their moral reasoning justified different precepts for behavior. Thus, in the orthodox view, we will alleviate suffering if we curb behaviors such as divorce, abortion, and suicide in the case of terminal illness. In the progressivist view, such behaviors ought not be tolerated indiscriminately, but individuals should have the freedom to choose to engage in these behaviors under various conditions.

Worldviews and Behavior

The interview and questionnaire studies with the orthodox and progressivist groups focused upon their moral evaluations and reasoning. However, some behavioral information was obtained, in that the 40 midlife interviewees reported their marital status and occupation, and dicussed their children's education. This information indicated that adults in the two groups differed on behaviors pertaining to divorce, home schooling, and being a homemaker. The behavioral differences between the orthodox and progressivist groups were in accordance with their different moral outlooks and worldviews. The progressivists were less likely to oppose divorce, and there was a trend for more of these adults to have divorced (30.0 vs. 5.6%). The orthodox were more likely to approve of traditional spousal roles, and more orthodox women were homemakers (60.0 vs. 12.5%). The orthodox were more likely to regard society and its institutions as being morally bankrupt, and more orthodox parents had withdrawn their children from the public schools and were home schooling them (50.0 vs. 0%; the figure for the orthodox group is high and it should be kept in mind that it is based on a fairly small sample).[6] These findings suggest that people's moral behaviors are based to some extent upon their moral reasoning and worldviews.

In turn, by engaging in these different behaviors, the orthodox and progressivist adults may be maintaining and seeking to pass on their respective worldviews. Generally, this was the explicit goal of orthodox parents who were home schooling their children. These parents viewed home schooling as a moral decision and behavior. Typically, they discussed how God has given parents the responsibility for their children's upbringing and training. They argued that the training conveyed by public schools either excludes or counters what they want their children to learn, and thus parents must themselves educate their children. For example, one woman gave numerous examples from her children's experiences in public school to explain why she and her husband had decided to home school:

> I really liked the teachers and we were very involved in the school, but I did *not* like what they were teaching. I did not like the moral implications that they were teaching my children ... that homosexuality is a lifestyle ... [Also], at Christmas time multiculturalism was brought into play, but you definitely couldn't bring in the story of Christ ... [Also], there was a teacher who brought in these rocks and the children, if they would get upset or needed to talk to somebody, they were supposed to talk to this *rock*. To me that was encouraging either idol worship or that this *rock* could help them. And it can't, it's just a rock!

By home schooling their children, orthodox parents are acting upon their moral views and their worldview. In turn, home schooling is an attempt to pass on that very worldview. [For a more detailed discussion of Christian fundamentalists' approach to home schooling and education generally, see Ammerman, 1987; Rose 1993; Schultze, 1993; Tehranian, 1993.]

None of the progressivist parents had withdrawn their children from the public school system. These parents are unlikely to evaluate public education as negatively as

[6] Divorce (out of total number of adults, excluding never married adults): $\chi^2(1,37) = 3.77$, $p = 0.05$. Homemakers (out of total number of married women): $\chi^2(1,17) = 4.22$, $p < 0.05$. Home school (out of total number of households with school age children): $\chi^2(1,15) = 4.38$, $p < 0.05$.

the orthodox parents. For example, they are more likely to see a positive side to teaching from a multicultural perspective, or to introduce children to therapeutic approaches to suffering. Thus, progressivist parents, by accepting public school education and enrolling their children in public schools, at least in part are expressing and helping to pass on a different worldview.

The education we provide our children often serves to pass on a worldview. Other behaviors also serve this purpose in less explicit ways. Thus, the different behaviors of the orthodox and progressivist adults, such as those pertaining to divorce and being a homemaker, indicate the values they favor. Also, their behaviors may encourage others to adopt their values. Recall the progressivist woman who divorced her alcoholic husband, in part because she felt that he was not contributing as much as she to their marriage. Discussing how she reached the decision to divorce her husband after much agonizing, she explained:

> I felt like our two daughters needed to know a lot of things about marriage. One, they don't have to be married. Two, they don't have to stay in a relationship that's not working.

According to her moral outlook and worldview, divorce in general and her own divorce in particular could be morally commendable. Through her own divorce, she expressed this view, and she sought to impart it to others. In contrast, the orthodox adults by rejecting divorce are adhering to and giving credence to a different set of values and worldview.[7]

The ways in which moral reasoning and behaviors reinforce one another have been explored in recent cross-cultural research [Morelli et al., 1992; Rothbaum et al., 1995; Shweder et al., 1995; Tudge et al., in press]. However, further research is needed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present discussion indicates that people's morality is informed by their worldviews. The answers that people give to the questions of who are we, where are we, why are we suffering, and what is the remedy, provide a basis for their moral reasoning. In turn, their moral reasoning results in moral evaluations which prescribe behaviors. The research discussed here indicates that the moral division between the orthodox and progressivist groups is founded on their different worldviews. The orthodox and progressivist worldviews, moral reasoning and moral evaluations also appeared to inform some of their behaviors. It was suggested that these different behaviors, in turn, help to maintain, pass on, and promote the orthodox and progressivist worldviews.

The present illustration of ways in which people's moral reasoning is based on their worldviews contrasts with the cognitive-structuralist approach. As described earlier, that approach separates moral reasoning from worldviews, and focuses upon the logic and method of people's moral thinking. However, within the present analysis, it would seem that no matter how much reversibility of thought orthodox and progressivist

[7] One orthodox interviewee had divorced. Interestingly, he emphasized how this had occurred before he was 'saved', and how his pastor in subsequent conversations had empathized with him.

adults engaged in, they would not be likely often to arrive at similar moral reasoning. This is because their worldviews are markedly different. Their divergent views of human nature, reality, suffering, and how to overcome suffering often lead them to different understandings of the viewpoints of subjects in a moral situation. Thus their moral evaluations and reasoning frequently differ – and frequently conflict.

Hunter [1991, 1994] has suggested that one important reason for the public acrimony between orthodox and progressivist groups is precisely the fact that they subscribe to such different understandings of the world. He argues that the groups' different moral discourses make a reconciliation between their points of view exceedingly difficult. In turn, this leads to attempts on both sides to discredit the opposition by portraying it in strongly negative terms. Hence the culture war.

The culture war research discussed here highlights the importance of not only focusing on the individual but also on the communal context within which individual moral reasoning occurs. It emphasizes the study of moral psychology with increased attention to intra- and intercommunal transmission of worldviews, moral reasoning, and moral behaviors.

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