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Different Habits, Different Hearts: The Moral Languages of the Culture War

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Bellah et al. (1985) argue that middle-class Americans have wholeheartedly adopted a moral language of individualism. However, Hunter's (1991) description of the "culture war" suggests that moral values in general and individualism in particular are being contested in America, with "progressivist" groups advocating a language of individualism and "orthodox" groups rejecting it. While Hunter focuses on the presence of the culture war in the public arena, the present article provides an account of the moral discourse of ordinary middle-class Americans who tend toward progressivism and orthodoxy. Interviews with mainline Baptists (progressivist) and fundamentalist Baptists (orthodox) on issues such as divorce and abortion showed that the progressivists often used a language of individualism, but also gave voice to community considerations. The orthodox participants rejected the language of individualism, and instead spoke first of divinity considerations and secondarily of community concerns. The present article ends by calling for a dialogical approach (Levine, 1995) to the study of morality that brings together sociologies of moral discourse with psychologies of moral reasoning.

Key Words: Moral discourse, individualism, culture wars, abortion, suicide, divorce.

A little more than a decade ago, Robert Bellah and his colleagues (1985) published their now famous study, *Habits of the Heart*, on the moral discourse of middle-class Americans. With this study, the authors gave a powerful boost to older social science traditions of focusing upon moral language, and of contributing to a public discussion of the mores by which we live. Specifically, Bellah et al. argued that middle-class Americans have wholeheartedly adopted a moral language of individualism. They also warned that excessive individualism renders us susceptible to communal and political anomie—a warning that helped spur the communitarian movement.

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Bellah et al. described an American culture dominated by individualism. However, James Davison Hunter's (1991, 1994) recent writings on the "culture war" suggest that moral values in general and individualism in particular are being contested in America. The aim of the present article is to follow the approach of Bellah et al. by providing an in-depth examination of the moral discourse of middle-class Americans. This examination draws upon methods and approaches from both sociology and psychology. In contrast to Bellah et al., however, the focus here is upon the different "habits of the heart" that find expression in the context of the culture war. The intent is to contribute to an understanding of the culture war divide as well as point to possible ways toward bridging that divide.

A Culture of Individualism

In *Habits of the Heart*, Bellah et al. (1985) set out to describe the American character. They asked: "Who are we, as Americans? What is our character?" (p. vi). In order to answer these questions, they engaged more than two hundred middle-class Americans in conversations about the self, the community, and the divine.

Bellah et al. took their lead from Tocqueville, who some 150 years earlier had detailed the mores of Americans—mores which he at times referred to as "habits of the heart" (1840/1969). Like Tocqueville, Bellah et al. warned of the potentially corrosive nature of the individualism so close to the American heart. Tocqueville was one of the first observers to write of individualism and he cautioned against cultivating it excessively. He described the seeds of individualism in early American life. One-and-one-half-centuries later, Bellah et al. argued that individualism has grown excessive.

According to Bellah et al., middle-class Americans have come to speak a *first language* of individualism. When considering moral issues, Americans speak first and foremost of the individual's interests and emotions. The emphasis upon fulfilling one's own interests springs out of what Bellah et al. called utilitarian individualism. The emphasis upon expressing one's own emotions springs out of what they referred to as expressive individualism. In describing contemporary American discourse as dominated by individualism, Bellah et al. are in the company of numerous other observers who have written of individualism as characteristic of modernity in general and America in particular (e.g., Arnett, 1996; Berger, 1967; Lasch, 1978, 1984; Luckmann, 1963; Parsons, 1963; Rieff, 1966; Triandis, 1995).

Bellah et al. hold that the language of individualism comes first in the discourse of Americans. In contrast, *second languages,* pertaining to communal obligations and relations to the divine, are languages in which Americans are losing their fluency. They are still present but seldom spoken. According to Bellah et al., these second languages are rooted in the older republican tradition emphasizing communal and political participation, and the biblical tradition emphasizing living a life infused with faith and aimed at moral purity.

The Culture War

Bellah et al. emphasize the dominance of individualism in American life. Yet, as mentioned above, the culture war described by Hunter (1991, 1994) suggests that American individualism is hotly contested (see also Jensen, 1995a; Neuhaus, 1990; Wuthnow, 1988, 1989). It suggests that a consensus has not been reached about what national ideals to strive for, and that a division is occurring over how to define the American identity and character.

Hunter (1991) examines the opposing political alliances that have been forged on a wide variety of current issues, such as those pertaining to abortion, gay and lesbian sexuality, family policy, and the content of education and media. He also examines 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 progressivism" versus "the impulse toward orthodoxy" (p.43).

Hunter emphasizes that philosophical treatises have not been put forth that fully articulate the progressivist or orthodox worldviews. Hunter also emphasizes that the categorical nature of a distinction between progressivism and orthodoxy must not be exaggerated. At the public level, groups exist that combine elements from both sides. In terms of the thinking of individuals, Hunter suggests that it is likely that the views of Americans distribute along a continuum between the poles of progressivism and orthodoxy. Still, Hunter holds that "two *relatively* distinct and competing visions of public life" (emphasis in original, p. 107) and morality are finding expression in American public debates.

Briefly described, progressivists stress the importance of human agency in understanding and formulating moral precepts. Progressivists vary in the basis on which they arrive at moral precepts. Some draw upon scientific evidence about the human condition. As pointed out by Hunter (1991), this approach derives from the intellectual tradition of Enlightenment naturalism. Other progressivists draw upon their personal experiences—an approach derived from the intellectual tradition of Enlightenment subjectivism. However, progressivists unite in the focus upon human understanding and formulation of moral precepts. They also unite in regarding moral precepts as changeable, because human and individual understandings evolve and societal circumstances change. Progressivists represent the trend toward an ethic of individualism, described by Bellah et al., in that they emphasize the moral autonomy and self-sufficiency of the individual.

In contrast to progressivists, those who are orthodox contest the legitimacy and value of human autonomy and individualism. They hold that a transcendent

authority—an authority that is independent of, prior to, and more powerful than human experience—originated a moral code and revealed it to human beings. Different religious traditions have different conceptions of the sources through which transcendence communicates its authority (e.g., 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 authority, 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.

Present Aims and Hypotheses

In his writings, Hunter (1991, 1994) primarily focuses upon the views of publicly active figures and groups who tend toward progressivism and orthodoxy. The aim of the present study is to describe the moral discourse of ordinary Americans who tend toward progressivism and orthodoxy. Mainline Baptists, representing the progressivist side, and fundamentalist Baptists, representing the orthodox side, participated in interviews about issues such as divorce, abortion, and suicide.

Only members of one denomination were included, in order to capture the extent to which the division between orthodox and progressivist views is occurring within denominations, as Hunter (1991) describes it. Also, by comparing people from the same religious tradition some aspects of theology and denominational organization are held constant, as opposed to comparing members of different traditions. The exclusive focus on Baptists may limit the generalizability of the findings to some degree, although as pointed out by Hunter (1991) the commonalities within progressivist and orthodox outlooks (respectively) carry across denominations.[1] The focus only on Baptists also means that groups who are more progressivist (and secular) than mainline Baptists could have been identified. The two groups of 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 culture. However, Hunter's caveats (discussed above) about the concepts of progressivism and orthodoxy should be kept in mind.

In the present study, the participants' discourse was analyzed in terms of Richard Shweder's (1990) ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity. These three ethics overlap with the moral traditions described by Bellah et al. (1985), and they were also considered appropriate for understanding the culture war division. The three ethics entail different conceptions of the moral agent. The ethic of autonomy defines the moral agent as an autonomous individual who is free to make choices with few limits. What restricts a person's behavior is mainly a prohibition on inflicting harm on others and encroaching upon their rights. Moral discourse within this ethic centers on an individual's rights, inter-

ests, and well-being, and on equality between individuals. The languages of utilitarian and expressive individualism described by Bellah et al. are examples of an ethic of autonomy.

The ethic of community defines the moral agent in terms of her membership in social groups, and the obligations that ensue from this membership. Moral discourse within this ethic centers on a person's duties to others, consideration of others' welfare, and promoting the interests of groups to which the person belongs (such as family and society). The republican tradition described by Bellah et al. is one example of the ethic of community.

The ethic of divinity defines the moral agent as a spiritual entity. Moral discourse within this ethic centers on divine and natural law, injunctions and lessons found in sacred texts, and the striving on the part of a person to avoid spiritual degradation and to come closer to moral purity. The biblical tradition discussed by Bellah et al. is representative of the ethic of divinity.

In comparing the progressivist and orthodox groups, it was hypothesized that progressivists would speak in terms of the ethic of autonomy more than orthodox participants, and that orthodox participants would speak in terms of the ethic of divinity more than progressivists. These expectations were based upon Hunter's (1991, 1994) explanations of progressivist and orthodox outlooks (described above). It was expected that both groups would speak of promoting the best interests of families and society, even if their conceptions of the ideal community might differ. Thus, no differences were expected in their uses of the ethic of community.

Regarding the extent to which progressivist and orthodox participants would have first and second moral languages, it was hypothesized that the orthodox participants would speak the most in terms of the ethic of divinity, less in terms of the ethic of community, and the least in terms of the ethic of autonomy. This expectation is in line with surveys of the moral responses of conservative Protestants (Roof & McKinney, 1987), as well as ethnographies of fundamentalist Baptists (Ammerman, 1987).[2]

It was hypothesized that progressivist participants would speak as much in terms of the ethic of autonomy as the ethics of community and divinity. However, more specific hypotheses were not proposed as research results on the topic have been varied. Thus, the characterization by Bellah et al. and others of the American middle-class as first and foremost speaking a language of individualism would suggest that the progressivist participants would speak more in terms of the ethic of autonomy than in terms of the ethics of community and divinity. However, Roof and McKinney (1987) have argued that mainline Baptists respond to moral issues in terms of both individualistic and collectivistic responses, suggesting that the progressivist participants (who were mainline Baptists) would speak equally in terms of the ethics of autonomy and community. Finally, Jensen (1995b) has found that among middle-class, politically liberal Americans, young adults speak a first language of individualism while midlife and older adults speak about equally of individual, communal, and divinity considerations. The latter findings would suggest that the progressivist participants

(who were in midlife) would speak about equally in terms of all three ethics. Common to the above findings is only the observation that progressivists speak no less in terms of the ethic of autonomy than the ethics of community and divinity. Thus, this was the hypothesis proposed.

Method

The Participants

The study included forty participants: twenty mainline Baptists and twenty fundamentalist Baptists.[3] The mainline Baptists attended a church that has a dual affiliation with the American Baptist Churches/USA and the Southern Baptist Convention. (The latter affiliation is regarded as an historic affiliation.)[4] The fundamentalist Baptists attended four independent Baptist churches that self-identify as "fundamentalist."[5] All the churches were located in a medium-sized Midwestern city.

The participants were recruited in two ways. In the larger churches (the mainline church and one fundamentalist church), most participants were recruited on the basis of lists of active members provided by the ministers. Of those contacted on the basis of the lists, 67 percent agreed to participate. This method was used for the recruitment of 50 percent of the participants. The remainder of the participants volunteered after the author had described the research project at a service.

All participants were between 35 and 55 years old. The mean age was 48.6 years (SD=6.8) for the progressivists and 42.9 years (SD=6.8) for the orthodox participants. The groups did not differ significantly in proportion of women and men, marital status, or number of children. Women constituted 45 percent of the progressivist sample and 60 percent of the orthodox sample. The majority of the participants were married (progressivist: 70 percent, orthodox: 85 percent) and had children (progressivist: M=2.0, orthodox: M=2.4). The groups differed significantly on their levels of income and education. The progressivist group had a higher mean income. However, both groups represented the middle and upper-middle classes, in that 75 percent or more of participants in both groups reported a yearly family income of $36,000 or more. The progressivist group overall had a higher mean level of education. However, a majority of participants in both groups had obtained a college degree (progressivist: 100 percent, orthodox: 75 percent). The progressivists were exceptionally highly educated; 95 percent had at least some post-college education (vs. 45 percent of the orthodox participants). In statistical analyses, demographic differences were controlled for where appropriate.[6]

The Interview

All adults participated in an interview about six moral issues: one personal moral issue and five general moral issues. The personal issue was one that the

participant had experienced and regarded as involving a moral decision. (All participants were contacted about three days prior to the interview and asked to think of such an issue.) The general issues were: suicide in general, suicide in the case of terminal illness, divorce, abortion, and sati.[7]

The general moral issues were picked so as to pertain to matters of life and death, the family, and gender roles. Hunter (1991) points out that these are among the primary issues of contention between progressivist and orthodox groups. The practice of sati was included in order to see whether participants would reason differently in response to an unfamiliar practice. Participants were asked about a personal issue in order to find out whether they reasoned differently in response to this than the general issues (Walker, de Vries & Trevethan, 1987).

All participants were interviewed at their homes. The interviewer asked each participant to evaluate whether the issues were morally right or wrong, and then to elaborate upon their point of view. The interviews lasted between 50 and 130 minutes (M=90). They were tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis purposes. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Each participant was offered $20 for taking part in the study.

Coding

Each moral justification that participants provided was coded into one of Shweder's (1990) three ethics (described above). The justifications were coded on the basis of a manual constructed by the author in cooperation with Shweder (Jensen, 1991). From the transcribed interviews, the coding of moral justifications took place as follows. The three ethics each consist of sub-categories. For example, the ethic of autonomy includes sub-categories pertaining to an individual's rights, the psychological well-being of an individual, the physical well-being of an individual, and fairness. The sub-categories were used to identify codable statements. All interviews were coded by the author. A stratified random sample consisting of 20 percent of the interviews was coded by an independent rater. Reliability using Cohen's kappa was 0.87.[8]

Quantitative Analysis

Comparisons of the groups on their use of the ethics showed that progressivists spoke more in terms of the ethic of autonomy for almost all of the issues than did orthodox participants (see Table 1). Orthodox participants spoke more in terms of the ethic of divinity for all of the issues than did progressivists. Orthodox and progressivist participants did not differ in their use of the ethic of community for any of the issues.

Analyses were carried out to determine the extent to which the progressivist and orthodox participants had first and second moral languages. Within the progressivist group, more participants spoke in terms of the ethic of autonomy than the ethic of divinity for all of the issues (see Table 2). Similar proportions of progressivists used the ethics of autonomy and community for two-thirds of

TABLE 1
Comparison of Progressivist and Orthodox Groups on use of Ethics of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity

	PROGRESSIVISTS	ORTHODOX	p
(Mean number of justifications stated by participants)			
ETHIC OF AUTONOMY			
Suicide, General	0.84	0.15	***
Suicide, Terminal	1.30	0.05	***
Divorce	1.35	0.55	**
Abortion	1.35	0.90	***
Sati	0.89	0.30	ns
Personal	1.60	0.55	**
ETHIC OF COMMUNITY			
Suicide, General	0.95	0.90	ns
Suicide, Terminal	0.60	0.40	ns
Divorce	0.80	1.75	ns
Abortion	0.40	0.75	ns
Sati	0.63	0.85	ns
Personal	1.15	1.10	ns
ETHIC OF DIVINITY			
Suicide, General	0.26	1.50	***
Suicide Terminal	0.15	1.10	***
Divorce	0.30	1.60	***
Abortion	0.25	1.70	***
Sati	0.26	1.40	***
Personal	0.30	1.30	***

Notes: [a] ANOVAs were used with education and income as covariates for all of the moral issues, and with number of justifications provided by the participants as a covariate for the issues of divorce and abortion. [b] * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 d.f.= 1

the issues. The exceptions were for the issues of abortion and suicide in the case of terminal illness. In response to these issues, more progressivists spoke in terms of the ethic of autonomy than the ethic of community. Similar proportions of progressivists used the ethics of community and divinity for all but the personal issue.

Within the orthodox group, more participants spoke in terms of the ethic of divinity than the ethic of autonomy for all issues. More orthodox participants also spoke in terms of the ethic of divinity than the ethic of community for most of the issues. More orthodox participants used the ethic of community than the ethic of autonomy for half of the issues (suicide in general, suicide in the case of terminal illness, and divorce), while there was no difference in the use of these two ethics for the other half of the issues (abortion, sati, and the personal issue).

TABLE 2
Use of Ethics of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity within Progressivist and Orthodox Groups

Issues	Ethics			Comparisons			
	Aut.	Com.	Div.	Overall	AvsC	AvsD	CvsD
(Percentage of participants using three ethics)							
PROGRESSIVIST							
Suicide, Gen.	78.9	52.6	26.3	**	ns	*	ns
Suicide, Term.	90.0	40.0	15.0	***	**	***	ns
Divorce	85.0	55.0	25.0	**	ns	**	ns
Abortion	90.0	25.0	25.0	***	***	**	ns
Sati	73.7	47.4	26.3	*	ns	*	ns
Personal	85.0	75.0	30.0	**	ns	**	*
ORTHODOX							
Suicide, Gen.	15.0	70.0	100.0	***	***	***	*
Suicide, Term.	5.0	35.0	100.0	***	*	***	***
Divorce	40.0	90.0	100.0	***	**	***	ns
Abortion	60.0	40.0	100.0	***	ns	**	***
Sati	30.0	60.0	100.0	***	ns	**	*
Personal	45.0	75.0	90.0	*	ns	*	ns

Notes: [a] Cochran Q tests were used for the overall comparisons of use of the three ethics. McNemar tests was used for comparisons of specific ethics to one another. For the comparison of the ethic of community to the ethic of divinity within the progressivist group, a Bonferoni adjustment was used as no hypothesis had been proposed regarding this comparison. [b] * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 [c] The rows do not add up to 100 percent because participants often provided more than one justification for each issue. Each justification was coded only once.

Elaboration upon Results

The results of the analyses largely conformed to the hypotheses. The progressivist and orthodox participants seemed engaged in a tug of war over how much to emphasize individualistic and divinity considerations. Progressivists placed much emphasis upon the autonomy of the individual whereas orthodox participants emphasized a person's obligations to the divine. Both groups stressed communal considerations. However, as will be discussed below, their conceptions of the ideal community were different.

To a large extent, then, the progressivist and orthodox participants spoke different moral languages. Their discourse expressed different "habits of the heart." The progressivist participants showed a tendency to speak a first language of individualism as described by Bellah et al. (1985). However, they also quite often balanced their use of the ethic of autonomy with the ethic of community. In contrast, the orthodox participants had what might be called a last language of individualism. Their references to the individual were often superseded by references to the community which, in turn, were superseded by references to the divine. This orthodox hierarchy of moral languages has been

observed in other studies (e.g., Roof & McKinney, 1987; Ammerman, 1987). It also conforms to fundamentalist Baptists' own moral prescription for how to obtain joy, as described by Ammerman (1987) in her in-depth ethnography of fundamentalist Baptists and as stated by participants in the present interviews. Their prescription is *J-O-Y*: *J*esus first (ethic of divinity), *O*thers second (ethic of community), and *Y*ourself last (ethic of autonomy).

Qualitative Analysis

In what follows, examples of the participants' moral discourse will be given, in order to illustrate and elaborate upon progressivist and orthodox "habits of the heart." The focus will be on how they spoke of the self, the community, and the divine.

Discourse on the Self

The progressivist and orthodox groups differed in their conceptions of the authority and accountability of the self. In the following section, this will be illustrated by focusing upon the participants' discourse on abortion. Turning first to the progressivists, many spoke in terms of the ethic of autonomy. They emphasized how our choices should be based on our individual interests—what Bellah et al. (1985) term utilitarian individualism—and our individual feelings—what Bellah et al. term expressive individualism. For example, a progressivist participant spoke of a woman's interests:

> I think in deciding whether or not to have [an abortion], [a woman] needs to consider . . . which would be best for [her] . . . .If someone is a freshman in college and has these goals of finishing college and going on and getting a masters and maybe a doctorate, . . . it would just be a struggle for her to reach those goals.

Another progressivist also spoke of a woman's interest as well as her feelings:

> I think a woman has a choice over what happens to [her] and the consequences that [she] can see happen[ing] with the birth of the baby . . . .If you're in school, if you have a career, [maybe] you cannot go ahead with a career or finish whatever you're training for . . . .The other thing is how [a woman] feels about it . . . .It may be emotionally . . . devastating.

Other progressivists spoke of community considerations rather than of the utilitarian and expressive concerns of the individual. Speaking in terms of the ethic of community, these progressivists argued that our moral choices must benefit society. For example, one progressivist man argued that unwanted children cause societal problems.

> For instance, here is this [woman] who knows that to bring this child into life is only to be spawning one more social problem and [she] chooses abortion. I would . . . say that that is a smart choice as opposed to being an immoral act.

Another progressivist man also spoke in terms of the ethic of community. However, he emphasized societal problems caused by the availability of abortion.

> [Abortion] confirms and condones and encourages an approach to life that says: "I don't have to be responsible for the choices and decisions I make." . . . I think it encourages a level of sexual activity that does not involve any sense of commitment . . . to the partner [or] to the child that comes as a consequence of promiscuous sexual behavior . . . . I think that's a *very* serious moral problem in society at large that I can get by with making bad choices and I don't have to bear the consequences of them.

The progressivist moral discourse on abortion shows that they conceive of the self as both autonomous and accountable to the community. The progressivists spoke of how humans are free to make moral choices—choices for our own lives and choices for how we live with one another. The progressivists generally did not speak of humans as obliged to obey divine moral precepts. Instead, they emphasized how 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 comparison to the progressivist participants, the orthodox moral discourse was founded upon quite a different view of the authority and accountability of the self. Orthodox participants emphasized human accountability to God, rather than human authority to formulate moral precepts. In their discourse on abortion, orthodox participants emphasized that abortion involves ending a human life, and they invoked the ethic of divinity view that life and death decisions should be made by God, not humans. Thus, an orthodox woman said:

> Very early in the Scriptures, very early in recorded human history, there's the command not to kill. We don't have the right to kill. God gives life and God takes life.

An orthodox man similarly emphasized that God commands us not to take human life. He also emphasized that following God's commandment is a sensible decision because God knows what is best for us. He explained:

> In the Ten Commandments, [God] said that we should not commit murder . . . .I believe in general when a person disobeys God 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.

The orthodox adults' moral discourse about abortion reflects their understanding of the self. According to this orthodox world view, every person is God's subject. 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. God "tells us" what is morally right and wrong. In the orthodox view, this moral order is not arbitrary or oppressive, rather it is for our benefit. 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, each person has the freedom to decide whether or not to live in accordance with God's moral order. Those who do will be rewarded by God, while those who fail will be punished. In the orthodox world view, the authority of each individual is circumscribed by a divine order, and each individual is accountable to that divine order.

In sum, progressivists conceive of the self as what might be called a social individual. The self has the authority to formulate moral precepts, and these precepts often balance individual and communal considerations. In contrast, orthodox adults conceive of the self as under God's authority. God communicates moral precepts to people, and people should seek to adhere to these precepts.

Discourse on the Community

As noted earlier, the progressivist and orthodox groups did not differ in the extent to which they spoke in terms of the ethic of community. Both progressivist and orthodox participants spoke of promoting the best interest of children, families, and society. They spoke of obligations inherent in being a spouse, parent, and colleague, and of cultivating community-oriented virtues such as loyalty, love, and commitment. However, the interviews suggested that while the progressivist and orthodox groups were similar in their use of the ethic of community, they differed in the kinds of community life they wished to promote. All participants may have wished for children to grow up under the best of conditions, but there was a world of difference in the kinds of communities they wanted their children to inherit. In the following section, participants' discourse on divorce will be used to illustrate this difference.

Responses to the issue of divorce revealed that the progressivist and orthodox groups held different conceptions of the origin of marriage and the roles of spouses. These different views of the institution of marriage provide insight into the more general progressivist and orthodox conceptions of community—its origin and the roles of its members. The progressivist and orthodox views of marriage also provide insight into the extent to which the groups see the ideal community as allowing for individual expression.

In terms of the origin of marriage, progressivists spoke of marriage more as a social than a sacred institution. People choose to enter into marriage, and in some cases they may also choose to dissolve the marriage contract. Emphasizing the contractual over the divine nature of marriage, a progressivist woman said:

> I don't believe that divorce is the unforgivable sin, that it is not possible for persons to admit a mistake in their original choice. [Then] having taken an act of separation, it is possible for them to find a new mate for a more happy and fulfilling life.

A progressivist man also spoke of marriage as a social union.

> Divorce . . . is pretty much a part of the way that we do business in this country. And I don't think many individuals who are involved [in divorce] are morally corrupt. [They] are trying to choose something that seems to make sense for their lives . . . .I wish [that people] were smarter before they got into one of those unions [i.e., marriage]. [But] sometimes things change. The sweetness and light of the marriage ceremony don't last forever.

In the progressivist view, marriage is a social institution that may serve numerous purposes, such as satisfying the emotional needs of spouses and caring for children. Many progressivists held that when a marriage ceases to fulfill some its purposes then individuals may be justified in dissolving the social bond between them.

Progressivist participants held that the social bond of marriage is founded upon a mutual agreement between the spouses. Some progressivists held that if a marriage ceases to accommodate the goals of both spouses, or if spousal contributions are unequal, then divorce may be justified. For example, one progressivist woman discussed her own decision to divorce as an illustration. She spoke in terms of an ethic of autonomy, emphasizing the need for 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 was when he went 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, progressivists often spoke of the roles and statuses of spouses in terms of the ethic of autonomy ideal of equality. Marriage partners ought to contribute equally to the marriage, and to share mutually in each other's joys and hardships.

Compared to the progressivists, the orthodox participants spoke of the origin of marriage and the statuses of spouses in a noticeably different way. Orthodox participants spoke of marriage as a sacred institution that can only be exited in the rarest of circumstances. Speaking in terms of an ethic of divinity, an orthodox woman explained that divorce is morally wrong, "I just believe that when you get married you're really making your vow to God that you will stay together." Another orthodox woman similarly emphasized the divine nature of marriage: "God said . . . 'what God has put together, let no man put asunder.'" Thus, orthodox participants regarded marriage as sacred because it is instituted and sanctioned by God. Spouses vow to stay married to each other and the vow is binding because it is taken in front God, not because an agreement has been reached between persons.

Furthermore, marriage is sacred because it is a picture or reenactment of humans' relation to the divine, with the husband and wife taking on different

roles and statuses. The hierarchical relationship between God and humans is mirrored in the relationship between husband and wife. Speaking in terms of an ethic of divinity understanding of marriage, an orthodox man explained, "in the New Testament, God compares marriage to the marriage of Christ and the Church [i.e., the faithful]. He used Christ as the husband and the Church as the bride." One implication of this relation, as explained by another orthodox man, is that since "Christ was the one who [was] the leader and made the final decisions . . . , that same analogy is used in the marriage as well. The husband needs to be the one who makes th[e] final decision[s]." An orthodox woman elaborated upon the different roles and statuses of the spouses. She stated, "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." (For further discussion of Christian fundamentalists' conceptions of gender roles and the family, see Ammerman, 1987; Hardacre, 1993.)

In sum, the progressivist and orthodox participants spoke of marriage in substantially different ways. The progressivists spoke of marriage as a social arrangement uniting egalitarian partners. The orthodox spoke of marriage as a sacred union between spouses who have different roles and statuses. These different conceptions of marriage provide insight into the more general progressivist and orthodox conceptions of community. Progressivists often regard communities as social arrangements where humans who are fundamentally equal in their status come together. In contrast, the orthodox often regard the source of community as sacred. In their view, members of communities differ in their roles and statuses, and this differentiation and hierarchy has a divine origin.

An implication of these different conceptions is that progressivists allow for more individual expression within communities. To a large extent, individuals can take on the roles that they choose, and individuals have considerable leeway in forming and dissolving social bonds. In this way, progressivists tend toward what Richard Merelman (1984) has referred to as "loose-bounded" communities, and what Jeffrey Arnett (1995) has referred to as "broad socialization." These communities place loose boundaries on individuals' behaviors, and consequently a broad range of behaviors find expression within the community. In comparison, the orthodox conception of community places stricter behavioral requirements upon individuals. Some roles, statuses, and social bonds are binding with relatively little room for individual alteration. In this way, the orthodox tend toward what Merelman has referred to as "tight-bounded" communities, and what Arnett has referred to as "narrow socialization." These communities place tighter boundaries on individuals' behaviors, and consequently a narrower range of behaviors occur. Thus, while the progressivist and orthodox groups did not differ in the extent to which they spoke in terms of the ethic of community, the kinds of communities they wish to promote and pass on to their children are markedly different. (See also Bellah, 1987, for the view that incivility in America arises out of clashes between competing desires for loose-bounded and tight-bounded communities.)

Discourse on the Divine

The moral discourse of the progressivist and orthodox groups on the self and the community reflected a difference in the extent to which they emphasized the will, needs, and feelings of the individual. This difference was also seen in the participants' discourse on the divine, and it will be illustrated by focusing upon their responses to the issue of suicide in the case of terminal illness.

As seen, progressivists' moral language drew relatively little upon the ethic of divinity. However, when they did speak of the divine, their emphasis was upon the individual's interpretation of God's will and the priority of the individual's desires over notions of divine commandments. In response to the issue of suicide in the case of terminal illness, for example, one progressivist man spoke of the individual's interpretation of God's will, "I've got to square it with what *I* discern is God's will in this matter." Another progressivist man expressed a similar idea in similar words, "I guess that . . . as human beings and as children of God, we can discern and make choices about the world in which we live."

The progressivist emphasis upon individual interpretations of God's will was often accompanied by a rejection of the idea that individuals must submit to conceptions of God's plan for their lives or God's commandments given in the Bible. A progressivist woman emphasized honoring the will of the terminally ill person over notions of God's plans:

> Not everybody can endure suffering well. And if it's one of those horrible things like lung cancer or something which is just going to [cause] 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.

The progressivist participants' conception of the divine tended toward the "individualized" and "subjectivized" conceptions of religion described by Bellah et al. (1985) and numerous other observers (e.g., Berger, 1967; Hunter, 1983; Luckmann, 1963; Parsons, 1963). The progressivists spoke little of moral knowledge or rules that God reveals to humans. They spoke little of God's will for each individual life. Instead they spoke of the individual's interpretation and subjective understanding of God's will. They spoke of accommodating notions of the divine to the will of each individual.

While the progressivist discourse on the divine tended toward individualization, it was by no means at the extreme of individualization. The progressivist participants considered themselves Baptists and participated in a common church life, a common church life that was deeply important to them. Thus, in their approach to the divine as in their conceptions of the self, the progressivist participants were seeking to balance both individualistic and community considerations.

Some have argued that Protestantism with its focus upon each person's relationship to God, inevitably leads to individualism (e.g., MacIntyre, 1966, 1984; Parsons, 1963). The discourse of the mainline Baptists discussed above might be

taken to support this argument. Yet, the discourse of the fundamentalist Baptists—the orthodox participants—did not. While they emphasized traditional Protestant ideas of each person having a relation with the divine, their conception of the divine was not individualized or subjectivized (see also Ammerman, 1987). They saw the individual as the receiver of God's commandments, not the perceiver and formulator of divine matters. They thought it imperative that individuals subject their own will to God's Will.

The orthodox participants continuously reiterated that God gives His commandments to humans through the Scriptures, and that we must adhere to them. Speaking of suicide in the case of terminal illness, one orthodox man stated: "Biblically you aren't supposed to do it. If God tells you not to do something and then you do it, then you've done something that's wrong. That's usually the bottom line." An orthodox woman also invoked the Scriptures, "I understand the suffering, I've seen a lot of people with cancer and all that . . . but if the Bible says it's wrong, [then] it's wrong."

According to the orthodox participants, humans can know and ought to adhere to God's word. Also, in their view, God has a plan for each individual life, and we ought not to interfere with that plan. Thus, many orthodox participants held that in the case of terminal illness, people may wish to die, but they are not allowed to end their lives. They must await to see God's purpose for them. An orthodox woman, who was suffering from cancer herself, stated:

> 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 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. 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.

In the orthodox view, the will of the individual must be subjected to God's authority. The reference point for moral knowledge and moral action is the divine. Thus orthodox participants spoke a first language of divinity.

In sum, the discourse of the progressivist participants tended toward a subjectivized and individualized conception of the divine. In contrast, the orthodox participants held that people can know the true and eternal God, and that one's purpose in making moral decisions should be to adhere to God's will.

Conclusion

The present article argues that different "habits of the heart" find expression in the moral discourse of middle-class Americans. Bellah et al. (1985) have argued that the American middle class has come to speak a first language of individualism. The progressivist participants in this study were indeed at ease with such a language. However, they quite often balanced their individualism with community considerations. Thus, they spoke both of the freedom that all individuals ought to have to make moral choices, and the necessity of adjusting

individual wishes to community interests. They spoke both of the importance of honoring one's own feelings, and of caring for others in the community. They spoke both of finding one's own god, and of participating in a common church life. In contrast to the progressivists, the orthodox participants rejected individualism. These middle-class Americans spoke not a first but a last language of individualism. Their moral discourse was based first and foremost in an ethic of divinity. To them, the purpose in life is for one's heart to beat to the rhythm of God's will. The more individuals live in accordance with God's will, the more communities thrive.

It is possible that the issues selected for the present study highlighted the differences between the progressivist and orthodox groups. In future research, it would be useful to include other kinds of issues. Struck by the marked differences that I found in the present study, I invited a mainline Baptist minister and a fundamentalist Baptist minister to my home for a conversation about the culture war and the possibility of rapprochement (Jensen, 1997b). Their conversation suggested that research on issues pertaining to race relations, materialism, and virtues such as honesty and dependability may elicit a more common moral language.

In future research, it might be fruitful to draw upon both the extensive tradition in sociology of studying moral discourse, as well as methods and approaches often used in moral psychology. The two disciplines share a focus on the moral discourse and reasoning of ordinary persons. Yet, the disciplines often seem like two ships passing in the night. As I have argued elsewhere (Jensen, 1997c), psychology might benefit from learning more about the sociological tradition of placing morality in its world view context. On the other hand, sociology might benefit from paying more attention to the diverse psychological theories and methods pertaining to moral reasoning. The present article represents an attempt to bring elements from the two disciplines together. I see a dialogical approach (Levine, 1995) between sociology of moral discourse and moral psychology as holding the potential for a more thorough and insightful understanding of morality in all of its diversity.

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Notes

1. Liberal and moderate Protestants constitute about 33 percent of the American population (Roof & McKinney, 1987). Fundamentalist and evangelical Protestants constitute about 20 percent of the American population (Reichley, 1990). However, culture war divisions also exist among Catholics and Jews.
2. It might be noted that Hunter (1987) has argued that a language of individualism is emerging among evangelical students at biblical colleges and seminaries, even if it still is not their first moral language.
3. In order to conduct in-depth interviews (which are time consuming), the sample size was kept relatively small. Subsequent to the present study, a larger questionnaire study (N=120) was carried out with the same populations. The questionnaire results were largely similar to the interview results (Jensen, 1997a).

4. Generally, the American Baptist Churches/USA are considered to be liberal to moderate in their moral and political orientations. The Southern Baptist Convention is considerably more conservative. However, since the late 1970s, Southern Baptists have engaged in contentious battles among themselves, with many Southern Baptists calling for orthodoxy but some moving toward progressivism (Ammerman, 1990; Hunter, 1994).
5. The term fundamentalist derives from a series of booklets edited by A.C. Dixon between 1910 and 1915. They were entitled *The Fundamentals*, and defended a literal reading of the Bible, the Second Coming, and conservative doctrine. The booklets were symptomatic of a more general reaction against the liberalism and ecumenism endorsed by mainline Protestant denominations. The fundamentalist reaction began in the later part of the ninteenth century.
6. See notes in tables for a description.
7. Sati is the Hindu practice where a widow immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre.
8. It should be emphasized that a participant may speak in terms of one or more of Shweder's three ethics. A participant is not classified within one of the ethics, rather each justification provided by a participant is coded within one of the ethics.

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