

The Dynamics of Marriage Law and Custom in the United States

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Abstract: This article examines changes in marriage laws and related cultural norms and values in the United States across the last several decades, and discusses correlating worldview shifts. It appears that the “traditional” worldview produced earlier laws, cultural norms and values, and changes to these have corresponded with a cultural worldview shift, first into “modernism” and then towards “postmodernism.” The implications of these worldview shifts for ongoing change to marriage law and custom are also analyzed.

Keywords: Cultural lines of development, feminism, gay marriage, integral, law, marriage custom, marriage worldview, modernist, postmodern, teen pregnancy, traditional, worldview paradigm.

Introduction

Over the last several decades, marriage laws and customs within the United States have changed dramatically. For example, not long ago, it was relatively common for females to marry in their mid-teen years (Moss, 1964).² Now, most states do not allow couples to marry without parental consent until both are at least eighteen (USLegal, 2012). Additionally, only a couple of decades ago, it was both common and socially acceptable for males in their twenties to date females who were between 16 and 18 years of age. Now, statutory rape laws in several states make it possible for a man as young as 18 to be prosecuted for having consensual sexual relations with his girlfriend if she is less than 18, with penalties being harsher if she is more than two years his junior.³ At the same time, “dating” as a form of courtship for young people, has

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² Also, although prior to the 1950s the average age that females married was older, my own grandmother and great-grandmother were both married at the age of 16. In the 1950s, teenage marriage numbers spiked. Although the numbers soon lowered again, as late as the 1970s I knew of several girls between 15 and 17 years old who were getting married. In the rural area where I grew up, this was still an accepted practice at that time.

³ For most states, the statutory “age of consent” falls between 16 and 18, but laws vary state to state. For example, in both California and Mississippi, it is against the law for any person who is 18 or older to have



begun to disappear. Today, both males and females in the U.S. are more likely to have casual sexual relationships, with partners close to their own age and without an intent for commitment, well into their twenties (Wilson, 2009). Because women tend to marry men who are older than them, and because males have, in the history of the U.S., been more likely than females to wait until their mid to late twenties to marry for the first time, these new dating norms may have helped to push the average age at time of first marriage higher for American women.⁴ Not long ago, many young women encountered family and social pressure to marry young. Now, teenage marriage is largely seen as scandalous and damaging to youths, particularly to young women.⁵

In addition to these age-related changes, the legal structure of marriage has changed as well. Over the last several decades, as the nation's cultural attitudes have shifted, marriage laws that had once perpetuated a male-over-female hierarchy were re-written to give women rights more comparable to those enjoyed by their husbands. Marriage laws were also changed to make it easier for couples to seek divorce.⁶ In the meantime, part of the dialectic force behind these changes may have helped to bring about a partial cultural rejection of marriage itself. That is, during the mid-twentieth century, many feminist writers demonized the institution of marriage as being inherently demeaning to women (for examples, see Firestone, 1970 and Dworkin, 2002). With so many cultural and legal forces in play, the direct impact of this dialogue is impossible to

sexual contact with anyone who is not yet 18. However, in California, the crime may be reduced to misdemeanor status if the distance in age is less than three years, yet in Mississippi, age difference does not matter. Similarly, in Connecticut, a person can be charged with a felony for having sexual contact with someone who is less than 16 years old only if the offender is more than two years older than the victim. Yet in Kansas, where the age of consent for sexual conduct is also 16, distance of age does not matter. Although most state's laws refer to "any person" rather than "any male" over 18 who has sexual relations with a younger person as being guilty of committing a crime, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Michael M v Superior Court*, 450 U.S. 464, 1981, upheld the Constitutionality of state laws which hold stricter rules for males than females, on the grounds that females can get pregnant while males cannot. See Richard Posner and Katharine Silbaugh, *A guide to America's sex laws*, 1996.

⁴ The average age of first marriage has not changed much across the last century for males. In 1890, the average age at first marriage for males was 26. This number declined slowly in the early twentieth century, to reach an all-time low in the 1950s and 1960s of an average age just shy of 23. By 1990, it was back up to 26, and today stands at 28. For women, the average age at first marriage, in 1890, was 22. This number declined slowly in the early twentieth century, to reach an all-time low in the 1950s and 1960s of an average age just over 20. By 1980, it was back up to 22, and has steadily risen since. Today the average age for women at first marriage is 26. Tables may be viewed online at the "Info Please" database compiled by Pearson Education, 2011. Also see National Public Radio's (NPR) online chart titled "Marriage in the U.S.," 2011.

⁵ Recall the scandal, played out in the media, over the fundamentalist Mormon families that were taken into state custody in Texas in 2008. It was not only the notion of polygamy that appalled people, but the worry that some of the wives might be "underage." In fact, this concern was touted as why Texas placed some of the children and young women into state custody. See R. Owens, "Polygamist sect marks first anniversary of Texas ranch raid," 2009.

⁶ For discussion of divorce law prior to and during the mid-twentieth century, see Weitzman, "Women and children last: The social and economic consequences of divorce law reforms," 1988, and Okin, *Justice, gender, and the family*, 1989. A discussion of the Family Law Act of 1996 and contemporary divorce law can be found in Douglas et al, "Safeguarding children's welfare in non-contentious divorce: Towards a new conception of the legal process?" 2000. See also Baer, *Women in American law: The struggle toward equality from the New Deal to the present*, 2002.

measure. Nonetheless, a general attitudinal change is evident. A few decades ago in the U.S., marriage was culturally exalted by both men and women of all ages.⁷ Today it enjoys far less social prestige. A growing percentage of heterosexual couples cohabit before or instead of getting married, and since the 1950s, the rate of divorce has increased almost steadily, while the likelihood that women will remarry has declined (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Meanwhile, a majority of U.S. women still become mothers.⁸ This has increased the number of single-parent families and contributed to what economists call the “feminization of poverty” (Pearce, 1978) – the fact that most poor, single-parent families are headed by never-married or divorced women has left them with less social power and economic security than they might have otherwise enjoyed.

At the same time, however, the increasing numbers of unmarried men and women helped to drive a further cultural shift as society as a whole began to respond to this new social phenomenon with greater awareness of and toleration for, lifestyles that had once been shunned. Single mothers, for example, are no longer cut off from social power simply because they are single. Cultural and legal acceptance of marriages that do not conform to old social restrictions have also expanded. For example, in the U.S. today, the idea that a couple could be denied the right to marry simply because they are not both of the same race seems unthinkable to most people.⁹ And, while it is still against the law in most states for gay couples to marry, acceptance of homosexuality and gay rights in general has broadened (Brewer, 2003; Brumbaugh, 2008). Now, all states grant gay couples domestic partnership rights, and an increasing number of states allow them to legally marry.

These many rapid shifts in predominant cultural values and in marriage law have resulted in worldview clashes, individual confusions, and political fireworks as pressure mounts to either further or reverse the changes. In an attempt to facilitate improved understanding of these dynamics, I will discuss what I refer to as the three predominant worldview paradigms evident in the United States today. Using a holistic approach, I weave together findings from other scholars’ empirical research, various philosophical and theoretical ideas, including my own, and meta-ethics concepts.¹⁰ I then distill some of these ideas into simple charts, which can, hopefully,

⁷ For example, in the mid-1950s, less than 10 percent of American's believed that a single person could be happy. See Stephanie Coontz, *The way we never were: American families and the nostalgia trap*, 1992.

⁸ For example, a 2005 vital statistics study found that only 42 percent of women ages 15 to 44 were childless, and the majority of those considered themselves to be “temporarily childless,” that is, they planned to have one or more children in the future. See Chandra et al, “Fertility, family planning, and reproductive health of U.S. women: Data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth,” 2005. In addition, during the last two decades of the twentieth century, while the birthrate among teens of color dropped, the birthrate among white, single, middle-class women increased. In 1990 more than 170,000 single women older than 30 gave birth. See Bock, “Doing the right thing? Single mothers by choice and the struggle for legitimacy,” 2000. Finally, in the last decade, births to unmarried teens have remained close to constant, while births to unmarried women twenty and older have continued to steadily rise. In 2007, nearly four in ten births in the U.S. were to unmarried women. See Ventura, “Changing patterns of nonmarital childbearing in the United States,” 2009.

⁹ For example, in a 2001 survey, biracial couples reported widespread tolerance and even acceptance of their relationships. See Fears and Deane, “Biracial couples report tolerance: Survey finds most are accepted by families,” 2001.

¹⁰ For a definition of and operational concepts for “meta-ethics” see Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005).

allow for better understanding of how some integral theorists' concepts and meta-ethics concepts intersect with what feminist theorists have claimed, what political scientists have empirically measured and what anecdotal evidence suggests. This, in turn, can open new areas of study as we are able to pinpoint areas where knowledge is lacking. It may also help political activists and policy-makers to better understand the populations they attempt to lead.

Previous Research and Theory – Marriage

In the United States, literature about marriage has tended mostly to follow one of three threads. The first thread, forwarded in earnest by mid-twentieth century feminists (see below), argues that marriage was instituted by male-led society to coerce female sexual and caregiving behavior in ways that are desirable only to males. The second thread, forwarded by political conservatives and various religious groups, predominantly argues that marriage is a moral necessity for heterosexual couples and a societal necessity for the raising of children in stable households (see Feld et al, 2002; Wilson, 2002). The third thread, often embraced by those arguing legal cases in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage, follows the popular societal notion that marriage is a desirable “expression of romantic love,” decisions about which must be left to individual choice if citizens are to be free to pursue their own happiness in life (Murray, 2012, p. 3). Few attempts have been made to reconcile these disparate views about marriage, ask what effects they have had on American law and culture, or even ask why we have three contradictory views about marriage in the first place. Yet to do so seems vital to an understanding of the rapid changes in marriage law and custom that this article addresses. My first steps in that direction, then, will begin with a brief review of feminist literature about marriage.

Radical feminists argued that marriage was little more than a license for men to sexually abuse their wives (Brownmiller, 1975; Dworkin, 2002). Other feminists argued that “mothering,” and caregiving in general, was bad for women, and charged that the traditional mother-child relationship created and maintained male dominant societies (Chodorow, 1979; Meyers, Ed., 1997; Trebilcot, 1984). They therefore opposed the traditional husband/wife/children family unit, and encouraged women to remove themselves as far as possible from their stereotypical roles. Liberal feminists also argued that marriage and divorce law strongly favored men, and that women must be legally recognized as autonomous individuals even when married, rather than as simply under the legal jurisdiction of their husbands (Brennan & Pateman, 1979; Pateman, 1988).

Feminists also criticized the family economic unit that traditional U.S. marriage established. Marriage in the U.S., as it existed prior to relatively recent legal changes, afforded the male political and economic authority as the legal “head” of the family. In this assumed role, the male entered the political world as part of a “new economic unit,” separate from previously existing families ((Brennan & Pateman, 1979, p. 186). No equal privilege was granted to the married female. In fact, wives were expected to become economically dependent upon their husbands if the family units' finances allowed for them to do so. And, if both husband and wife had to work to support the family, the wages earned by both were usually considered to be “pooled resources” (Okin, 1989, p. 140), which were then controlled by the husband. Similarly, Judy Baer (1978) addressed male-favoritism in the market, which was supported and enhanced by laws that purported to “protect” women while actually limiting their ability to compete with

males in the workforce. According to Baer (1978; also Eisenstein, 1984), these laws limited women's public-sphere liberties without affording them any real benefits in exchange. In sum, these feminists argued that U.S. law had *coerced women into caring for others* by blocking their access to the "public sphere"¹¹ (also see Okin, 1979 and Elshtain, 1981) and, therefore, to economic independence.

More recently, feminist critique of American laws, while quieted to some degree, have nonetheless continued. For example, in spite of the legal changes that occurred during the second half of the twentieth century, most of which favored women, Baer (2002) commented that, while some important legal strides had been made, women in general were no better off now than they had been decades before. Similarly, Josephson (2005) compares feminist views about marriage to contemporary argument about same-sex marriage. She acknowledges that much has changed over the last few decades, but asks how much women have really benefitted from this change. She argues that "social change is a double-edged sword" (p. 276) because changes in marriage law and custom have both helped and hindered women. Finally, in her article which follows legal arguments in favor of marriage rights for same-sex couples, Murray (2012) reminds us that marriage has historically been used as a coercive tool and even as punishment for "the crime of seduction" (p. 5). She states that "recognizing and acknowledging marriage's disciplinary qualities" allows for "a more accurate depiction of marriage" (p. 65).

Josephson (2005) also argues that we need "extensive discussions regarding the public purposes of marriage" (p. 277). Her primary thesis, though, is about citizenship and how it is affected by the right to marry, the lack of the right to marry, or by the form and intent of marriage law. My project, on the other hand, examines the dynamic interaction between changing marriage law and changing social norms, and how these manifest within what I call shifting "worldview paradigms."

Previous Research and Theory – Worldviews

According to contemporary research and theory, there are multiple stages of worldview development that individuals pass through (Manners and Durkin, 2001; see also Cook-Greuter, 1990 and Kegan, 1982). Clare Graves, whose work was published by Don Beck and Christopher Cowan (1996), believed that cultures followed a similar pattern of worldview change and development, although much more slowly. This would occur because, as individuals move through their own stages of development, "they find points of commonality and mutual understanding that manifest as distinct cultural structures" (Brown & Riedy, 2006, p. 5). The integral framework, as articulated by Ken Wilber through numerous books (e.g. Wilber, 1995, 1996, 2000, and 2006), indicates that development occurs in all four quadrants of human experience (Table 1). These quadrants are the "interior individual" or "intentional" quadrant (upper left), the "interior-collective" or "cultural" quadrant (lower left), the "exterior-collective" or "systems" quadrant (lower right), and the "external, singular" or "behavioral" quadrant (upper right). If Wilber is correct, an examination of development and change as it occurs within all four quadrants is essential to a holistic understanding of human interrelational dynamics. In this

¹¹ For explanations of the "public/private split," see Arendt, *The human condition*, 1958, and Davidoff, "Regarding some 'old husbands' tales': Public and private in feminist history" 1998, p. 165.

context, clearer understanding of cultural worldview shift within the U.S is needed if we wish to understand the nation's ongoing changes to marriage law and its ever-present political dynamics.

Table 1. Four Quadrants of Human Experience

Interior-Individual Intentional: Thoughts, emotions, etc.	Exterior-Individual Behavioral (physical), & the biological body
Interior-Collective Cultural: customs, social mores, etc.	Exterior-Collective Social & Political Systems

Certainly, worldviews within cultures can be graphed, revealing cultural-majorities who primarily adhere to given worldviews at that particular point in time. For example, Evans (1997) challenged the “culture wars” notion (Hunter, 1992) that there were only two major worldview value-systems within the United States and that these two formed the roots of all groups' social and political values. While Evans did find evidence of two worldviews, those two could not explain all of the variance that he found in values with his extensive surveys. The introduction of a third worldview, along with an understanding that these three overlap each other and that most individuals draw from more than just one, could explain the discrepancy that he found in the data. The extensive research performed by Ray and Anderson (2000) supports this notion that a third worldview value-system exists. That there is a majority “center” group (“moderns” according to Ray and Anderson) continues to be supported by extensive research (see Fiorina, 2011), although the worldview values of this center group have thus far been difficult to pinpoint.¹²

According to Ray and Anderson (2000), in the 1990s, approximately 25 percent of Americans could be classified as “traditional,” 51 percent were “moderns,” and 24 percent were “cultural creatives,” herein referred to as “postmoderns” (also see McIntosh, 2007, p. 67). I refer to these three as “traditional,” “modernist” and “postmodern.” I borrow these terms from Steve McIntosh (2007). Beck and Cowan (1996) referred to these worldviews as “truth-force,” “strive-drive,” and “human-bond.”¹³ Western political theorists know the terms for these worldview paradigms as ancient, modern and postmodern. However, “traditional” is the term used by some right-of-center politicians in the U.S. today to describe their own ideology.¹⁴ It also seems to be a better descriptor than “ancient” for a set of views that in many ways parallels those of the ancient philosophers but has nonetheless developed and changed across time. For example, some “ancient” ideas, such as that slavery is both natural and morally acceptable, have been rejected. Yet other ancient ideas, such as that, within marriage, a male over female power

¹² Modernist values are difficult to pinpoint in much of this research because survey questions tend to gauge left-right political positions, which do not effectively measure modernist values. As the predominant worldview paradigms in the U.S. become more understood, survey questions could be developed which do a better job of measuring percentages of adherents to particular value sets and of tracking paradigmatic worldview shifts.

¹³ In Beck and Cowan's color chart, traditional is blue (“truth-force”), modernist is orange (strive-drive) and postmodern is green (human-bond). Wilber uses amber instead of blue, but orange for modernist and green for postmodern are the same in the Wilber model.

¹⁴ For example, Sarah Palin describes herself as a “traditional.” For discussion of her use of this term, see Talbot's “Red sex, blue sex,” 2008.

hierarchy is natural, biblically ordained and unavoidable, is still embraced within the traditional paradigm. Finally, the term “modernist” is borrowed from Steve McIntosh, who has written about these worldviews before, and uses the term “modernist” rather than “modern” as this helps to establish the term as distinct from “contemporary.”¹⁵

While this work by Evans (1997), Ray and Anderson (2000), and Fiorina (2011) does not cover a long enough time span to empirically measure more than a small a snapshot in time, various theoretical models have tried to map what appears to be lasting change, or development, that has occurred across time. Beck and Cowan (1996), McIntosh (2007) and White (2010), for example, have referred to a “spiral” of socio-political development. Beck and Cowan (1996) refer to the cyclical nature of the development as “life cycles,” and each new, distinct or “higher” level of development as another “vMeme” (value meme). McIntosh (2007) refers to the cyclical nature of development as one of differentiation, integration, differentiation. He refers to each new, distinct or “higher” level of development as another “worldview.” White (2010) describes a two-dimensional “crisis cycle” model, and argues that we need to add a developmental model to this in order to understand political change in America. White refers to the new levels as “higher keys” (as with musical notes). I refer to each new level as a worldview paradigm. Duckitt and Fisher (2003) define “worldviews” as individual’s “beliefs about the nature of their social environments” (p. 201). I prefer the term “worldview” because it not only is used widely in integral theory, but also has recently seen common usage in popular American political dialogue. I use the term “paradigm” for reasons explained below.

I acknowledge that use of the term “paradigm” to describe worldviews may seem odd to some researchers and theorists, particularly because the way any given individual views the world at any particular time usually encompasses more than just one of these sets of belief. Further, individuals will draw upon differing worldviews according to the location of their predominant views along the various lines of development (to be explained later in this article).¹⁶ Individuals may also vary their worldviews according to situational context. For example they may hold traditional views when it comes to their own homes and families, but modernist or postmodern views when it comes to their workplaces or government. The same is also true for tendencies that we can see across cultures and sub-cultural groups. Therefore, the use of worldview paradigm models to explain differences between political groups may seem like a gross over-simplification. However, it is also true that whichever worldview one draws on to make a value-judgment about any given occurrence or interaction, the notions found within that particular worldview tend, at least for that particular situation, to be considered as universal truth rather than as debatable assumption.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that when the basic tenants of a worldview paradigm are entrenched within cultural understandings and norms, it is difficult for individuals of that culture or sub-culture to fathom the reasoning behind any other view. If this notion about worldview paradigms is correct, the paradigms function in a way that is similar to the function of “mental models” (Jones et al, 2011). In fact, worldview paradigms could help to explain how and why mental models function the way that they do, in that “people tend to filter new information

¹⁵ Explained in an email to me from McIntosh, received August 27, 2010.

¹⁶ For example, an individual may express traditional views within the power distribution line of development but modernist views within the recognized authority line of development.

according to its congruence or otherwise with their existing understandings, beliefs, and values" (Jones et al, 2011). Individuals may not even realize that worldviews other than their own exist, which greatly limits their ability to understand or effectively communicate with others whose worldview paradigms are different. This produces frustration, particularly when people with conflicting values view each other as irrational or nonsensical.¹⁷ When failing to recognize paradigmatic worldview differences, people may talk past one another, so that no one really hears or understands anyone else. This is why examination of a culture's predominant worldview paradigms is vital to an understanding of its shifts in law and custom and of the social and political dynamics which accompany those shifts.

My Own Theory of Worldview “Paradigms” and “Cultural Lines of Development”

Loosely speaking, a paradigm may be defined as that which helps us make sense of the world around us. It is a set of general rules or guidelines that people use to interpret the world, sometimes on a subconscious or ‘automatic’ level. Thomas Kuhn (1962) used the term “paradigm” to refer to scientific understanding, but his ideas concerning the parameters of a paradigm lend well to an understanding of the function of worldviews. Kuhn tells us that when new discoveries disturb our old understandings, they cause a sort of chaos in the accepted paradigmatic frames. If the new discoveries cause too much chaos, that is, if they are too “far out” to be accepted by the larger culture of the time, they will be buried and forgotten. But if those discoveries are accurate, eventually they will be rediscovered. This means that, sooner or later, the paradigm engulfing the larger scientific community will fracture and expand into a larger one that allows for the reality of the previously shunned discoveries. This is how science, and our understanding of the physical world we live in, expands over time.

I posit that, similarly, the worldviews that construct the values which are at the very core of how we interpret, judge and interact with the vast world of information and life all around us (see Beck and Cowan, 1996; McIntosh, 2007; Wilber, 1996) are paradigmatic. Cultural worldviews within a given populace can shift, as they have done over the last few decades in the United States. As long as the older views are predominant, newer ways of seeing things will be suppressed. However, once a large enough section of the populace has begun to embrace the new ideas and values, laws and norms will begin to change (Williams, 1997). This, in turn, invites a push-back from those holding the old value sets, which creates a sort of chaos in the political system and in social networks. Eventually acceptance expands and the new worldviews become part of the overall norm. This would explain how societies change, and become more inclusive, over time.

Some theorists claim that worldviews develop and spread sequentially (Beck & Cowan, 1996; Brown & Riedy, 2006; McIntosh, 2007; Wilber, 1996). I argue that, at least within the

¹⁷ That people with differing worldview paradigms may see each other's actions or ideas as nonsensical is evident in current American politics. For example, Mitt Romney said that Obama's plan to withdraw troops from Afghanistan "makes... no sense" (Boxer, 2012), Donald Trump said that Obama's speech about Libya made "no sense" (Reisner, 2011), and Obama said that the Republican blocking of his Cordray nomination made "no sense" (Brower and Runningen, 2011).

U.S., this certainly appears to have been true. When the United States was first established, most of the culture was centered in the traditional paradigm,¹⁸ even though the founding fathers themselves promoted various elements of the modernist paradigm through their written ideas and in the Constitution they created. These modernist ideas had been gleaned from 17th and 18th century philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and were written into the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States (see Locke, 1689/1993 and Rousseau, 1782/1998). Nonetheless, we did not see majority cultural embrace of the modernist paradigm within the United States of America until the twentieth century.¹⁹ Finally, although tiny beginnings of the postmodern worldview paradigm began to appear before the modernist worldview took center stage in this country, it did not enjoy significant cultural expression until the 1960s (Wilber, 1995, 1996).

Theorists also stress that the developmental change of worldview paradigms is not rigid or exactly linear (see Wilber, 2006; McIntosh, 2007). Instead, it is fluid, more like waves than straight lines (Wilber, 2006), particularly as views and sentiments shift back and forth with various social and political stressors, such as emergencies and perceived threats. Also, the elements of a given worldview paradigm change as they bridge across to new worldview paradigms unfolding within the culture. These changing elements are called “lines of development” (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2009; Wilber, 1995, 1996) because they exhibit growth and change across time which, on average, tends to be in a particular direction. I prefer to use this “lines” of development terminology rather than the term “domains” of development as is often used in academic literature about child development. This is because I believe “lines” is a better descriptor for what I am attempting to explain. Anna Freud (1966–1980) used the term “lines of development” to describe six areas of developmental progression that occur from infancy to adulthood. These lines occur within, and thread through, the cognitive and social/emotional developmental domains. Similarly, worldview developmental lines occur within, and thread through, worldview domains, such as political ideology, sustainability awareness, and so forth. I borrow the worldview descriptions from other writers, as I have shown. Charting these lines, and explaining their political attributes and some of their social manifestations, is my unique contribution to this field. Charting them allows for clarity and, perhaps more importantly, allows us to determine their healthy and unhealthy attributes and manifestations, as I will explain later.

A culture’s average paradigmatic worldview across multiple developmental lines can be called its “center of gravity.”²⁰ Although individual viewpoints vary widely across issues, I nonetheless argue that, currently, the majority of Americans can be classified as cultural “modernists,” and the current paradigmatic worldview “center of gravity” for the U.S. is also “modernist.” I reach

¹⁸ This is why, for example, the founding fathers were unable to abolish slavery, which was still accepted within the traditional paradigm at that time.

¹⁹ Among other things, the abolition of slavery and subsequent push for equal rights for blacks, the industrial revolution, women’s enfranchisement, increased educational levels, and the ever-expanding influence of technology in the lives of common people combined over time to increase the embrace of the modernist paradigm.

²⁰ An individual’s “center of gravity,” as coined by Wilber, is the average level of attainment across identifiable developmental lines. Cultures also have developmental “centers of gravity,” as can be identified by majority worldviews held across multiple lines of cultural development (Wilber, *Sex, ecology, spirituality*, 1995).

this conclusion by identifying some of the theorist-described elements of the modernist paradigm within the majority's dialectical frames and cultural narratives, as demonstrated below. However, even an individual who can be classified as a cultural modernist is likely to also have some views and values that are either traditional or postmodern, as the views of few individuals today are completely grounded in only one worldview paradigm.

The Developmental Lines

Because both cultures and individuals have multiple lines of development, they are likely to be at different stages on different lines simultaneously. Also, in spite of seemingly closed-system, paradigm-like qualities, no worldview value-system stands alone or untouched by others, particularly in the contemporary United States with its wide cultural diversity. Therefore, a group whose worldview center of gravity is modernist may nonetheless espouse collective traditional or postmodern views on some topics. This phenomenon is additionally complicated by the fact that cultural worldview paradigms are constantly, if slowly, shifting.²¹ However, it is possible to make some sense of this complication. Making use of well-established theoretical descriptions of each of the aforementioned worldviews (see, for example, Beck and Cowan, 1996; Esbjörn-Hargens, 2009; McIntosh, 2007; and Wilber, multiple publications), I identify five lines of cultural worldview development. I have labeled these five lines of development the “social receptivity” line, the “power distribution” line, the “religious/spirituality” line, the “recognized authority” line and the “science/discovery” line. For simplicity's sake, I discuss only five lines of cultural worldview development as they appear across the three worldview paradigms predominant within the United States today. These explanations are not intended to stereotype individuals or groups, but rather to explain how worldview paradigms align with and complicate socio-political movements, cultural norms and individual perception of each. The labels of the lines are mine, and are intended only to be simplistic descriptors of the types of change that we see across time within each line.

Once the defining elements of these lines, as they bridge across the three worldviews, are demarcated, they can be traced within populations by noticing expressed and implied perceptions of reality, notions concerning how government should work, and views about how we should live. This exercise can do much to explain the identifiable changes in law and cultural attitude about marriage that have appeared as the nation's worldview center of gravity has shifted, as well as the ensuing cultural clashes and individual confusions. For example, using this nuanced understanding of paradigmatic worldview perception, we can see that it was the traditional worldview paradigm that produced earlier marriage and dating norms and laws, and the changes over the last century have corresponded with a cultural worldview shift, first into the modernist paradigm, and then towards postmodernism. Cultural strongholds of traditionalism still exist in the U.S., at somewhere between 20 and 35 percent of the population.²² This is likely why there is

²¹ Paradigmatic shifts in the population are difficult to demonstrate empirically, in part because change occurs relatively slowly, and in part due to a lack of survey data utilizing questions which could accurately measure these. Nonetheless, we can observe gradual, long term trends, as discussed throughout this paper.

²² For example, religious fundamentalism and biblical literalism, hallmarks of traditionalism (religious-spirituality line of development) remained constant from 1996 to 2000 at approximately 22 or 23 percent of the U.S. population. Surveys in 2004 and 2005 place this number somewhere between 20 and 37

always political push-back against so-called “progressive” or “liberal” ideals which are mostly forwarded by postmoderns. Although a relatively small percentage of the population,²³ it is predominantly postmoderns who forward and embrace the newest laws and norms, such as legal acceptance of gay marriage and cultural acceptance of the gay lifestyle.

Note that when I refer to the “tendencies” of any worldview group, it is not my intent to stereotype the group or to suggest that all “postmoderns,” for example, would follow those tendencies. The generalizations are intended to broadly describe the worldviews in keeping with the way that other theorists have described them, and to simplify understanding of each worldview paradigm. I acknowledge that actual views of individuals vary widely. But it is also helpful to understand that when, for example, a self-described “modernist” disagrees with a particular description of a “modernist” paradigmatic view, what this actually means is that the individual does not actually hold what is the most common “modernist” view on the subject in question. It may be that the individual has some variation of the modernist view, or may instead mean that the individual actually holds a traditional or postmodern view on that particular subject.

The Social Receptivity Line of Development

Scrutiny of the “social receptivity” line of development reveals that the traditional paradigm is communal, but the focus of that communalism tends to be relatively small. Care for one’s family and one’s neighbor is of paramount importance, but full acceptance of others tends to be limited to one’s own family and neighbors, or to the members of one’s church or religious community. Loving families and peaceful neighborhoods are healthy expressions of traditionalism. Unfortunately, the same social norms which ensure the functional mechanisms of these families and neighborhoods can have unintentional side-effects, such as ethnocentrism, intolerance, and racism. This is partly because traditionalist groups tend to use the threat of being humiliated, shunned or ostracized as coercion to ensure that most individuals within the culture will follow the accepted set of rules and norms. Once this threat is imbedded within a culture, individuals born into the culture may fear being perceived as different or, as they mature into adulthood, as failing to completely and properly assimilate with the culture. These fears are then projected onto to others, and become the basis for gossip, shunning, and even violence against

percent, depending on how questions are phrased and how combined question results are interpreted (see Alwin, et al, “Measuring religious identities in surveys,” 2006, and Hoffmann and Bartkowski, “Gender, religious tradition and biblical literalism,” 2008). Also, a percentage of people who tend to be largely intolerant of people perceived to be very different from themselves has remained fairly constant for awhile at between 25 and 33 percent (traditionalism, social receptivity line of development). See Schafer and Shaw, “Trends: Tolerance in the United States,” 2009.

²³ In 2010 and 2011, between 18 and 22 percent of Americans considered themselves to be either “liberal” or “progressive,” political values which somewhat align with postmodernism (see “Doing what works survey,” 2010, and “CNN/Opinion research corporation poll,” 2011, both retrieved from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research’s ipoll databank). However, these numbers may be slightly depressed due to the negative connotations that have been attached to these terms in recent decades. Interestingly, in 2008, 24 percent of Americans said that they would be more likely to vote for a presidential candidate who celebrates the wide diversity of Americans than one who celebrates the shared values of Americans. This also is likely a reflection of postmodern values (social receptivity line). See “FOX News/Opinion dynamics poll,” 2008, retrieved from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research’s ipoll databank.

anyone labeled as “different.” Concepts of “good” versus “bad” behaviors can evolve into perception of an “us” versus “them” conflict. “We” are the ones who adhere to particular social expectations, and “they” are the ones who do not. To make matters worse, expectations concerning physical appearances can be tangled into the mix, such that those who look “like us,” have the same skin color as “us,” dress “like us,” or wear their hair the way “we” do are seen as “good,” and those who are different in some way are labeled as “bad.”

We can also see this ethnocentrism in the “us against them” attitude that surfaces any time resources appear to be scarce. For example, when employment opportunities in the U.S. appear to be scarce, traditionalists tend to blame recent immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, because these “others” are easily perceived as “not us” and therefore in competition against “us” for the limited resources. Another example of cultural ethnocentrism’s response to perceived scarcity is the hoarding of rights by power-elite groups. This occurs because of a perceived scarcity of rights, which is in part created by a belief in “natural and necessary”²⁴ hierarchy. This notion of “natural and necessary” hierarchy occurs within the “power distribution” line of development at the traditionalism juncture. The result is that those traditionalists who are at the powerful top of a legal or social hierarchy tend to believe that the granting of rights to other groups must mean the taking of rights from the currently powerful, because they believe that no two groups can ever really equally coexist.²⁵ This reinforces the “us against them” attitude so often seen in the “social receptivity” line of development at the traditionalism stage (Table 2). Fortunately, these tendencies lessen as later worldview paradigms emerge. Also, such problems do not *necessarily* manifest within traditionalism. Rather, these are unhealthy aspects which have a potential to manifest, and which, unfortunately, often do.

Table 2. Social receptivity line of development – Traditional paradigm juncture

	Healthy aspects	Possible unhealthy manifestations
Family	Individuals are attentive to family members; family relations are considered a priority over other aspects of life.	Individuals within family may be controlling of one another. For women, relationships and goals or work beyond caring for family may be denied.
Community	Individuals are taught to be strongly community oriented and to care about their neighbors.	One's own community or group may be considered to be superior to others, causing racism and ethnocentrism.
Socialization	Norms and expectations taught to children include items intended to ensure family and community well-being: honesty, trust, kindness, care-giving, sharing, respect, etc.	Those who do not adhere to expected roles may be branded as evil and ostracized. Possible phobia of those who are “different,” such as homophobia.

²⁴ This notion of natural and necessary hierarchy was perhaps first documented in Aristotle’s Politics.

²⁵ I discuss this concept more fully under the “Power distribution line of development,” section of this article.

The modernist paradigm, on the other hand, tends to forward toleration as a social good or patriotic duty within democratic societies which are multicultural, multiracial and multi-religious. Toleration for difference is emphasized, but to varying degrees according to one's distance from traditionalism. Whereas traditionalism tends to shun differences rather than to accept them, modernism sees its toleration as a reason for pride. In fact, some modernist philosophy stakes out toleration as the only basis for peace and democracy (for example, see Rawls, 1971 and Popper, 1945).

The modernist paradigm is also highly individualistically focused (Table 3). This seems to explain why one argument that feminism has had with traditionalism is that, in the name of "taking care of the family," women could be coerced into forsaking their own goals and individuality. The difficulty for women was that they were the expected caretakers of their children and of the home (Baer, 1999), and this role, coupled with their exclusion from the public realm, placed them largely into dependency upon males and left them unable to pursue *meaningful choices of their own*.

Table 3. Social receptivity line of development – Modernist paradigm juncture

	Healthy aspects	Possible unhealthy manifestations
Family	Individuality of all family members is respected. All individuals are allowed to seek their own goals and happiness.	Hyper-individualism can manifest, wherein family and close ties are forsaken as being "too much responsibility"
Community	Democratic and tolerant of differences.	Common good can be forgotten in the pursuit of personal desires.
Socialization	Personal strength and care of oneself is emphasized. Children are taught to believe in and stand up for themselves, and to seek out the realization of their own dreams and goals.	Traditionalism's integrity, trust and honesty can be lost if individuals are taught to always "look out for number one" and to be wary of the motives of others.

Postmodernism, on the other hand, brings a return to communalism, but as large-group, or global, communalism (Beck & Cowan, 1996; McIntosh, 2007). A shift into the postmodern paradigm means that individualism can be once again dampened, this time in deference to a greater common good. For example, in the U.S., postmodern liberals and progressives, likely because they tend to think in global terms, tend to favor governmental regulation of business which can guarantee consumer safety and the preservation of the natural environment. For the same reason, they tend to believe in universal healthcare and free higher education for all. They also tend to be concerned with the well-being of individuals all around the globe (for example, see Lakoff, 2002).

Postmoderns in the U.S. also tend to push for *group* rights beyond what modernists are generally ready to extend (Table 4). For example, “Affirmative Action”²⁶ is a postmodern concept, in that it seeks to promote the well-being of minority groups, which is also why modernists tend to dislike it. People whose values are centered in the modernist paradigm tend, instead, to see “Affirmative Action” as an affront to *individual* effort and merit. Further, toleration, as it is usually defined, is fairly unique to the modernist paradigm. Individuals embracing the postmodern paradigm can be offended by the notion of “toleration,”²⁷ as it suggests that something or someone is not liked, but nonetheless must be “put up with.” Postmodernism instead tends to embrace diversity as a universal good and much needed commodity (Beck & Cowan, 1999; McIntosh, 2007). It is also from postmodernism that we get “politically correct” language, which is encouraged so as to avoid demeaning other individuals and groups.

Table 4. Social receptivity line of development – Postmodern paradigm juncture

	Healthy aspects	Possible unhealthy manifestations
Family	Embracing of the “global village” concept, postmoderns seek to eradicate poverty, world hunger and discrimination against all groups worldwide.	Can unintentionally suppress individual drive. Postmodernists can also sometimes forget to take care of those closest to themselves or may engage in extreme self-sacrifice.
Community	Embracing of diversity as a social good. There is a tendency to revel in individual and group differences as life-enriching.	Can be <i>extremely</i> relativistic, refusing to <i>evaluate</i> customs, behaviors or claims.
Socialization	Children are taught to be accepting and embracing of others regardless of differences. Sharing, giving, and care-giving are once again emphasized.	The modernist paradigm’s individualism can be lost if <i>too</i> much emphasis is again placed on communal efforts.

The Power Distribution Line of Development

The power distribution line of development at the traditional juncture reveals an interesting phenomenon. Here there is a strong although arguably false perception that there is among humans a *scarcity of rights*, which manifests repeatedly throughout American history. For example, when women were struggling to gain the right to vote, a common fear-based argument emphasized by some men was that if women gained the right to vote, men would lose their political power. John Adams told his wife Abigail that women should not have the right to vote because if they did, men would be subject to “the despotism of the petticoat.”²⁸ In other words, if

²⁶ “Affirmative action” refers to deliberate attempts to increase the representation of minorities in employment, education, and business (see the *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, 2009).

²⁷ See discussion of types of toleration in Walzer’s *On toleration*, 1997.

²⁸ John Adams said this in spite of being marginally tolerant of his wife’s feminist views. See his letter to Abigail, dated March 31, 1776.

women were allowed to vote, they would end up with total rule over men. This suggests a notion that it is impossible for men and women to have equal political power. Adams appears to have assumed that either men could have political power or women could, but that both could not have it at the same time. Similarly, white men historically argued that blacks should not be given rights equal to their own because, given some measure of political power, blacks would “take over the country.”²⁹ Heterosexuals have likewise been guilty of arguing that if homosexuals are given the right to legally marry, heterosexual married couples will somehow lose their own political and social power.³⁰

This notion of a scarcity of rights permeates much of American society, often appearing as an argument for why rights should not be extended to groups who have not previously had them. Yet no reason exists why basic “inalienable” rights must be rationed across groups. The notion is inextricably bound to the hierarchical structures of social and political power found within the traditional paradigm. For example, according to Hobbes (1660/2011), hierarchies arose as a response to widespread violence, as well as to aid man’s opposition to nature as he struggled to survive. Hobbes argued that groups of people would choose one person to rule them, because of a belief that this person could ensure the safety of the entire group. According to this Hobbesian theory, men, for this reason, were willing to swear fealty to their kings. Although the accuracy of Hobbes’ descriptions of early human existence are debatable, his tale of people desperately seeking a king to rule over them and protect them is echoed in the Old Testament of the Bible, and is also seen in similar explanations of hierarchical societal organizations explained by both Aristotle and Plato. Embedded within all of these stories is an assumption that hierarchy is both natural and *necessary for the survival of mankind*.

In medieval Europe, hierarchies could be seen everywhere within social and political structures. Kings were over lords, lord were over commoners. Clergy typically held high political positions in addition to being the religious leaders. Men always held higher station than women. Skilled craftsmen held higher station than farmers, land owners held higher station than tenants. Those who were wealthy held higher station than those who were poor. For much of human history, these power hierarchies have been extreme, such that there were kings and lords who held most of the power, but also slaves and drudges who lacked any personal power at all. Kingdoms and other hierarchical socio-political structures could be found across as much of world as was known by the writers of history, for thousands of years. It is not surprising, then, to find within the traditional paradigmatic worldview a notion that hierarchy is unavoidable.

Today, however, many of the old forms of power hierarchies have collapsed, and more are starting to break down. Although a number of totalitarian governments still exist, legal slavery has been abolished almost everywhere in the world. Even the Indian caste system is at long last

²⁹ I heard this one from my own family, and have much more recently heard it said as a “reason” why a Black man should not become president of the United States. For an example, see the video “Misconceptions of Obama fuel Republican campaign,” online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRqcfqiXCX0> (accessed 8-12-2011).

³⁰ Homosexuals and their advocates argue that marriage is a basic human right that should not be denied to anyone. One of the counter arguments from the Christian right has been that gay marriage impinges on the rights of heterosexuals. For example, this is the primary argument used by The National Campaign to Protect Marriage (NCPM). See NCPM “Colorado for family values,” 1996.

beginning to erode.³¹ Nonetheless, power hierarchies continue to exist, and as long as they do, there will always be those who enjoy more power, and thus more rights, than others. This is why these hierarchical power structures come with a notion that, no matter what happens, someone will always be on “top” and someone else will always be on “bottom.” This promotes the notion that there is a scarcity of rights, that the number of people who can have any given set of rights at any given time is somehow limited. Whoever is struggling for rights understandably points a finger of accusation at whoever already enjoys those rights, but the real culprit is this notion of scarcity of rights, because so long as this notion exists, any group that has rights will have members who resist expanding the scope of those rights to others. This is because they do not see it as an expansion, they see it as a shift of a finite number of rights from themselves to some other group.

We can see a weaker form of power hierarchy within the traditional family structure. Within the traditional paradigm, men are designated as the heads-of-households, the family breadwinners, and the religious leaders. Women are designated as wives, mothers, and the primary caregivers of children, the elderly and the infirmed. Further, patriarchal religions tend to define women as the “weaker vessels”³² who must look to their husbands and fathers for protection and support. The same structure defines many traditional households across America. Children are expected to “honor and obey” their parents, wives are expected to “honor and obey” their husbands.³³ Husbands, in turn, must accept responsibility as head of the household, and as such must make sure that the family's basic needs are met, or in other words, he must financially support them.

Feminists for several decades have charged that this patriarchal family structure promoted family violence and was unfair to women (for examples, see Firestone, 1970 and Dworkin, 2002). However, in its healthiest form, this structure is not as much about power as it is about function. Husbands financially take care of their wives, who are seen as the most logical caregivers for the children, but the wives are loved, honored and respected. Also, in these arrangements, women usually have the last word of authority when it comes to decisions about the children, and also often about the household in general. In its unhealthy form, though, there can be a manifestation of possessiveness instead of love, and a desire for control instead of honor and respect. Coupled with poor emotional control, this becomes the catalyst for family violence, and men, being at the top of the household hierarchy, are statistically most often the culprits (NCADV, 2007). Nonetheless, patriarchy itself is more to blame for the oppression many women have suffered under this hierarchal structure than the men are to blame simply for being at the top of it. This patriarchal structure is no longer useful in most family situations today. But it served a purpose during a time of human history when hierarchical structures were the only

³¹ The caste system has been outlawed in India. However, because of long embedded social norms, many elements of it continue to survive throughout that nation. See Bayly, *Caste, society and politics in India from the eighteenth century to the modern age*, 1999.

³² For example, the Amish religion defines women as the “weaker vessels” who look to their husbands and fathers for protection and support. See documentary by Lucy Walker, 2002.

³³ Many people interpret the admonition in the Ten Commandments that children should “honor” their parents to also mean that they should obey them. The idea that wives should obey their husbands, which is still used by some Christians in their wedding vows, comes mostly from an interpretation of Ephesians 5, which has been translated to read, “Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord.”

available or understood structures of social and political organization. Further, in their healthiest form, these structures were functional, ensuring that women, who spent many years of their adult lives pregnant, nursing and otherwise tending to young children, had husbands who believed it was their duty to protect them and to provide sustenance for them.

On the other hand, modernism as it manifests within the capitalistic and democratic republic of the United States grants power and social prestige to those who manage to become financially successful. Perhaps because of the challenges pioneers in the American frontier faced, so-called “rugged individualism” is also highly valued.³⁴ This is the notion that all individuals can and should take care of themselves, without requiring aid or assistance from others. It also forwards a notion that everyone is capable of “success,” but that it takes individual will and action to accomplish it. Because the United States has a capitalistic economy, success tends to be measured by financial wealth. This is where we find political “internalism.”³⁵ That is, when an individual fails to accomplish economic success, modernist groups tend to accuse that individual of laziness or of failing to take ample advantage of available opportunities. Those who are seen as deserving are rewarded with higher incomes than those who are not so perceived, and those with higher incomes are awarded greater social respect and political power than those who earn less. As a result, escape from poverty is difficult but at least theoretically not impossible, and all individuals, male and female, young and old, are judged, at least to some degree, according to how much financial wealth each has managed to accumulate. And, this “rugged individualism,” coupled with a correlation between attainment of wealth and social prestige, appears to be directly responsible for the fact that traditional interdependent marriage relationships could not well survive beyond modernism’s breakdown of the sexual division of roles predominant in traditional households. A brief look at what happens when traditional sex roles run afoul of modernist demands explains this phenomenon.

Sexual division of roles necessitates interdependence. For example, in the mid-twentieth century, the husband in a traditional, middle-class American household was responsible for ensuring his family’s financial security. His wife, who was either not employed outside of the home or only worked part-time at a relatively low-paying job, necessarily depended on him for all or most of her financial resources. At the same time though, he depended on her for a number of other necessities. She kept their shared home clean and organized, cooked their meals, and was the primary care-giver for their children and perhaps even for aging parents. Depending on the decade and their level of wealth, she might also be responsible for making or obtaining, and repairing or replacing their clothing and other needed household items. The traditional woman generally is also responsible for caring for any ill or disabled members of the family, including her husband should illness or disability occur. Without his wife available to tend to these matters, the traditional husband would have to pay someone else to provide these necessities.

These sexual role-divisions, however, were discouraged and viewed as repressive by modernist feminism in the U.S. For example, Heidi Hartmann (1976, p. 137) declares that

³⁴ Coined by Herbert Hoover in a campaign speech dated October 22, 1928.

³⁵ See Ken Wilber’s explanation of views concerning “internal” versus “external” causes of suffering in *Up from Eden*, 1983.

“[N]ot only must the hierarchal nature of the division of labor between the sexes be eliminated, but the very division of labor between the sexes itself must be eliminated if women are to attain equal social status with men and if women and men are to attain the full development of their human potential.”³⁶

Further, most feminists declared that empowerment of women entails an equal-opportunity chance for women to be employed in the public sphere of work in jobs equal to the jobs men hold, and for equal pay (Herd, 2003). However, once women are equally employed outside of the home, “independent” individuals must earn enough money to pay for whatever necessary home and care labor they are unable or unwilling to perform. Full “independence” is an illusion, because the individual is then dependent upon his or her income, and a decrease in this income or an increase in expenses for whatever reason can leave the individual without needed help. Nonetheless, this illusion of independence is necessary within the “rugged individual” ideology of American-style modernism. Thus, both independence and life “success” is measured according to degree of financial attainment. The greater one’s earnings, the greater the perceived independence, because of the ability to purchase labor and care that one would otherwise have to depend on someone else to provide or would have to perform for oneself.

This social pressure for financial success applies to both men and women within the modernist worldview as it manifests within the United States. According to traditionalism, work outside of the home is only or at least primarily for men, because they must support their families as heads-of-household at the top of the family hierarchy. Partly as a result of this view, it was until recently common practice for businesses to pay women less than men. Also partly because of this view, discrimination against women in education and at work was common. This problem was made worse by the notion of scarcity of resources that tends to correlate with traditional paradigmatic views. Yet a woman suddenly taken out of her traditional role as home-laborer and caregiver or who has no marital partner must somehow provide her own financial resources, which can be extremely difficult especially if she has previously held the traditional role for an expanded time-frame. On the other hand, a man suddenly taken out of his traditional role as sole financial provider for his wife and family can simply shift his financial outlay from direct support of others to purchase of what he lacks. This can occur with little or no change to his financial lifestyle. This simple equation helps to explain the imbalance that we have seen between the financial well-being of the average single, widowed or divorced male and the financial well-being of the average single, widowed or divorced female in the United States (see Weitzman, 1988 and Okin, 1989). Worldview shift in the U.S. may have compounded this problem for many women. Nonetheless, this problem, as it manifested for a number of less-lucky traditional women, helped to produce the worldview shift in the first place. That is, traditionalism’s women are vulnerable to financial ruin should loss of spouse occur, particularly if children are involved. That this was passionately pointed out by feminists is part of what spread the cultural belief that women should be as gainfully employed as men (see Davies, 1974 and Hartmann, 1976; see also Wilson, 2007).

³⁶ See also Dworkin, *Woman hating*, 1974, and Brownmiller, *Against our will: Men, women and rape*, 1984, both of which characterized sexual roles within traditional marriage as being oppressive to women although empowering to men.

Of course, this need to have comparable income necessitated other cultural changes. A woman who wishes to have the level of income once afforded only to men must be competitive in the job market. This necessitates that she be as educated as her male counterparts and that she begin her career pursuits as early in life as her male counterparts, because earning power, savings and credit all accumulate over time. Somewhat less obvious but equally necessary is that she not lessen her employment availability by pregnancy or the need to spend large blocks of time caring for children. These factors are at least partially responsible for modernism's changes to marriage and childbirth customs. If a woman must be highly educated and launch her career as a young adult, she must postpone marriage and child birth as long as possible. Failure to do so is a quick road to either financial dependence on her husband or at least temporary poverty (Ladd-Taylor, 1994; see also Lewis, 1991). It is no accident, then, that the median age at which young women in the U.S. marry has risen steadily over the last several decades.

Wage earning power, however, is not the sole reason for this shift. The notion of individual independence and freedom-of-choice as it applies to women also necessitates a shift away from traditionalism's male over female hierarchy. Because traditions relevant to marriage were for so long, and across so many cultures as well as the world's predominant religions, rooted in this notion of God-ordained and necessary hierarchy, men held almost all power over marital decisions, leaving young women particularly vulnerable to male infatuation and whim. Modern laws which increase the minimum marriage age protect young women from being coerced into marriage before they are culturally perceived to be adults capable of making marriage-related decisions for themselves. These laws, along with statutory "age of consent" laws are all part of modernism's attempt to level the "power-distribution" playing field between the sexes.

Meanwhile, as the modernist struggle for women's rights was heating up during the mid-twentieth century, the postmodern paradigm also began to have a cultural presence in the U.S., particularly among the then young-adult "baby-boom" generation. Postmodernism expanded the notion of equality universally. Within the postmodern paradigm, hierarchies are never allowed. There is no perceived scarcity of rights, and often no perceived scarcity of resources. Any resources which are scarce will tend to be equally rationed, because no group is seen as more deserving of or having more right to any given resource than any other group. For example, postmoderns tend to defend modern-day immigrants, legal or not, as being as equally deserving of all available rights and benefits as anyone else in the United States (for example, see ACLU, 2000). Often, postmoderns favor socialistic governmental systems and are offended by the modernist paradigm's wealth-based meritocracy.³⁷ In business and academic organizations, postmoderns may prefer decision-making committees as a replacement for top-down administrative structures. Even at the family level, postmoderns may be egalitarian, with parents often involving their children in their decision-making processes. Believing in broad equality for all, it is also the postmoderns who have led the fight for gay marital rights in America. These contrasts are summarized in Table 5.

³⁷ For offense at the notion of wealth-based "meritocracy," see Horwitz, "The dangers of the myth of merit," 2009, as well as the comments posted below his online article. For discussion of whether "merit," as measured primarily by work-ethic, actually leads to the gaining of wealth in America, see McNamee and Miller, "The meritocracy myth," 2004, and Toch, "The meritocracy's caste system: What's good and bad about the SAT," 1999.

Table 5. Lines of Development Manifestations at Worldview Paradigmatic Junctures

Lines of Development	Predominant cultural worldview paradigms within the United States		
	Traditionalism	Modernist Paradigm	Postmodernism
Social Receptivity	Small-group communalism, family oriented, ethnocentric. Potential problem: “us against them” mentality	Expended Ethnocentrism; <i>toleration</i> is key. It is a patriotic duty to get along with others who are different. Potential problems: hyper-individualism, failure to acknowledge human interdependency	Worldcentric, large-group communalism. Embraces diversity as a social <i>good</i> . Potential problem: extreme relativism.
Power Distribution	Rigid social and political hierarchies and strict role assignments. Potential problems: suppression of individuality; family violence; elitism.	Rugged Individualism: opportunity for individuals to climb up the ladder of success, meritocracy. Potential problems: harm to the common good due to narrowly-focused goals, blaming of poverty on the poor without consideration of circumstance	Egalitarian: no power hierarchies allowed; everyone deserves equal rights, equal status, equal quality of life. Potential problems: suppression of individual drive; evaluation systems which fail to differentiate between intent and achievement.

Religious/Spirituality, Scientific Discovery, and Recognized Authority Lines

The next three lines of development are closely intertwined with the “social acceptance” and “power distribution” lines and with each other. Examining the “religious/spirituality” line of development, we see that traditional cultures tend to adhere to religious fundamentalism. That is, any given religious group within the culture is likely to believe that its own religion is “the one true way,” and that all other belief systems are wrong and perhaps even evil. As a result, followers of the religion are not likely to want to listen to anyone who has a different belief system, and may work feverishly to keep views that disagree with their own from being heard. Their “understood reality” and “allowed realm of scientific discovery” is likewise constricted according to their faith. This is why, for example, most Evangelical Christians in the U.S. think the science of evolution is heretical and strive to keep its concepts from being taught to their children. It almost goes without saying, then, that the “recognized authority” for traditionalists is their holy book and/or religious leaders. For U.S. Christians, then, the recognized authority becomes some particular interpretation of the Bible, which they then consider to be the only accurate interpretation and therefore the definitive “word of God.”

Depending upon the culture involved, the modern worldview can bring about a wide departure from traditionalism along these lines of development, and this is what has occurred in the U.S. At the “entering phase,”³⁸ of course, modernist thinking will be similar to traditional thinking. However, with the huge advance of science in the modern age, culturally diverse, relatively wealthy and technologically advanced countries like the U.S. can see a dramatic change in their primary value systems, in a relatively short span of time, and all within the modernist worldview paradigm. This begins with the idea that beliefs which are similar enough to one’s own are tolerable after all. With the new acceptance comes the opportunity for even a little more acceptance and then even a little more and so on. Further, the modernist paradigm values science and discovery. Scientific knowledge builds upon itself and therefore expands exponentially. The more rapidly scientific knowledge expands, the faster the worldview expands and evolves.

In addition, the modernist worldview as it manifests within the United States has a uniquely American belief in the winner-take-all system that goes hand in hand with near absolute “rule by the majority.” The winner-take-all system unfortunately breeds a notion that “winning” is more important than holding to any ethical guidelines, which is why we see so many unethical tactics employed in the political realm and even in the business world. Strict rule by the majority ensures that a slight majority of relatively uninformed people can slow the cultural progress of a nation that once allowed its sometimes inspired leaders to shape its destiny. Yet it is also likely true that it is in part the majority’s tendency to trample on the rights of the minority that eventually gave birth to the postmodern worldview paradigm.

Postmoderns in the U.S. tend to believe at least philosophically in the total equality of all peoples and in the importance of consensus decisions (Beck and Cowan, 1996). Because of this, some postmodernists may tend to view strict rule by the majority as an oppressive political system that systematically violates the basic “inalienable” human rights of the minority (see, for example, Alfaro, 2012). This may also be why some postmodernists within the U.S. strive to create a “deliberative democracy” (Chambers, 2003; Dryzek, 2005) whereby issues are discussed at length with all concerned groups until a consensus can be reached. This ideal that some postmoderns hope for would give the greatest amount of freedom to the largest number of people. In fact, in the U.S., many young postmodern-worldview individuals believe that anarchy is the only true solution to oppression.

The postmodernism paradigm also tends to be relativistic, which forwards the notion that beliefs and, for some, even most forms of “knowledge” can be equated with opinions that have no factual support one way or the other. From within this view, it is suggested that, because everyone has a viewpoint, no one is any more right or wrong than anyone else. As might be expected, this tendency also causes a number of individuals and groups holding postmodern worldviews to question modern science and to point out that we learn and discover only within the frames of what we already perceive or are at least willing to accept as possible. This skepticism concerning the rigorous confines of modern science has allowed the so-called “fringe sciences,” such as attempts to electronically record “ghosts” and forays into the “5th dimension,” to at least make a public showing in the contemporary United States. It is ironic that this same skepticism and relativism lends momentum to the traditionalists’ attacks on modern science, and

³⁸ Phrase borrowed from Beck and Cowan, *Spiral dynamics*, 1996.

even to some degree bolsters traditionalism's assertion that it has a "right" to be intolerant of both scientific data and cultural movements which disagree with its basic tenants. These contrasts are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Lines of Development Manifestations at Worldview Paradigmatic Junctures

Lines of Development	Predominant cultural worldview paradigms within the United States		
	Traditionalism	Modernist Paradigm	Postmodernism
Religious/ Spirituality	Fundamentalist, biblical literalists	Expanded belief systems, religious toleration	Relativistic: all beliefs are equally accepted as coming from various perspectives
Science/ Discovery	Understanding of the world is derived from religious beliefs and mythology	Understanding of the world is defined by scientific/empirical observation	Current understandings of the objective world are criticized and questioned due to concern that they may be colored by biases or misinterpretations
Recognized Authority	Believed-in God, holy book or some accepted "mouthpiece" of God, such as a preacher or prophet	Majority always wins: whoever/ whatever is most popular/accepted or who/what a majority selects/ votes for must be accepted by all	Consensus on any rules, with as few personal restraints (to allow civil society) as possible. Total equality among citizens desired - no recognized elite authority. Minority views and rights always protected

Worldview Paradigms and Changing Views about Marriage, Sex and Pregnancy

With some basic understanding of these worldview lines and stages, we can begin to understand the concept of marriage as it uniquely manifests within each paradigm. For example, traditional fundamentalist Christians in the U.S. often believe that the Bible defines marriage as only between a man and a woman, assigns the role of "protector and provider" to the male, decrees that the woman must obey her husband – thereby establishing a male-over-female power hierarchy, and declares that sex outside of marriage – and for some, for purposes other than procreation – is evil. Given all of these factors, one can see why traditionalism within the U.S. adheres to a very specific and narrow view of what "marriage" must mean. Marriage, to a traditionalist, can only be between a man and a woman largely because its biblically stated purpose is procreation. Traditionalists encourage young adults to marry. The human instinct to procreate is strong and not restricted to a "mating season" as with other mammals. As a result, sexual urges are strong and near constant, particularly in young adults, yet, according to traditionalism, sex outside of marriage is a sin. That traditionalism believes that "true" marriage is described in the Bible, a relatively ancient document, explains why traditionalists in the U.S.

claim that marriage law and custom has been unchanged since antiquity and therefore extending marital rights to gays violates this “true” marriage tradition. No documenting of changes in marriage law and custom as it has occurred across millennia or even as it has occurred over recent decades in the U.S. can shake the traditionalist’s sense that it has remained nonetheless essentially “unchanged” for eons, all because of this notion of Biblically defined parameters.³⁹

Further, the statistical changes that have occurred in the U.S. are considered by traditionalists to be an unfortunate degradation of marriage values. Couples are waiting until a later age to marry, and hence the number of couples who cohabit and are sexually active long before they get married, if they ever do, increases steadily. Divorce has also been on the rise for decades (US Census Bureau, 2000). Religious Right traditionalists blame this change on what they call “loose morals” or the lack of a “moral compass.” Women in unmarried sexually active relationships are referred to in a derogative manner as sexually “loose,” as adulterers or as simply making “poor choices.” The men in these relationships are usually thought to be “players” who do not really love or respect the women they are with. This is all part of traditionalism’s shunning of those who do not conform to traditional cultural norms.

Traditionalists’ religious beliefs concerning birth-control vary somewhat, but at best they see birth-control as a “necessary evil.” Some believe that everyone is supposed to “be fruitful and multiply” as much as possible, using birth-control only when it is necessary, within marriage of course, to preserve the woman’s health.⁴⁰ Some believe that sex at any age and even within marriage should only occur if pregnancy is intended, and therefore birth-control should be completely unnecessary.⁴¹ These groups therefore believe that birth-control can only encourage immoral behavior, no matter whether the couples in question are married or not. Finally, there are the groups that push for “abstinence-only” education for teenagers who believe that birth-control should not be readily available or taught as an option to teenagers because they are simply not yet morally developed enough to make wise choices when actually given choices when it comes to sex and marriage. According to this view, teenagers should be coerced to obey their parents, and parents should make it clear that they should neither have sex before they marry nor get married before they are legal adults, period. When teenagers go against their parents’ wishes and sin by way of sexual intercourse, teenage girls become pregnant. Traditionalists tend to believe that when this happens, the best solution is marriage.⁴² If marriage is not an option, then the teen must give birth and give the child up for adoption to a more mature and religiously obedient couple. It is also important to remember that within the traditional worldview paradigm, religious faith trumps scientific fact. No amount of teen pregnancy statistics will convince a traditionalist that contraception is a more realistic goal than abstinence.

³⁹ Many websites today attest to this belief. For a few examples, see <http://www.ropens.com/marriage>, <http://www.bibletruths.net/Archives/BTAROO3.htm>, and <http://www.answersingenesis.org> (accessed 7-31-2011).

⁴⁰ For example, this is the belief held by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons).

⁴¹ The Catholic Church is still officially against even married women using any form of birth control other than abstinence.

⁴² This is likely why Sarah Palin told reporters during her campaign for the vice-presidency that her pregnant daughter, Bristol, would marry Bristol’s boyfriend. This is the “solution” to the unplanned, teen-pregnancy that would be accepted by her constituency.

However, the gap between the age that young people begin to have strong romantic-love centered emotions and sexual urges as well as a self-perception of autonomous adulthood and the age at which society recognizes them as legal adults capable of making their own rational decisions can leave some young couples in very difficult situations. The high instance of teenage pregnancy in the U.S. bears witness to society's failure, so far, to adequately address this problem. A teen, faced with hormonal drives and also a drive to assert oneself as an individual independent of one's parents – which usually manifests as some form of “teenage rebellion,” will almost inevitably engage in sexual intercourse by his or her mid-teens. In the U.S., 46% of teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19 report that they have engaged in sexual intercourse at least once. Seven out of ten teenagers have sexual intercourse at least by the age of 19 (Amba, 2004). This occurs regardless of religious affiliation or worldview center-of-gravity. For example, in spite of “chastity pledges” intended to help girls wait until marriage for sexual activity, the average age of the sexual debut of Evangelical teen girls is still only 16 (Talbot, 2008). Further, in spite of the trend towards increased age at first marriage (Hurt, 2010), about 30 percent of young women in the U.S. today get pregnant at least once before age 20 (National Campaign, 2012).

In traditional America, it is the young woman's responsibility to wisely choose a good lifetime mate, to be innocent – which translates to unprepared for sex (Talbot, 2008), and to obey her chosen once she has decided. When we follow to its conclusion the reasoning within the “power distribution” and “recognized authority” lines of development at the traditionalism level, we can see the dilemma faced by these young women in the contemporary world. Confused by her simultaneously powerful and powerless position, her hormones, her inexperience and her hormonal boyfriend's likely pressure for sex, the teenage girl who has “fallen in love” – i.e. in her young mind already “chosen” her mate – is likely to succumb to her boyfriend's will but without contraceptive protection. If she becomes pregnant, traditional marriage may be eminent, whether she or her boyfriend are ready, due to pressure from their religious families.

All of this is why the modernist paradigm tends to dislike, and postmodernism tends to be intolerant, of the traditional view when it comes to the problem of teen pregnancy. Modernism's answer to the teenage pregnancy problem is birth-control and reproductive-system education for teens. Birth control not only frees older women from endless pregnancies, but it gives teenagers a safety-net in the event that they do not abstain from sex until marriage. Further, modernism's biological science and teenage-pregnancy statistics suggest the hope that most teens will abstain from sex is simply unrealistic. Modernists also tend not to like the idea of young marriage, particularly if it is followed by early-marriage childbirth, because it restricts employment opportunity for the female and increases financial responsibility, and therefore likely decreases educational opportunity, for the male. As a result, segments of the culture that have a modernist worldview will push for sexual education in public schools that includes teaching teenagers about contraceptive alternatives.

Believing in the full equality of men and women and also believing that traditional sexual roles are oppressive to women, modernism and postmodernism both assert that individual women must be afforded the right to never have children or to never get married if they so choose, regardless of their sexual activities. Further, sexual “experimentation” among teens seems inevitable and therefore modernism believes that teaching teenagers about contraceptive

options is an absolute necessity (for example, see National Campaign, 2009). Postmoderns also tend to want contraception to be readily available to teenagers as well as older women, and also tend to believe in abortion rights. The concern, of course, is unplanned pregnancy that may cause emotional upheaval for the teens at best and restrict their life opportunities at worst. To both modernists and postmoderns, young marriage, especially if in reaction to an unplanned pregnancy, is almost never a good idea.⁴³

As Worldviews Shift, New Stresses for Women

Obviously, the values of each of these worldview paradigms clash at least somewhat with the others. Many misunderstandings and stresses currently attributed to gender difference or oppression of women can be better explained by the collision of worldviews. That is also not to suggest, however, that gender differences or the oppression of women are nonexistent. Traditional belief in hierarchy facilitates abuse by those on the top of those on the bottom. Oppression does not therefore become universal, but can occur with greater frequency. The more pronounced the power differential, the more likely and the more severe the abuse, as is evidenced by the treatment of women in Afghanistan today. Nonetheless, this hierarchy induced oppression should not be mistaken for gender-induced oppression. Males of the human species landed on top of traditionalism's hierarchy likely because of their relative size and physical strength as well as their less physically intrusive reproductive systems, which would have afforded them an amount of survive-alone ability during prehistoric times that females would not have enjoyed.⁴⁴ But it is the hierarchy itself that gave men power over women in traditional society, and the power which tempted abuse. Movement of a culture into the modernist worldview begins a productive push against such abuses. In addition to protecting teenage women from marriage to or pregnancy by older men, modern U.S. law also forbids once legal spousal abuse and gives married and divorced women rights that were nonexistent for them only a few decades ago.

Modernism, though, removes some customs that once helped to facilitate the raising of children, such as the household that always had one parent home to care for them. Modernism also brings its own set of rules to marriage customs, and while solving some of traditionalism's problems also, of course, creates its own. For example, modern women will often postpone childbirth because they must be financially "independent." After postponing childbirth, many U.S. women have found that becoming pregnant in their thirties or later can be difficult or impossible (Hewlett, 2002). Yes, the postmodern paradigm, with its acceptance of role-reversals, has brought men who spend time caring for children and helping with household chores. However, when women in modernist households do have children, they often find themselves working "double shifts" – one to earn a living and one to take care of children and household necessities (Hochschild, 1989).

Further, with the paradigmatic shift to modernism, the birth of postmodernism, and the corresponding feminist-led blame of men and marriage as causing much of society's ills,⁴⁵

⁴³ For examples, see discussions online at <http://www.prochoiceamerica.org/issues/> (accessed 8-28-09).

⁴⁴ For discussions of this topic, see Brownmiller, *Against our will*, 1975, Firestone, *The dialectic of sex*, 1970, and Pateman, "Hobbes, patriarchy and conjugal right," 1998.

⁴⁵ There was a tendency for second-wave feminists to treat unhealthy, dysfunctional families as though they were the universal norm for all traditional families, but they were not.

marriage in the U.S. has become less popular. Yet while there is far less social pressure for men to marry the women who love them, women often still prefer marriage, especially if they wish to have children or a stable lifelong relationship. This statistical propensity for women to desire marriage (Baber & Allen, 1992) is likely linked to age old survival-of-the-species instincts that manifest differently in women than they do in men. As mentioned previously, men in ancient times could survive alone easier than women. Further, because women who bare children spend nine months pregnant and then, with the absence of modern breast milk substitutes, must also breast feed for at least an additional year, a woman without a helpful partner could have a very difficult time keeping herself and her child alive.⁴⁶ Even in the modern world, single women are more likely to be poor than single men, and are also more likely than men to have serious health complications related to reproduction (Muller, 1990). Lifetime partnerships, when healthy, can simply make life easier and more pleasant for women, especially when children are involved. Further, research shows that healthy lifetime partnerships enhance life and wellbeing for both partners (Willitts et al, 2004). These are all likely reasons why traditionalism promoted marriage in the first place, and why traditionalism's women fought against feminism's attack on marriage customs. Nonetheless, men are more likely than women to be avoiding of marriage when it is not religiously or culturally mandated, such as within the modernist and postmodern paradigms in the United States.

In spite of this, women, according to prevailing custom in the U.S., cannot propose marriage. As a result, if they wish to marry, they can find themselves mired in emotionally difficult situations. This can be particularly painful for women with extended traditionalist families, regardless of their own paradigmic worldview. The punishment for women who do not follow traditionalism's marriage and courtship guidelines is severe to varying degrees depending upon the religion and culture in question. In the U.S., women are not stoned or physically tortured, as in some countries, for sexual activity outside of marriage. However, the wish to have her actions and choices accepted by her family and friends can increase a woman's desire for marriage, especially if she is in a sexual relationship with the man she loves. This is because, if the marriage proposal is not forthcoming, these women will often find themselves at best somewhat disgraced and at worst completely shunned by their families. Yet, because worldviews are little understood by the majority of people, a woman in love with a modernist or postmodern man may never understand why his marriage proposal is delayed or never forthcoming.

Of course, the same can be said for a man who desires marriage and children but falls in love with a woman who prefers to wait until her career is strong, or who believes that marriage necessarily comes with oppressive male-over-female hierarchy. The difference, though, is that the power of marital decision still socially lies first with the male, while females are more likely both to desire marriage and to endure shame because of their relationship choices. Culturally, most women in the U.S. are still pressured to marry, and often counseled not to engage in long-term, sexually active relationships unless marriage is certain to be forthcoming. This leads some women to end otherwise happy relationships, and leads some to resort to pressuring or manipulating their partners in attempts to elicit proposals from them. A smaller percentage of women will decide, for the sake of preserving the relationship, to more or less silently endure

⁴⁶ For further discussion of this topic, see Firestone, *The dialectic of sex: The case for feminist revolution*, 1970, Whitbeck, "The maternal instinct," 1983, and Pateman, "Hobbes, patriarchy and conjugal right," 1998.

embarrassment or shame as they wait for proposals that may never be forthcoming. This may be why many women still assert that they feel “powerless” in their romantic relationships, even while they find it difficult to explain why (NPR, 1998). There are a plethora of books, newsletters, websites and other businesses⁴⁷ devoted to helping women solve this newest “problem with no name.”⁴⁸ It is clear that neither the so-called battle “between the sexes”⁴⁹ nor the battle between the paradigms has given women all of the empowerment that they once sought, and some of the changes they managed to secure seem, at least for now, to have made matters worse instead of better.

Worldview Paradigms and Marriage Rights

Meanwhile, as an increasing number of heterosexual people are trying to decide whether or not the institution of marriage has any real merit after all, gay and lesbian couples are trying to secure the right to make that decision for themselves. Modernism, partly because it finds fault with traditionalism’s rules, has allowed a cultural movement in that direction. This is partly because the modernist paradigm is more tolerant of deviance from the established social norms than traditionalism. This applies to all aspects of marriage custom, from the delay of marriage, to single parenthood, to gay marriage. However, modernists may be convinced that gay marriage matters, as a personal right, only if they are convinced that being homosexual is not a matter of choice (Craig et al, 2005; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2005). For the modernist paradigm, if homosexuality is as predetermined as race, then to define marriage as only between a man and a woman is as offensive as to define marriage as only between two people of the same race. If, on the other hand, one can choose to be homosexual or not, then the “free choice” is in the choosing of the sex of one’s lifetime mate in the first place. Modernists can be swayed on this issue by the relevant scientific evidence. Traditionalism is not swayed by this evidence, though, because it does not recognize the authority of science in the first place. In the traditional view, homosexuality is a sin, and “sin” implies choice, therefore to be homosexual must be by choice. No amount of scientific evidence changes this view so long as the traditional worldview paradigm holds sway. Further, because of traditionalism’s belief in the scarcity of rights, a common U.S. traditionalist argument against gay marriage is that making it legal will take marriage rights away from Christians. Traditionalist whites did not easily embrace interracial marriage either, because they feared dilution of the white race. For example, in 1958 a couple in Virginia was arrested for violating the state’s “racial integrity” law that prohibited interracial marriage. It was not until 1967 that the Supreme Court ruled such laws unconstitutional.⁵⁰ However, because of their belief in hierarchy, traditionalists tend to respect elite political authority as legitimate. Therefore, when the U.S. law declares something to be legal, traditionalists will usually *eventually* come to accept it rather than to continually fight for reversal of the law.

⁴⁷ For example, Christian Carter and Rori Raye each have several websites, newsletters, videos and books dedicated to this subject.

⁴⁸ A reference to Betty Freidan’s *The feminine mystique*, 1963, which refers to a pervasive unhappiness among middle-class housewives, which no one seemed to be able to clearly explain at the time.

⁴⁹ For examples of uses of this term, see Mitchell, “Hostility and aggression toward males in female joke telling,” 1978, and Herron and Kipnis, “Ending the battle between the sexes,” 2005.

⁵⁰ 1967 Supreme Court case, *Loving v. Virginia*.

While modernism is often tolerant of traditional views in spite of lack of agreement, postmodernism ironically often is not, particularly when it comes to the legality of gay marriage. From within the postmodern worldview paradigm, marriage is seen as a matter about which the ability to make one's own decision becomes necessary for personal happiness and life fulfillment. To deny the right of this choice to anyone is seen as a gross violation of inalienable rights and as discrimination against all homosexuals as a minority group. Also, showing up as a cultural worldview only where modernism, with its promotion of science, has been strong, the postmodern paradigm accepts homosexuality as likely being a biological given. Further, in the postmodern view, there is no "universal" or even long-standing definition of marriage. Rather, the diversity of various marriage customs from around the world, as well as changes in marriage laws and customs in the U.S. over the last century, are proof to the postmodern that the term "marriage" has no single definition. Finally, that which is defined as "sin" is seen to vary based on religion and on personal view, and therefore not as something which should ever be defined by or policed by a democratic government. This is likely why even heterosexual postmodernists tend to actively participate in the push to legalize gay marriage.

The argument that rights are being violated by government definition of marriage, though, does not as easily convince moderns. Because within the modernist paradigm majority strictly rules, legal changes tend to only be forthcoming as the majority of the mainstream comes to embrace them. For example, in California the recent passage of Proposition Eight, which constitutionally limits marriage to opposite sex partners, may have had as much to do with modernism's notion that the "will of the people" should win out over judgment by the Supreme Court as with traditionalism's declaration that Biblical parameters must continue to be imposed. The hope for gays that their marriages will someday be legalized lies in the continuing shift of the worldview majority as well as in modernism's toleration for difference. However, modernism is as tolerant of religious fundamentalism as it is of other worldviews, and will only accept legal changes away from fundamentalist doctrine when it perceives those changes to be the will of the majority. It tends to be taken for granted by modernists that not all laws are fair and that minority groups will be less than satisfied with the rules that majorities make. This, however, is seen as necessary in a democratic society. The responsibility of citizens is to obey the rules, but they always have the right to try to win the majority over to their own way of seeing things. This becomes the competitive political game of trying to sway public opinion, and the winning majority "takes all," or rather makes all rules. Traditionalists, on the other hand, tend to see a struggle against evil rather than a political game. From within the traditional paradigm, vigilance against the tendency of civil society to "slide towards evil" is a constant and necessary duty. That is why the argument that homosexuals deserve rights does not persuade traditionalists to change their views concerning gay marriage. Traditionalists, seeing a scarcity of rights in the first place, see granting rights to homosexuals as a taking of rights away from traditional, fundamentalist Christians. They further tend to see it as a partial triumph for evil, something which they cannot easily accept. Therefore, for those who wish to see the legalization of gay marriage, the best hope is likely in winning over the majority of modernists to the inalienable rights cause. However, because traditionalism is small-group communal and very family oriented, videos currently distributed on the internet by the ACLU, GetToKnowUsFirst.org and other advocates may well prove to be effective.⁵¹ These videos feature gay and lesbian couples with their

⁵¹ For examples, see the "Get to know us first" series of videos on YouTube.com, the ACLU "Freedom files: Freedom to marry" videos, and the "10 Couples" videos distributed by WhatIsGay.net.

children and invite heterosexual individuals to speak lovingly about their gay or lesbian friends or family members. In fact, according to polls, when it comes to heterosexuals' attitudes towards gays and lesbians, familiarity actually breeds acceptance (CBS News, 2010).

Toward Understanding

Traditionalism held the center of gravity majority of the western world for millennia. The modernist paradigm has claimed center of gravity majority for a relatively short time, yet in the U.S., postmodernism is already strong on the scene. Understanding how worldview paradigms evolve can help explain not only why changes have occurred in law and custom, but why some individuals are frustrated by the change even as those who desire additional change are frustrated by its slow pace. Such understanding can also help people who wish to improve their own lives and the lives of others to further their goals. For example, those who advocate for ongoing progress in the gay rights movement can more quickly accomplish their goals if they understand worldview paradigm developmental lines. Such understanding could also help individuals who wish to find life-partners with goals and values similar to their own know what to look for. Understanding also has the potential to ease the tension between the sexes that has been evident in the U.S. since the advent of modern feminism, while at the same time explaining some of the reasons why today's U.S. women often still feel powerless. It could also allow for the avoidance of unpleasant and unexpected worldview clashes if dating couples realized soon enough that their worldview paradigms did not match. The choice of life partner is undoubtedly a very important decision. Such knowledge would empower individuals to make better choices as well as find more success in their relationships, because, while relationship stress must be as old as humankind, the added worldview paradigm clash is relatively new and unique in the contemporary world. Ideally, a working knowledge of worldview paradigms would also allow for an understanding of what is dysfunctional versus what is healthy about the norms produced by each paradigm. Finally, such understanding may help to promote the development of a new worldview paradigm, one that recognizes and promotes the healthy laws, customs and norms of each previous paradigm, while rejecting those that cause oppression, isolation, or other social dysfunctions. Hopefully, understanding will also help those with differing worldviews become increasingly kinder to one another.

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