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Proponents of autonomy claim that what is most important about human beings is their capacity to choose and define the moral boundaries that govern their lives.

Shifting Views on the Male-Female Relationship: Same-Sex Marriage and Other Social Consequences

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The past two decades in the United States have seen the near-universal definition of marriage (between a man and woman) shift dramatically from majority acceptance to majority rejection. In 1996, 65 percent of Americans favored marriage as only between a man and a woman, but by 2015, the year the US Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, only 39 percent favored maintaining marriage as between a man and a woman.¹

Amidst these rapid changes, Church leaders have reiterated teachings of marriage as solely between man and woman. Indeed, soon after the US Supreme Court's decision, a First Presidency letter was read to all Church members in the US and Canada reinforcing "the Church's unequivocal position regarding matters of morality, chastity, marriage, and the family" that are "framed in 'The Family: A Proclamation to the World,'" asserting that marriage is between a man and a woman.² Similarly, in response to a recent initiative in Mexico to legalize same-sex marriage, the Church had a letter read to its more than 2,000 Mexican congregations, again stating its position that marriage should be between a man and a woman.³ Further, amidst suggestions that the church would alter its stance on same-sex marriage,

Elder D. Todd Christofferson said, “Our doctrine—not just belief, but doctrine—that sexual relations are only appropriate and lawful in the Lord’s eyes between man and woman legally and lawfully married is unchanged and will never change.”⁴

Cultural shifts on marriage combined with the fixed position of the Church often create tension for Latter-day Saints. One reason for this tension is that the marriage beliefs of individual Church members are shaped, often unknowingly, by the culture. Thus, as cultural beliefs on marriage shift, it is almost inevitable that, at some point, the shifting beliefs will come into conflict with fixed Church teachings.⁵ Because these cultural beliefs are taken for granted (part of the cultural “air” we breathe), they are difficult to identify, analyze, and critique.

If Church members are unable to identify the cultural lenses they use to see the world (especially in institutions like marriage), they will be unable to choose what to believe. They are likely to, unknowingly, use their culture as the lens to see gospel teachings rather than use gospel teachings as the lens to see their culture. Yet when the cultural beliefs are identified and seen in their historical context (along with their effects), individuals are able to be intentional about what beliefs to accept and are better able to understand gospel teachings regarding marriage.

The purpose of this paper is to identify the historical trends in marriage beliefs, clarifying how today’s popular attitudes came to be and how those beliefs form the root of arguments for same-sex marriage. Although many believe the push for same-sex marriage arose through society’s increasing understanding of homosexual relationships, they often discount another cause: society *mis*understanding the value of the male-female relationship. Cultural beliefs have shifted such that the essential qualities of the male-female relationship are misunderstood and this relationship’s value has been overlooked. Thus, same-sex marriage can be seen as a symptom of shifting marriage beliefs. And, as will be discussed, these new beliefs have created some of the most potent societal challenges of our time.

It is critical to understand what this paper is *not* arguing. The arguments here are not about gays and lesbians *as persons*. This discussion does not relate to their value as persons (which is infinite) or to their ability to parent or to contribute to society (both of which may be great). Indeed, when considering same-sex marriage, questions about how children fare when raised

by same-sex parents often arise. Unfortunately, there is little high-quality research in the area and the research that does exist is polemical.⁶

The question this paper does treat is “What attitudes towards marriage allowed same-sex marriage to emerge in the first place?” with the follow-up question “What impacts do these attitudes have on society?” When considered as an *extension* and *solidification* of these popular attitudes, the question of whether same-sex marriage is “good” for a society becomes clearer. The recent majority opinion by the US Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (written by Justice Anthony Kennedy) has become a linchpin for this extension and solidification.⁷ By closely following popular marriage beliefs, this opinion gives them the weight of US legal precedent.

I begin by first outlining why marriage developed as a distinctly male-female institution, addressing the question: “What is it about the male-female relationship that has caused virtually every society to create marriage?” Theologically, Mormonism has much to say about why the male-female relationship is distinctive and requires unique attention. But it is also important to understand from a societal perspective what it is about this relationship that creates a compelling need for the near-universal creation of male-female marriage.

After addressing this, the shifting attitudes on the male-female relationship will be outlined along with their consequences. This, then, leads to a discussion on how same-sex marriage became a possibility and how it has fundamentally transformed norms and laws that were created specifically for the male-female relationship.

The Male-Female Relationship: Society’s First Priority

Societies across history and around the globe find there is a particular question they each must answer. Societies regularly grapple with questions such as whether they should engage in trade with one group or another; what transportation laws are optimal; and whether they should require certification for professionals such as doctors and lawyers. Although each of these questions is important, they are not *essential* for the society to answer. One question that is essential for every society is how to structure the male-female relationship.

The need to answer this question about the male-female relationship, and to answer it first, has been recognized for millennia. In Plato’s *Laws IV* (written approximately 2,500 years ago), an Athenian argues that if a society were to be built from scratch, the first thing would be to organize the

male-female relationship.⁸ Similarly, the philosopher John Locke noted in his Second Treatise on government (1960), “The first society was between man and [woman].”

The Dual Nature of Male-Female Relationships: Public and Private

To understand Plato and Locke’s position, it is important to recognize that societies throughout history have acknowledged that the male-female sexual relationship is the gateway through which new members of a society enter. And because it is the gateway, the male-female relationship impacts every other individual in the society. The consequences of their relationship are not merely private, but are also public. As family law professor Harry Krause put it, “Children are only *in part* the private folly of their parents,”⁹ and as Harvard historian Nancy Cott emphasized, “No modern nation-state can ignore marriage forms, because of their direct impact on the reproducing and composition of the population.”¹⁰

As a society, when a new member enters, each of the other members is, in part, responsible for that individual. A child born in the US, for instance, automatically inherits the citizenship and rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (United States Declaration of Independence). This includes whatever structures and resources the society has previously deemed the child obligated to have, for example, food, shelter, and education. If the child is in danger of losing any of these (e.g., the parents are unable/unwilling to provide them), US society steps in to obtain them for the new member.

Thus all members of a society are affected, at least in part, by the addition of the new member. Indeed, if new members of a society did not affect the others in any way, and if there was no sense of responsibility one to another, then it would not be a society at all. “Societies” are defined by the relationships and responsibilities each person has to the others.¹¹

Because the consequences of male-female relationships are significant for all participants, societies throughout history and around the globe have taken it as the first order of business to organize that relationship. Inadequate or faulty organization of this relationship threatens the situation of everyone in the society.

Marriage as a Solution

With very few exceptions, societies have ordered the male-female relationship through the instrumentality of marriage. As Justice Roberts, in his dissent

to the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage, wrote: “This universal definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman is no historical coincidence. Marriage did not come about as a result of a political movement, discovery, disease, war, religious doctrine, or any other moving force of world history—and certainly not as a result of a prehistoric decision to exclude gays and lesbians. [Marriage] arose in the nature of things to meet a vital need: ensuring that children are conceived by a mother and father committed to raising them in the stable conditions of a lifelong relationship.”¹²

Joseph Martos points out that “marriage was always a socially institutionalized way of defining relationships between the sexes.”¹³ This “defining” reaches both the married and unmarried. Cott also notes, “The unmarried as well as the married bear the ideological, ethical, and practical impress of the marital institution, which is difficult or impossible to escape.”¹⁴ Indeed, marriage “stabilize[s] the essential activities of sex and labor and their consequences, children and property” and creates relationships between men, women, and children meaning “motherhood for wives and the burden of providing for husbands.”¹⁵

Although individuals do have some influence in shaping laws, marriage laws shape individual desires. As DiMaggio and Powell put it, “Institutions do not merely reflect the preference and power of the units constituting them; the institutions themselves shape those preferences.”¹⁶ For marriage, “the law’s public authority frames what people can envision for themselves”¹⁷ and “the fact that people marry and the explanations they give for their choices are mediated by the nature of the institution of marriage.”¹⁸

Part of the mediation function of marriage also concerns what Valerie Hudson Cassler argues, from anthropological perspective, is the first conflict among humans: “the clash . . . between males and females.”¹⁹ Cassler goes on to describe the endemic nature of violence between the sexes. However, Smuts notes that “Male use of aggression as a tool is not inevitable but conditional; that is, under some circumstances coercive control of women pays off, whereas under other circumstances it does not.”²⁰ Marriage norms have been central in creating sanctions where male coercive control over females does not pay off. As Cassler describes “a true understanding of marriage leads us to the recognition that marriage is, in the first place, about human peace: *peace incarnate between the two halves of humanity, male and female.*”²¹ Indeed, research has repeatedly found that marriage serves an important protective factor against male violence towards women and children.²²

Thus, all societies are required to struggle with the powerful currents and consequences of the male-female relationship. Some societies have done this in ways that create flourishing, while others have done this in ways that create individual and societal decay. When the marital institution fails to uphold norms and laws that place the male-female relationship in a preeminent position, it makes it more difficult for all to participate in it and for individuals and societies to fully derive the benefits of that relationship.

As Patrick Lee and Robert George have pointed out: “The state does have an obligation to do what it can to promote or protect a sound view of marriage. . . . The state’s laws and policies partly shape the general culture. If the state conveys a gravely distorted view of marriage, it will weaken and undermine its members’ capacities for full and rich participation in this critical aspect of human flourishing.”²³

Societies do not have the option to alter the reality that males and females reproduce, and do not have the option to choose whether there is a unique tendency towards, and characteristics of, coercion and violence in the male-female relationship. Yet each society does choose how to order the male-female relationship. Thus marriage structures become the most basic, fundamental, and consequential aspect of a society.

Shifting Views on Marriage

How, then, did this uniquely male-female institution become, seemingly of a sudden, applied to same-sex couples? It cannot be, for example, because our society currently stigmatizes homosexuality less. For many ancient societies, homosexual relations were common and even praised.²⁴ Yet with only minor caveats, those relationships would not have been considered marriages. Plato’s Aristophanes, for example, argues that one’s other half (i.e., their “soulmate”) may be a member of the same sex. But Aristophanes also assumes that the same-sex relationship would never be a marriage,²⁵ taking for granted that the unique qualities of the male-female relationship require the institution of marriages while same-sex unions do not.²⁶ How then, did an institution created for the male-female relationship become applied to any gender combination?

In order to understand this, one must understand the gradual changes in views of the male-female relationship. As one marriage scholar has put it, “everywhere relations between men and women are undergoing rapid and at times traumatic transformation.”²⁷ This transformation can be represented

in various “models” of marriage societies subscribe to.²⁸ Although a lengthy treatment of any one of these models is outside the scope of this article, key differences between models will be highlighted. Importantly, these models are not mutually exclusive, and societies may subscribe to multiple models.²⁹ However, when describing the various time periods and their models of marriage, I refer to the model most reflected in social norms and laws. It is also critical to recognize that these shifting views on marriage represent shifting views on the male-female relationship, the two being inextricably linked throughout history.

As mentioned earlier, individuals likely do not recognize what model of marriage they are subscribing to.³⁰ Outlining these models helps us recognize what our beliefs are and where they come from, enabling us to analyze and critique them. This, then, allows us to make conscious decisions about which marriage beliefs to adopt.

The Institutional Model

Dominating views on marriage for millennia, the “institutional” model of marriage³¹ held that the purpose of marriage was to organize male-female relationships in such a way as to promote family and community well-being.³² Concern for the individual was not entirely absent, though it was subsumed within this overarching purpose. Plato’s Athenian epitomizes this in his *Laws*, arguing, “One general rule should apply to marriage: we should seek [a marriage] that will benefit the state, not the one we personally find most alluring.”³³ Marriage was a responsibility to be performed for the good of all. Indeed, Plato’s Athenian argues that a man who does not marry by the age of thirty-five should pay a fine since he is not contributing appropriately to society.

Because family and community were considered stakeholders in the marriage, they were deeply involved in process. Although through the Middle Ages the consent of those being married was a near universal requirement, family took a primary role in selecting the marriage partner, with parental consent almost always required.

Beginning in Middle Ages, the Catholic tradition viewed marriage as conferring grace on the community as well as on the couple. Reformers likewise considered the community an integral part of marriages. For Calvinists, marriage was considered “a covenantal association of the entire community”³⁴ with Lutherans also viewing the community as centrally involved. The

community was seen as so central that “The man and woman consented to marry, but public authorities set the terms of the marriage; . . . neither [the man nor the woman] could break the terms set without offending the larger community, the law, and the state, as much as offending the partner.”³⁵

The man-woman relationship was also viewed as ultimately under God’s jurisdiction. Marriage was considered “God’s gift to men and women as part of his creation.”³⁶ The purpose of this gift was regulating the man-woman relationship for the betterment of the couple, the family, and the society. As Witte describes, “God was a third party to every marriage covenant, and God set its basic terms in the order and law of creation.”³⁷

Joseph Martos summarized the intuitional model’s conceptualization of marriage:

As a natural institution marriage was ordered to the good of nature, [and] the perpetuation of the human race. . . . As a social institution it was ordered to the good of society, the perpetuation of the family and the state. . . . And as a sacrament it was ordered to the good of the church, the perpetuation of the community of those who loved, worshipped, and obeyed the one true God.

Marriage . . . was viewed not so much as a personal relationship but a social reality, an agreement between persons with attendant rights and responsibilities.³⁸

Although “love” has been a considerable force in man-woman relationships for millennia, in societies where the institutional model of marriage is dominant, love’s manifestations and importance in marriage were quite different from modern marriage. Mutual love between husband and wife was seen as an inherent “good” within the Catholic and reformed traditions of marriage. However, this “love” was most often associated with Ephesians 5, a chapter where husbands are instructed to love their wife as Christ loves the Church. Thus “love” did not necessarily carry the same connotations of sexual passion and romance as it typically does today. Rather, it embodied the concept of giving one’s whole self to the spouse and deep feelings of affection.

Respect and admiration for one’s spouse were considered ideal marital sentiments. Indeed, to be overly passionate about one’s spouse was seen as uncouth and, from a religious perspective, a form of idol worship.³⁹ Feelings of love, esteem, respect, and admiration for one’s spouse were thought to emerge *after* the marriage ceremony as the couple built a life together.

Isaac and Rebekah’s marriage in the book of Genesis is a prime example of the institutional marriage (see Genesis 24). Isaac’s father, Abraham, sends his servant (not Isaac) to find a wife for Isaac with instructions to

find a woman who could carry on family religious practices. Upon finding Rebekah, Abraham’s servant indicates to her family that she should marry Isaac for reasons including religion, economics, and family. Rebekah seems to have little say in the matter, and Isaac appears to have no say at all. “Love” does eventually enter the picture but only after the wedding (Genesis 24:67). Later, concern for their children marrying within the covenant became a primary worry for Rebekah and Isaac (Genesis 27:46; Genesis 28:1). Genesis poignantly describes Rebekah’s grief over Esau marrying outside the covenant and her fear of Jacob doing the same (Genesis 28:46).

Marriage Attitudes from the Enlightenment to the Present: The Individualistic Marriage

Social observers of the 1700s began to note that the family, community, and religious purposes of marriage began to decline in importance.⁴⁰ Many enlightenment philosophers rejected a religious dimension of marriage, adding a new emphasis on the individual. Along with this came “the radical new idea that love should be the most fundamental reason for marriage.”⁴¹ Love became the principle basis of entering into a marriage and what ultimately maintained it. Conservatives of the 1700s decried this new method of marriage, arguing that enshrining love as the basis of marriage would create instability and divorce.⁴²

During this time of shifting values, popular writers often contrasted the institutional model and new love-based marriages. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen contrasts the marriage of Charlotte to Mr. Collins with the marriage of Elizabeth to Mr. Darcy. Charlotte marries Mr. Collins for his “comfortable home” and good “character, connections, and situation in life.”⁴³ Under the institutional model, these spousal characteristics were highly prized. However, by marrying for these reasons Elizabeth concludes that Charlotte “sacrificed every better feeling” and “disgrac[ed] herself.”⁴⁴ The novel then bears out a sad view of Charlotte’s marriage while Elizabeth, who marries for love, has a much happier ending.

The emphasis on love in marriage continued through the twentieth century. In comparing rankings of mate preferences from 1939 to 1996, “love” rose from the fourth to the first priority for males and from fifth to first position for females, overtaking the more institutional qualities.⁴⁵ For men, love overtook such qualities as “dependability,” “emotional stability,” and a “pleasing disposition.” For women, love overtook all these as well as

“industriousness.” From 1967 to 1994, a study found expectations of “companionship” and “emotional security” in a marriage increasing along with expectations of romance.⁴⁶

The Rise of Expressive Individualism

The enlightenment emphasis on individual liberty also became a precursor to an increased focus on individual fulfillment in marriage. As family historians Mintz and Kellogg describe: “By the beginning of the twentieth century, middle-class families had been shorn of many traditional economic, educational, and welfare functions. . . . At the same time, however, the family had acquired new burdens and expectations. The middle-class family was assigned primary responsibilities for fulfilling the emotional and psychological needs of its members. . . . Family life was now expected to provide romance, sexual fulfillment, companionship, and emotional satisfaction.”⁴⁷

Although a greater consideration of individual desires in family life provided important new avenues for individual satisfaction in families, for much of society, this extended into an ideology of “expressive individualism” which began to exert substantial influence on marriage attitudes.⁴⁸ This ideology emphasizes individual self-expression as the primary moral good. Within this view, the community and family are seen as serving moral goods only inasmuch as they support individuals’ expressions. For expressive individualists, it is dubious (even dangerous) to view community and family as entities with interests that require consideration.

During this time, love began to be seen in “expressive, sexual, and especially individualistic terms.”⁴⁹ From an individualistic perspective, love is primarily useful as a form of self-expression and self-fulfillment.

In this climate, family and community involvement in marriage began to wane. Individuals were provided unprecedented latitude in whom to marry, in setting the terms of the marriage, and in when to end the marriage.⁵⁰ The community began to see itself as less interested in whether the marriage lasted, and the third-party effects of getting and staying married were largely ignored. Among other legal changes throughout the twentieth century, no-fault divorces signaled an emphatic retreat of the state from marriage, society no longer claiming an interest in keeping a man and woman together for any reasons of its own. It has been observed that “by the 1980s the states and the nation had let go their grip on the institution of marriage along with their previous understanding of it.”⁵¹ Indeed, as Witte describes of this new model

of marriage: “The essence of marriage . . . was not its sacramental symbolism, nor its covenantal associations, nor its social service to the community and commonwealth. . . . The essence of marriage was the voluntary private bargain struck between the two parties.”⁵²

Under the individualistic model, infidelity was not considered the deeply public wrong it had been in the past. Cott points out that President Bill Clinton being able to remain a public figure after his infidelity demonstrates a dramatic transformation in the conceptualization of marriage.⁵³ This is also seen more recently as President Donald Trump’s infidelities did not, for many Americans, disqualify him from the presidency. Cott argues that the ability to remain a public figure after infidelity “can only be understood against the background of a generation’s seismic shift in marriage practices.”⁵⁴ That is, the notion that fidelity within marriage was in society’s best interest had largely been lost; the general sentiment being that infidelity is a *private*, rather *public* concern.

As expressive individualism became more generally adopted, Western societies began to have difficulties articulating the value of the male-female relationship which, up to that point, had been self-evident. For a growing segment of society, the male-female relationship became something to be avoided altogether. The challenges in male-female relationships and the high costs of childbearing and rearing became difficult to fit within an ideology of expressive individualism. For many, the male-female relationship (including the sexual aspect) became too costly and unnecessary.

The Results

It is important to first note that many changes in marriage attitudes have been beneficial. The increased attention to the individual, emotional, and sexual side of marriage has been of great value to couples. Further, in most of the Western world, laws are fairer in their treatment of women and children. These benefits are important and should be maximized in societies.

However, other changes in marriage attitudes have come with high costs. As Stephanie Coontz says of the modern marriage system, “From the moment of its inception, this revolutionary new marriage system already showed signs of the instability that was to plague it at the end of the twentieth century.”⁵⁵ Although balancing the needs of the individual and the community has always been challenging, the modern swing towards expressive individualism has had rather clear and serious consequences. Indeed, there is widespread

agreement among scholars that today's families are much more fragile than in the past, coming with a cost to couples, children, and the community.

Cost to Couples

One cost of the current marriage culture is that fewer and fewer are marrying. This is concerning since the link between marriage and individual wellbeing has been well established with evidence of a causal effect.⁵⁶ And today, those that do get married have a significantly more difficult time staying together.⁵⁷ Further, some research has demonstrated that more and more people are adopting an individualistic marriage, which appears to be the most unhappy and fragile form of marriage.⁵⁸

Indeed, the rising attitude of "love at all costs" (professional, family, religious) encapsulates the worries of those from the 1700s. In today's language, the phrase "love conquers all" (particularly in the expressive individualistic sense of "love") can also mean conquering commitment, trust, common goals, and family.⁵⁹ From an ideology of expressive individualism, it is better to be true to oneself than true to one's marriage. For instance, Governor Mark Samford, speaking about his affair, described love winning against all else. Said he: "Though we both know . . . how different our lives are, all those different things we know in my professional work, my family, all those different things, I will be able to die knowing that I had met my soul mate."⁶⁰

Cost to Children

Research is abundantly clear that children from parents who never marry or whose parents divorce are at a substantially higher risk for emotional, intellectual, psychological, relational, and academic problems.⁶¹ Although many children still do well despite difficult circumstances, the evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that, on average, children do worse when their parents are not married.

As earlier noted, marriage also serves as an important protective factor against child abuse.⁶² Rates of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of children are three to five times greater for those living with cohabitating biological parents versus married biological parents. Children whose mothers cohabit with someone other than their biological father are 10 to 20 times more likely to suffer these types of abuses.⁶³ This is highly concerning, as rates of cohabitation and nonmarital childbirths having increased substantially in the last few decades.

The societal costs of divorce and nonmarital births are considerable. Children in these homes are more likely to experience poverty,⁶⁴ adding additional stress to the welfare system. And, since these children are also more likely to have children as teens, the stresses on the system are compounded over generations.

Cost to the Community

With the devaluing of the male-female relationship in favor of individual expressions, what the male-female relationship uniquely produces—children—also became devalued. During the time when expressive individualism took hold, research found the perceived importance of children decreasing.⁶⁵ Children were difficult to fit within individualistic goals. Current abortion rates likely speak to the devaluing of children, which, although trending slightly downward, remain high. In the US alone, there are over 664,000 abortions each year, one for every 5 live births.⁶⁶

The devaluation of children has created alarm in some nations. Plummeting birthrates mean many countries face the problem of too few workers to support an aging population. A recent, tongue-in-cheek fertility slogan, "Do it for Denmark" arises from serious underlying issues.⁶⁷ Italy's low fertility rates prompted the national health ministry to create a controversial, and eventually canceled, national "fertility day" complete with posters, one which read "fertility is a common good."⁶⁸ Governments in many countries find themselves in the difficult position of encouraging greater fertility while at the same time not offending certain sensibilities.

Japan is in a similarly tight spot. Between 2013 and 2014, the Japanese population shrank by 268,000.⁶⁹ Amidst this crisis, a popular Japanese magazine declared, "Young people, don't hate sex!"⁷⁰ Although programs are working to incentivize men and women to join together and have children, because of the difficulties of real relationships and the ubiquitous nature of the Japanese sex industry, a large and growing number of men and women are no longer interested in a relationship.⁷¹ As per one report in Japan, "to an astonishing degree, men and women go their separate ways."⁷² The combination of fewer overall births and the high likelihood of births within nonstable households is cause for great societal concern.

Same-Sex Marriage: An Extension and Solidification of the Individualistic Marriage

Same-sex marriage thus becomes possible in the context of expressive individualism and the declining belief that the male-female relationship is uniquely valuable. Referring to the transformation towards individualistic marriages, Andrew Cherlin has said, “Once that transformation had occurred, gay and lesbian couples could logically argue that they were just as entitled to official recognition of the intimate partnerships they chose as were heterosexual couples.”⁷³ And as Coontz notes, “The demand for gay and lesbian marriage was an inevitable result of the previous revolution in heterosexual marriage. It was heterosexuals who had already created many alternative structures for organizing sexual relationships . . . and broken down the primacy of two-parent families.”⁷⁴ Again, it is important to recognize that homosexuality has been in societies throughout recorded history and has been accepted and praised in many societies.⁷⁵ But, with only minor qualifications, societies have never considered same-sex unions to be marriages.

With same-sex marriage, the law no longer recognizes (and no government institution can assert) that the male-female relationship possesses unique qualities that should be recognized or supported. Further, with same-sex marriage, institutions that give preference to male-female marriage, they are at risk of legal action. Paradoxically, the unique qualities of the male-female relationship are precisely why marriage has been instituted throughout history and societies, to support this relationship’s essential role in societies.

Same-sex marriage also solidifies ideals of expressive individualism into law. This is perhaps best seen in Justice Kennedy’s opinion in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the case that legalized same-sex marriage in the US. Justice Kennedy asserts that allowing same-sex marriage is necessary since people have the right to “define and express their identity,” to have “nobility and dignity,” to “enjoy intimate association” and have “companionship and understanding,” to assert their “personhood,” and to avoid “be[ing] condemned to live in loneliness.”⁷⁶ To consider these criteria as foundational elements of marriage would be foreign to most societies throughout history. But they are the very essence of the individualistic marriage. And, although these criteria may be of value to couples, as the moral and legal foundation for marriage they produce the most unstable and unhappy marriage type to date.⁷⁷

From a legal standpoint, Justice Roberts counters that the Constitution does not ensure anyone’s right to companionship. And, rejecting the reasoning

that not allowing for same-sex marriage creates loneliness, Justice Roberts writes, “Same-sex couples remain free to live together, to engage in intimate conduct, and to raise their families as they see fit. No one is ‘condemned to live in loneliness’ by the laws challenged in these cases—no one.”⁷⁸ In his dissent, Justice Scalia argues that Kennedy’s opinion “claimed power to create ‘liberties’ that the Constitution and its Amendments neglect to mention.”⁷⁹ Justice Thomas considers the court’s majority’s opinion to be only “musings” that are “deeply misguided.”⁸⁰ Justice Alito most directly takes issue with the majority’s opinion for redefining marriage from a “postmodern” perspective.⁸¹

This is not to say that all same-sex relationships are based on a postmodern ideology of expressive individualism. Some are based on commitment, sacrifice, and raising children. But individualistic ideals were foundational for same-sex marriage to become legal. This new acceptance also emphatically asserts that marriage has nothing to do with procreation; which, in turn, indicates that procreation has nothing to do with marriage.⁸² Further, same-sex marriage has embedded individualistic ideals into law along with an assertion that the male-female relationship has no unique value. These beliefs, which have been central in creating many of the problems we face today, have now been put into law.

Conclusion

Thus, same-sex marriage is not the central issue. Rather, it is a symptom and solidification of much deeper issues regarding attitudes toward marriage and the male-female relationship that arise from *mis*understanding the necessity of the male-female relationship is key. And unfortunately, we see in other countries that when a certain critical mass of male-female relations is lost, the country becomes imperiled.

By supporting male-female marriage, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bolsters the most foundational relationship to any society. It preserves the concept that this relationship has unique qualities that deserve particular attention. These efforts help stabilize families, providing substantial benefits to individuals, couples, children, communities, and the larger society.

By recognizing the various models of marriage that exist, Church members can better determine what aspects of their society’s culture may be helpful and what may be damaging. They can also determine which elements best fit with Church teachings. Indeed, some elements of each model may be



The support of male-female marriages by the Church bolsters the most foundational relationship to any society. It preserves the concept that this relationship has unique qualities that deserve particular attention.

accepted while others are rejected. Wilcox and Dew found that the happiest and most stable marriages combined elements of the institutional (high commitment and religion) with an awareness of individual needs.⁸³

Finally, beliefs about marriage and the male-female relationship are not yet done shifting. There are likely many more changes ahead. Having a deeper understanding of the importance of the male-female relationship will allow

members of the Church to connect more closely with the Church's support of this most fundamental relationship. **RE**

Notes

1. Pew Research Center, "Support for Same-Sex Marriage at Record High, but Key Segments Remain Opposed," June 2015, <http://www.people-press.org/2015/06/08/support-for-same-sex-marriage-at-record-high-but-key-segments-remain-opposed/>.
2. The First Presidency to Church members in the United States and Canada, 29 June 2015.
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8. Plato, "Laws IV," *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. T. J. Saunders, ed. J. M. Cooper (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 1391–1409.
9. H. D. Krause, "Child Support Reassessed: Limits of Private Responsibility and the Public Interest," *Divorce Reform at the Crossroads*, ed. S. D. Sugarman and H. H. Kay (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 184; emphasis added.
10. N. F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 5.
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13. J. Martos, "Marriage: A Historical Survey," in *Perspectives on Marriage*, ed. K. Scott and M. Warren, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press: 2007), 31.
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15. Cott, *Public Vows*, 124.
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18. R. R. Barich and D. D. Bielby, "Rethinking Marriage: Change and Stability in Expectations, 1967–1994," *Journal of Family Issues* 17, no. 2 (1996): 141.
19. V. Hudson, B. Ballif-Spanvill, M. Capriolo, and C. Emmett, *Sex and World Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 71.

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21. V. H. Cassler, "Some Things That Should Not Have Been Forgotten Were Lost: The Pro-Feminist, Pro-Democracy, Pro-Peace Case for State Privileging of Companionate Heterosexual Monogamous Marriage," *SquareTwo* 2, no. 1 (2009).
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23. P. Lee, and R. P. George, *Conjugal Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 104-5.
24. J. Neill, *The Origins and Role of Same-Sex Relations in Human Societies* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009).
25. Plato, "Symposium," in *Plato: Complete Works*, 474-75.
26. This is not to endorse Plato's Aristophanes as a marriage expert but merely to point to historical thought on the subject.
27. S. Coontz, *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 4.
28. See Amato, 2012; P. R. Amato, A. Booth, D. R. Johnson, and S. J. Rogers, *Alone Together: How Marriage in America Is Changing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Coontz, *Marriage, A History*; W. B. Wilcox and J. Dew, "Is Love a Flimsy Foundation? Soulmate Versus Institutional Models of Marriage," *Social Science Research* 39, no. 5 (2010): 687-99.
29. A. J. Cherlin, *The Marriage Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).
30. Cherlin, *Marriage Go-Round*, 10.
31. Hudson argues for a marriage form that predates the institutional model and has influence throughout many societies today. She refers to this as the "Evolutionary Legacy Marriage." From an LDS perspective, this may be (however it arose) the marriage form most dominated by the "natural man." In this type of marriage, women are treated as property to be exchanged for goods. Husbands are legally allowed to beat (or even kill) their wives and are able to commit adultery with impunity. This type of marriage can be separated from the other models of marriage referred to here, though in any society elements of the evolutionary legacy marriage may be present.
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33. Plato, "Laws," 1446.
34. J. Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and the Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 7.

35. Cott, *Public Vows*, 111.
36. T. Mackin, "The Primitive Christian Understanding," 24.
37. Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*.
38. Martos, "Marriage: A Historical Survey," 54.
39. Coontz, *Marriage*, 179.
40. S. Coontz, "The Origins of Modern Divorce," *Family Process* 46, no. 1 (2007): 7-16, doi:10.1111/j.1545-5300.2006.00188.x; N. F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 5.
41. Coontz, *Marriage*, 5.
42. Coontz, "The Origins of Modern Divorce," 7-16.
43. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 140-141.
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45. D. M. Buss, T. K. Shackelford, L. A. Kirkpatrick, and R. J. Larsen, "A Half Century of Mate Preferences: The Cultural Evolution of Values," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63, no. 2 (2001): 491-503.
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48. R. N. Bellah, R. Madsen, W. M. Sullivan, A. Swidler, and S. M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2007); A. J. Cherlin, *Marriage Go-Round*, 28-32.
49. Wilcox and Dew, "Is Love a Flimsy Foundation?," 688.
50. Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 266-69, 288-90.
51. Cott, *Public Vows*, 212.
52. Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 290.
53. Cott, *Public Vows*, 201.
54. Cott, *Public Vows*, 201.
55. Coontz, *Marriage*, 5.
56. R. E. Emery, E. E. Horn, and C. R. Beam, "Marriage and Improved Well-Being: Using Twins to Parse the Correlation, Asking How Marriage Helps, and Wondering Why More People Don't Buy a Bargain," In *Marriage at the Crossroads: Law, Policy, and the Brave New World of Twenty-First-Century Families*, ed. M. Garrison and E. S. Scott (New York: Cambridge, 2012), 126-41.
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58. P. R. Amato, "Institutional, Companionate, and Individualistic Marriages: Change Over Time and Implications for Marital Quality," in *Marriage at a Crossroads*, ed. M. Garrison and E. Scott (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 118-119.
59. For statistics on the rise of adultery within the last few decades, see T. Parker-Pope, "Love, Sex and the Changing Landscape of Infidelity," *New York Times*, 28 October 2008.
60. Wilcox and Dew, "Is Love a Flimsy Foundation?," 687.

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67. Spies, "Do It for Denmark," <http://www.spies.dk/do-it-for-denmark/>.
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69. A. Swanson, "Japan's Birth Rate Problem Is Way Worse Than Anyone Imagined," *Washington Post*, 7 January 2015.
70. P. Wiseman, "No Sex Please—We're Japanese," *USA Today*, 2 June 2004.
71. D. Baer, "Japan's Huge Sex Problem Is Setting Up a 'Demographic Time Bomb' for the Country," *Business Insider*, 1 June 2015.
72. Wiseman, "No Sex Please."
73. Cherlin, *Marriage Go-Round*, 189.
74. Coontz, *Marriage*, 274.
75. Neill, *The Origins and Role*.
76. Kennedy, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2, 3, 14, 19, 28.
77. See Amato, "Institutional, Companionate, and Individualistic," 107–25; Wilcox and Dew, "Is Love a Flimsy Foundation?" 687.
78. Roberts, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 17–18. It should also be noted that Justice Kennedy also includes concern for children of gay and lesbian couples as an argument for same-sex marriage. The logic being that marriage would produce important benefits to these children including certain legal rights as well as destigmatizing these families. This argument, however, receives little of Kennedy's attention as he quickly turns towards individual rights. This brief attention to concerns for children is indicative of the effective arguments against it such as: 1) children are not a requirement for marriage, and if they were, there then exists a strong argument for treating the male-female relationship as unique (the relationship that produces children) and 2) marriage being about raising children assumes that any two or more individuals raising a child should have access to marriage. In other words, if simply raising a child together is grounds for marriage, then there is no limiting factor to who could marry. In contrast, what has been assumed by societies throughout the world and throughout history is that the male-female relationship *itself* is unique (as described above) and in *itself* constitutes a limiting factor for marriage.
79. A. G. Scalia, *Obergefell v. Hodges No. 14–556: Scalia, J., Dissenting* (Supreme Court of the United States, 2015), 2.

80. C. Thomas, *Obergefell v. Hodges No. 14–556: Thomas, J., Dissenting* (Supreme Court of the United States, 2015), 17.
81. S. Alito, *Obergefell v. Hodges No. 14–556: Alito, J., Dissenting* (Supreme Court of the United States, 2015), 2.
82. It is often argued that because infertile male-female couples are allowed to marry, same-sex couples should also be allowed to marry. However, preserving male-female marriage still serves the function of sending critical social signals regarding the essential qualities and unique characteristics of male-female relationships. As described earlier, a foundational component of marriage policy is sustaining the view that the male-female sexual relationship (the relationship which produces new life) is to be enclosed within marriage (note the earlier reference to Nancy Cott's observations on the effects of marriage norms on both the married and unmarried). Preserving marriage between a man and woman indicates that the male-female relationship *is* unique. Further, maintaining marriage between man and woman continues to provide the ideal of harmony between the sexes. Same-sex marriage indicates that males and females no longer need to come together. In contrast, the intent of marriage (excluding evolutionary legacy components) has been just the opposite. Marriage can be structured so as to indicate that males and females do need to come together and that their relationship is a necessity for societies. As noted, without this, societies begin to flounder.
83. Wilcox and Dew, "Is Love a Flimsy Foundation?" 687.