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Moral Foundations in Bunkerville and Malheur

David K. Frey

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

Moral Foundations in Bunkerville and Malheur

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The events of the Bunkerville standoff and the Malheur wildlife refuge occupation were both important confrontations with the government by the western land rights movement. Participants in and responders to the events engage in distinct moral judgments and rationales. Utilizing cultural schema analysis and moral foundations theory (MFT), I explored the differences in rationales and judgments made by participants and responders in their explicit, public moral discourses of both events. My analysis indicates that responders and participants defined and utilized the same moral foundations, but in distinct ways. Participants were more diverse in their invocation of moral foundations while responders centralized on judgments/rationales centered on harm/care and authority/subversion. I argue that the insights of content differences in construction/usage of moral foundations are a key contribution to the literature and usage of MFT. I further argue that future research on moral judgments utilizing MFT should endeavor to specify the moral and rational content of how moral foundations are employed, rather than simply documenting their distributions.

Keywords: moral foundations, Bunkerville, Malheur, moral judgments

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## **Moral Foundations in Bunkerville and Malheur**

In 2014, a group of protestors blocked a section of US interstate 15 near Bunkerville, Nevada. The protestors organized to regain possession of cattle that had been taken by the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) law enforcement. Both protesters and BLM agents were in a standoff. Most of the protesters were unarmed, though some were positioned on a nearby highway overpass with assault weapons and sniper rifles. Without any firefight, government officials suspended the roundup and surrendered the cattle to the crowd. The crowd then brought the cattle back to the ranch of Cliven Bundy, and celebrated their victory over a government they deemed tyrannical and illegitimate.

BLM agents captured and removed cattle off public land in response to unpaid grazing fees. Cliven Bundy engaged in intense legal dispute with the government over these fees from 1993 to 2014, claiming that the federal government had no authority over public land, and that the land belonged to the state and to the local ranchers whose livelihood and livestock depended on use of the land. Cliven Bundy's resistance to grazing fees began as a localized protest over land the BLM was attempting to preserve as a habitat for the endangered desert tortoise. Eventually, that protest would expand and include a diverse amalgam of militia groups, conservative activists, and ranchers willing to participate in an armed standoff with BLM agents.

Cliven Bundy, as an organizing charismatic leader, rooted his reasoning in his belief that states and citizens can be sovereign in and unto themselves. This sovereign reasoning is why Bundy rejected federal entities like the BLM or the Justice Department as having no real authority. Bundy's sovereign citizen ideology also created connections and common grounds with groups like Oath Keepers and 3 Percenters who arrived with arms to support the standoff.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and mainstream media viewed the Bunkerville standoff as sovereign citizen extremism, a legitimate threat, and domestic terrorism.

By the early months of 2016, the Bundy family would again make headlines and clash with government forces again in southeast Oregon. Earlier in 2012, Dwight and Steven Hammond were convicted and sentenced to prison for two counts of arson on federal land. After imprisonment for three months and a year and one day respectively, Dwight and Steven Hammond's sentences were vacated, and they were re-sentenced to imprisonment for five years. Following this sentencing, Ammon Bundy – one of Cliven Bundy's sons – led protests of the federal government and began publicizing the Hammond's case on social media. Protestors and locals argued that the Hammond's were victims, and that the government was making an example of their case. Protesters argued, with some support from the community, that the fires were done as a back-burning effort, to mitigate some of the potential devastation from seasonal fires in the northwest. Sympathizers portrayed the situation as another prime example of government overreach and a conspiratorial move to monopolize land and resources to better exert control over the population.

After local peaceful protests, Ammon Bundy made a call for a "hard stand" at the Malheur wildlife refuge. After securing the refuge which had been vacated by staff for the winter, more and more militia arrived in support of Bundy and his position against the federal government. Supporters arrived with supplies and arms, ready to dig in, and prepared for confrontation with the government. Ammon Bundy released statements and messages on social media daily as supporters continued to gather at Malheur. Unlike Bunkerville, the Malheur occupation did not include cattle which the militia could reclaim; instead they planned until the release of the Hammonds and the ceding of the refuge to the community. Ammon viewed

Malheur as a quintessential example of the government's overreach; the refuge existed for the study of bird species abundant in the area. Ammon's call for the occupation of Malheur was symbolic; he was calling for reclaiming of public lands from the government by countrymen. The mustering militia arrived for the hard stand, and after 26 days of occupation state and government forces moved to apprehend the occupation leadership. On January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Ammon Bundy, Ryan Bundy, and LaVoy Finicum took two separate vehicles to a nearby county to muster support from the local sheriff. When the two vehicles reached a government roadblock, Ammon and Ryan Bundy were arrested. LaVoy, a cattle rancher from Cane Beds, Arizona, and media representative of the armed occupation, was shot and killed by Oregon State Police.

Shortly after LaVoy's death, Cliven, Ammon, and Ryan Bundy were each charged for crimes tied to both Bunkerville and Malheur standoffs. The trials surrounding the standoffs took place in both Nevada and Oregon, but neither trial met the expectations of federal prosecutors or mainstream media journalists. In Oregon, the Bundy's elaborately detailed their moral and existential plight of life in the American West. They claimed that their way of life was threatened by armed government entities, surrounding and threatening their families. The jury in Portland, Oregon acquitted the Bundys of the charges. In Nevada, the judge considered the case a mistrial with prejudice. Federal prosecutors withheld evidence, and as a result the case was dismissed before it reached a jury vote. Other participants, particularly in the case of Malheur, fared differently than the Bundys in subsequent court proceedings. Many participants are currently serving time for convictions of conspiracy charges, firearm charges, depredation, and theft.

How do social scientists make sense of the events of Bunkerville and Malheur? The Bundy's impact in conservative activism started in Bunkerville and Malheur. The Bundy's continue to call others to stand up to the government. Given the relatively surprising legal



outcomes following both standoffs, where was the disconnect between the way the media understood the events and the participants involved? The messages of an oppressive federal government, endangered rights and freedoms protected by a divinely ordained constitution, and conspiratorial government overreach still resonate with significant groups in American politics. Conversely, the government and mainstream media still largely view conservative activism which the Bundy's embody as domestic terrorism. However, in many respects the questions of the events at Bunkerville and Malheur are largely unanswered. The media and government still struggle to understand what exactly happened in Bunkerville and Malheur, and more importantly they struggle to understand why the Bundy's think and act as they do. What values are dynamically at work in western land rights movements? What values are at stake in the interpretation of these events, and what does that mean to the broader public? What motivates not just the actors involved, but the distinct interpretations of actors' actions by law enforcement, media, government, or the actors themselves? Bunkerville and Malheur are a case study of a much larger social problem and discourse about rights, the role of the government, activism, and domestic terrorism.

In this project I performed an inductive analysis on the discourse surrounding Bunkerville and Malheur. The discourse can be analyzed from two distinct sides: media/government and militia/western land rights movement. I utilized Haidt's moral foundations theory as a structure for the content analysis. Haidt's work focuses on the moral values and their organization as it applies in comparisons between conservatives and liberals (Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2007). While Haidt's framework is instructive, this research involves media and government entities on one side and a coalition of conservative and militia groups on the other, instead of liberal and conservatives broadly.

## History

### Bunkerville, Nevada

In 1991 the United States Fish and Wildlife Service enacted a short-term conservation plan to maintain habitats for the desert tortoise. US Fish and Wildlife service is an extension to the Department of the Interior overseeing the conversation of fish, wildlife, and natural habitats. US Fish and Wildlife proposed strict conservation measures on 400,000 acres of federal land in southern Nevada as an effort to provide habitat for the desert tortoise away from heavily populated areas. US Fish and Wildlife exchanged the measures on the 400,000 acres for 22,000 acres of then-designated habitat to be developed by the city of Las Vegas. The strict conservation measures proposed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service included prohibitions on off-road vehicle use and the elimination of livestock grazing. In 1993, the short-term conservation plan became permanent and the proposed conservation area size was doubled, extending into Bunkerville, Nevada. In instances where conservation measures conflict with ranchers who have a precedent of grazing in a particular area, the government will frequently offer to buy back grazing permits from ranchers.

Cliven Bundy is a rancher who claims familial ties to the land of southwest Nevada starting in 1877, when his ancestors began keeping cattle in Virgin Valley, an area spanning southwest Nevada and northeast Arizona. Cliven's family purchased the 160-acre farm southwest of Bunkerville, Nevada in 1948 after relocating from Bundyville, Arizona. Cliven grazed his cattle legally on public lands managed by the US Bureau of Land Management (the BLM) from 1954 to 1993. When the conservation measures prohibiting grazing extending to Bunkerville in 1993, Cliven refused to sell his grazing permits back to the government, and also refused to pay his renewal fees. The BLM made attempts to have Bundy renew his grazing

permits, cancelled his permit in 1994, and began raising the issue in US District Court of Nevada (Temple, 2019).

Initially the BLM responded to Cliven's resistance with notices and injunctions. On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1994, the BLM placed an order to remove his cattle from public lands on the dashboard of Cliven Bundy's vehicle. BLM official testified in court that Cliven became agitated by the notice, accused the BLM of harassing him, and threw the order out of his vehicle and drove away. BLM officials further testified that one of Cliven's sons then picked up the order from the ground, tore it into pieces, threw it on the ground, and left. Unpaid grazing fees and court fines continued to accumulate over the years. In 1996, the National Park Service made plans to remove cattle that were trespassing in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, but were "told to back off... because of a concern of violence" (O'Neill, 2016, para. 6). The BLM was eventually represented in court in the district court of Nevada by the United States Department of Justice in the 1998 case of *United States v. Bundy*. The BLM argued that Bundy's cattle were trespassing on government property, and that Bundy owed significant unpaid grazing fees. Cliven Bundy represented himself in 1998 and argued that the land in question belonged to the state of Nevada as well as claiming that he had pre-emptive rights to graze on the land due to his family's history in the area. District judge Larry R. Hicks ruled that Bundy had violated court orders, was trespassing on government land, had been grazing his cattle without paying to do so, and that the government had the right to act on injunctions against Bundy. In November, 1996, district Judge Johnnie B. Rawlinson ordered a permanent enjoinder of Bundy's livestock from the allotment of land in Bunkerville by November 30<sup>th</sup> 1998. Judge Rawlinson ruled that the BLM was entitled to collect trespass damages from Cliven Bundy in the amount of \$200.00/day for any livestock on Bunkerville public lands after November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Following the district court rulings, Cliven Bundy continued to allow his cattle to graze on public lands. Over the years, the trespass damages and unpaid grazing fees continued to accumulate while Cliven's cattle spread across public land in Bunkerville. Cliven expressed his beliefs that the federal government was overreaching its authority. Cliven additionally expressed a lack of recognition for the federal government's authority in several areas including land management, arresting, or policing. Cliven's only willing correspondence with law was with the sheriff of Clark County, Nevada, Doug Gillespie. In response to BLM plans to roundup Bundy's cattle in 2012, Gillespie suggested the BLM seek a newer warrant than that given in 1998. This prompted a second case of *United States vs. Bundy* which argued for renewed enforcement authority as well as relief for trespasses on Gold Butte, an area not covered in the 1998 case. In July 2013, Senior District Judge Lloyd George granted a summary judgment which restated the permanent enjoinder and included Gold Butte as new areas of trespass. In October of 2013, Judge George issued an order that allowed the BLM to protect the land against any cattle trespasses and to seize/impound trespassing cattle.

Following the second case of *United States vs. Bundy* the BLM began making plans to round up and impound cattle that were trespassing on public lands. Areas of public lands began to be closed off to the public in March and April 2014. The BLM reportedly attempted to work through Doug Gillespie in 2012 and again in 2014 to buy the Bundy's cattle and give the Bundy's proceeds from their sale (Ralston, 2014). The BLM designated first amendment zones for the public to express their first amendment rights as well as a designated media area. From April 5<sup>th</sup> to April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014, government contractors used horses and a small helicopter to pen over 300 cattle before the roundup was suspended due to safety concerns.

Cliven Bundy sent letters to county and state officials titled “Range War Emergency Notice and Demand for Protection” in March, 2014. Additionally the Bundy’s attended town meetings and advisory boards to express their concerns over state sovereignty and their willingness to ‘do whatever it takes’ to protect their cattle. Protesters and private militia members from across the United States began gathering at first amendment zones. Following a statement from the governor of Nevada calling for the removal of first amendment zones, BLM officials allowed for protestors to go anywhere on public land provided that they do not impede with the cattle roundup. On April 10<sup>th</sup>, tensions escalated when protestors blocked the path of a BLM truck. BLM officials claimed that an ATV was used to strike the truck which resulted in officers utilizing tasers and police dogs on some protestors. Federal officials claimed that a dog was kicked and officers were assaulted, while the Bundys and protestors claim they were pushed to the ground and attacked with tasers (Martinez, 2014).

The events of Bunkerville are frequently referred to as a standoff between militia protestors and government forces. On April 12<sup>th</sup>, tensions between government agents and armed protestors led to the suspension of the roundup and the release of the cattle to the Bundys. Armed protestors blocked portions of Interstate 15. Protestors converged at the entrance to Gold Butte where the BLM were keeping Cliven’s cattle. Protestors positioned themselves on a nearby highway overpass with rifles, while BLM rangers warned over loudspeaker that they were prepared to utilize tear gas to disperse protestors. Tom Roberts, Las Vegas Metro Deputy Chief announced to the protestors that the Bundy’s cattle would be returned to them in 30 minutes. BLM agents worked with sheriff Gillespie to mediate a resolution over concerns for the safety of government employees and members of public. Bundy made public demands to sheriff Gillespie to disarm federal agents and to bulldoze tolling booths at nearby National Parks. Cliven Bundy

would go on to appear as a guest on conservative political commentator Glen Beck's radio show as well as the Fox News program *Hannity*.

Following the release of the cattle, militia presence along the roads and around the area of Bunkerville, Nevada persisted for some months. Militia cited an interest in protecting the local area from government agents, occasionally creating checkpoints and requesting proof of residence. Cliven Bundy claimed that the government was interested in killing him for standing up to their overreach, and he stated publicly that he would not open any correspondence from the BLM. The BLM continued to attempt to send letters offering to buy back the cattle from Cliven, even after the cattle had been returned and the roundup suspended (Botkin, 2014). Bunkerville had gained national attention, and many were awaiting more severe action from the federal government. The events of Malheur in Oregon, however, would take attention away from Nevada. Cliven Bundy and his sons would eventually appear in court in Las Vegas, but not until after their arrest and trial surrounding the events of Malheur in 2016.

### **Malheur Wildlife Refuge, Oregon**

Immediately following the return of Cliven Bundy's cattle by the BLM in Nevada, the Bundy's began to seek out other ranchers and encouraged them to refuse to pay grazing fees to the government. The events of Bunkerville were used by the Bundys as an example of what the government is willing to do to maintain its control over western lands at the expense of people who have been managing the land for decades. LaVoy Finicum, a participant in Bunkerville and Malheur who would eventually become the only casualty of Malheur, met the Bundys in Bunkerville in 2014 and stopped paying grazing from that point onward (Pogue, 2018). The Bundy's did not exclude themselves to issues of cattle and grazing, but spoke out against varied expression of what they viewed as government oppression. After Bunkerville, Cliven Bundy's

son Ammon and Ryan Bundy became more prominent spokesmen and headed efforts on Facebook, Youtube, and other social media platforms to convey their message about government overreach. The first instances to catch the Bundy's public attention and coverage were developments in the arson case of two ranchers from Harney County, Oregon.

In 2001 and 2006 two wildfires were connected to Harney County ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond. The 2001 Hardie-Hammond fire was claimed by some hunter witnesses to be an attempt by the Hammonds to cover up illegal hunting of deer. The Hammonds claimed that the fire was started to prevent invasive plants from spreading to their grazing fields. The 2006 'Krumbo Butte' fire began as a wildfire, but arson charges stemmed from the Hammonds illegally backburning to protect their winter feed. The backburn was started at night with no warning to BLM firefighters who were nearly trapped between the wildfire and the backburn. In late 2012, the Hammonds were tried in federal district court on multiple charges stemming from both Hardie-Hammond and Krumbo Butte fires. The Hammonds struck a plea deal during a break in jury deliberations on two accounts of arson for a dismissal of the remaining potential charges. Federal prosecutors requested the mandatory minimum 5-year sentencing for arson on federal land, but U.S. District Judge Michael Hogan decided that the sentences would be cruel and unusual punishment. Judge Hogan sentenced Dwight Hammond to three months jail time and Steven Hammond one year and one day jail time, which both served in jail. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon appealed the decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. In October of 2015, Chief Judge Ann Aiken sentenced the Hammonds to the mandatory five-year minimum with credit for time served. The Hammonds were scheduled to report for prison on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

In late 2015, the Bundy's publicized the events of the Hammond's court cases and argued that the Hammonds were being unfairly punished for acting out of a concern for their land. The Bundy's scheduled a protest with David Ward, sheriff of Harney County, Oregon and requested that the sheriff prevent the Hammonds from being taken into federal custody. Members of militia organizations began arriving in Burns, Oregon to support the protests of the Hammond's scheduled incarceration from November 2015 to January 2016. On January 2<sup>nd</sup> at a rally in Burns, Ammon Bundy announced his plans to go to the Malheur Wildlife Refuge and encouraged the crowd to join him. The Hammonds met with the Bundys in late 2015, but did not formally accept their help nor did they endorse protestors to take up occupation of the nearby Malheur Wildlife Refuge. While protestors had just begun occupying the Malheur refuge, the Hammonds reported to a federal correctional institution on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016, and served their time until President Donald Trump issued full pardons to the Hammonds on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Compared to Bunkerville, media coverage of the Malheur wildlife occupation was more involved and had new material on a daily basis. The standoff with BLM officers at Gold Butte was only two hours in length compared to the 40-day occupation of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge. Since the stark duration of events, the media had more time to dispute participants' claims with their own observations. Journalistic accounts diverge from participant accounts in what events took place, and what damages were caused by which parties. For example, participants claim that when they arrived at the Malheur Wildlife Refuge the doors were unlocked and they had no need to break in (Sottile, 2018-present). Federal authorities and journalists claimed that there was evidence of forced entry. On the first day of occupation, participant leadership in Malheur claimed 150 armed members at the refuge. The population of participants was contested by early journalistic accounts claiming fewer than a dozen at first, to



roughly 25 on the second day of occupation (see Whitnall, 2016; and Zaitz, 2016a). Ammon Bundy acted as primary spokesperson and represented the leadership behind the refuge occupation. Bundy claimed that participants were being supplied by area residents, though journalistic accounts are quick to point out a difference in local support between the Bundy's involvement in Bunkerville and Malheur. Despite public interest in defending the Hammonds (Theriault, 2016), the Bundy's presence at the wildlife refuge was occasionally protested by locals to Burns, Oregon (Wilson & Haas, 2016).

Ammon Bundy and other leadership of the wildlife refuge occupation stated their intent was to remain in the refuge as a protest to the Hammonds incarceration. Bundy also expressed an interest in revitalizing the local logging and outdoor recreation economy of Harney County. On January 4<sup>th</sup> the occupiers of the Malheur Wildlife refuge named their organization 'Citizens for Constitutional Freedom'. Sheriff David Ward made efforts to seek community opinion on the presence of the occupiers. Ward offered to escort occupiers to the county line if they were willing to leave. The Bundy's claimed that they were unconvinced sheriff Ward spoke for the entirety of the people's wishes and stated that the occupation would continue until federally controlled land was returned to the residents of Harney County (Sepulvado, 2016; Zaitz, 2016b). Participants continued to congregate at the refuge in increasing numbers, some participants came from militant organizations such as the Oath Keepers, Pacific Patriots Network, and the 3 Percenters of Idaho (Hammill, 2016). Militants expressed an interest in establishing a constant presence and perimeter to prevent government intervention and violence comparable to the events of Waco, Texas of 1993.

Participants announced their intentions on working with neighboring county authorities and sheriffs to garner more support. Participants claimed that the refuge was in a state of

disrepair upon their arrival, they posted videos of archeological artifacts connected to the Burns Paiute Tribe. LaVoy Finicum, during the third week of the occupation, announced that the government needed to cede their control over the refuge, and that it would “never, ever return to the federal government” (Heim, 2016). Ammon Bundy occasionally spoke with FBI negotiators about the release of Dwight and Steven Hammond from federal custody as well as ceding federal control over the refuge, but eventually refused to discuss terms further without media presence. Community pressure to end the occupation increased as militia population steadily grew. On January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016, agents of the FBI and the Oregon State Police set a roadblock to arrest occupation leaders LaVoy Finicum, Ryan Bundy, and Ammon Bundy as they traveled to speak at a public meeting in Grant County, Oregon.

The group traveled to Grant County in two vehicles. The car containing Ammon Bundy and Brian Cavalier was pulled over by Oregon State Police. Ammon and Brian peacefully surrendered into police custody. Brian was an FBI informant at the time of the arrests. LaVoy Finicum drove a truck with Ryan Bundy, Ryan Payne, Shawna Cox, and 18-year-old Victoria Sharp. LaVoy stopped further along as several police cars pursued his truck. Police launched pepper spray at the vehicle as Ryan Payne exited and surrendered to authorities. Shawna Cox recorded the events on her phone inside Finicum’s truck. Ryan Bundy emphatically claimed that they should not have stopped while Finicum yells at officers to allow him to continue along the road. After seven minutes of remaining idle, Finicum resumed driving away from officers until the truck arrived at a roadblock. FBI agents fired at the truck as it approached. Finicum attempted to evade the roadblock on the shoulder of the road, but collided with a snow bank. Finicum exited the vehicle as officers approached him bearing rifles and tasers. In a 15-second interaction, Finicum can be seen on released aerial surveillance footage exiting the vehicle,

raising his hands, and making a jerking motion with his right hand towards his left. Finicum appears to alternate between raised hands and reaching for his pocket as officers approach him. According to police reports Finicum had a loaded 9mm semiautomatic handgun in his left pocket. Oregon State Police officers shot LaVoy Finicum twice in the back as an officer moved into range to incapacitate Finicum with a taser. Footage from within the truck showed Shawna Cox and Victoria Sharp panic as officers fired flashbangs and gas rounds at the truck.

After the death of LaVoy Finicum, Ammon Bundy communicated through his lawyer and called for an end to the occupation of the refuge. By January 28<sup>th</sup>, four occupants elected to remain until their supplies expired, but were eventually negotiated to surrender by February 11<sup>th</sup>. In total 27 people were arrested and charged with crimes in connection to the Malheur Wildlife Refuge occupation. Crimes ranged from conspiracy to impede officers through force, possession of firearms/weapons in federal facilities, depredation of government property, and theft of government property. Cliven Bundy was arrested in the Portland, Oregon airport as he traveled to assist his sons; Cliven was arrested on charges connected to the Bunkerville standoff of 2014. The Bundys faced trials in Oregon and Nevada in connection to their actions at Bunkerville and Malheur.

The Oregon trials took place before the trials of Nevada. Ammon Bundy, Ryan Bundy, and five other defendants were found not guilty of the charges of conspiracy to impede federal officers and possession of firearms by a jury of peers. Federal prosecutors emphasized evidence which placed the Bundys at the forefront of the occupation effort, and argued that the Bundys transparently broke the laws for which they were being charged. The Bundys argued in court that the government was oppressing their way of existence in the west. Ammon and Ryan Bundy utilized most of their time in court proceedings arguing that the government had responded

violently to their protests of government overreach. In the court case of Nevada, connected to Bunkerville, Cliven and his sons argued that their families feared for their lives due to government surveillance and threats. The district court judge Gloria M. Navarro dismissed the criminal charges against Cliven Bundy, Ammon Bundy, Ryan Bundy, and Ryan Payne with prejudice. Judge Navarro ruled a mistrial on the grounds that federal prosecutors withheld exculpatory evidence, violating evidence rules of the court. Other participants in Bunkerville and Malheur were charged and indicted in the years following the end of the Malheur occupation.

Varied interpretations, depictions, and representations of what took place at Bunkerville and Malheur were expressed during and after both events. National media attention on the Bundys began in earnest in 2014, and followed the events of Malheur on a day-by-day basis. In covering both events, news media narratives (both positive and negative) could only agree on the importance of the events and not what was important about them. To many national news outlets the willingness to defy the government was most important, or the inherent harm that the Bundys and their followers caused and threatened to continue causing. To others, the importance of the events was the boldness with which the government responded with violence to concerns about its control over public lands in the west. Each response was a form of argumentation attempting to clarify what was a stake in Bunkerville and Malheur. Something important – and something that warranted societal attention and response – took place across these events, but to come to the conclusion of what mattered most questions had to be answered: Who was the victim? Who was at fault? Who should be held accountable?

## **Theory**

### **Western Land Rights Movement**

The western land rights movement is an unofficial term I implement here to encompass the ideologies, diverse groups, and actors that participated in Bunkerville and Malheur. Scholarly attention to Bunkerville and Malheur is sparse. Authors which cover the Malheur refuge occupation have been journalistic (Ketcham, 2019; Temple, 2019) and ethnographic (Pogue, 2018; Walker, 2018). Book-length coverage of Bunkerville is left to Temple's (2019) account. Historic and social scientific literature appropriately houses the events of Bunkerville and Malheur within the higher-order processes that have been developing in the management of land in the American West. Political science literature of Bunkerville and Malheur are concerned with how these events serve to inform the advancement of populism in America (Berlet & Sunshine, 2019), and how participants' ideologies contrast with contemporary academic understanding of US law (Nemerever, 2021; Pason & File, 2021; Ragsdale, 2016). Other academic considerations are more specified, such as Livingston's (2018) analysis on the racial dynamics of gun culture in the US which studied Bunkerville as performance of belonging.

Academics are mixed in their handling of Bunkerville and Malheur; authors of political science articles are often incredulous about the Bundy's and their handling of political circumstances. Ragsdale's (2016) account in particular stands out as particularly critical of Cliven Bundy, but views the events of Bunkerville as an extension of the sagebrush rebellion. Ragsdale calls the events of Bunkerville "a mind-bending, consciousness altering, looking glass version of logic and reality" (p. 599). Others emphasize their general conflation of facts and contemporary understandings of constitutional law. Pason & File (2021) investigated the legal discourses of both Bunkerville and Malheur and came to the conclusion that participants conflated their first and second amendment rights in practice. Smith (2021) conceptualizes the rhetoric strategies within Malheur as an extension of settler colonial ideology within participants.

Academics like Nemerever (2021), emphasize the broader historical trends of violence within protests of western land management. Academics (at least within political science) seem to increase in their criticism of participants as participants play a role more centrally in their analysis.

Historians view Bunkerville and Malheur as extensions of macro-historical processes that have surrounded land in the American West broadly (Quammen, 2020; Rogers, 2017). Western lands and their management are at the forefront of understanding culture and identity in the American West, especially in coverage of indigenous groups (Garrouette, 2003, pp. 74-75). Participants in Bunkerville (and to an extent Malheur) are understood by historians to be part of a preceding movement called the sagebrush rebellion. The sagebrush rebellion was a political movement of the 1970s and 80s which emphasized the shrinking of federal control over land in the American West. Supporters of the sagebrush rebellion emphasized an interest in state, local, and private control over land and resources in the west (Cawley, 1993; Leshy, 1980).

As stated before, questions and issues that stem from the tensions at Bunkerville and Malheur did not end with the Bundy's trails, nor have concerns about public lands in the American West been settled outright. Participants in Bunkerville and Malheur are made up of a diverse amalgam of actors, entities, and groups. Central actors exist as participants; Cliven Bundy, Ammon Bundy, and Ryan Bundy were (and are) each key figures both in Bunkerville/Malheur but also in American Western political activism. Unpacking the ideology of each group, entity, or actor is beyond the scope of this project. However, since the Bundy's acted as unifying and charismatic leaders in Bunkerville and Malheur respectively, understanding their theoretical position can serve as a foil for other more varied participants.

The Bundys represent a complex expression of millenarianism, Latter-day Saint theology, and controversial political practice. Crowe (2021), for example, refers to the Bundy's political practice as radical constitutional libertarianism. Crowe notes that of the diverse rationales behind the Malheur occupation (restoring local control over land, demonstrating the distinctiveness of the American West, demonstrating their convictions of liberty, etc.) the constitution was a superordinate and returning keystone for the Bundys and their followers. Importantly, Crowe views the Bundy's conceptualization of liberty (combined with their religious beliefs) as having noteworthy radicalism. In his analysis Crowe (2021) concludes that:

...the Bundy's fervent belief in having been chosen to receive prophecy reemphasizes their independence from civil authority and dominion over the natural world. When God speaks to them and acts through them, they become warriors for both his divine and constitutional projects, bringing to life not only the dictates of the Bible but also the ends of the Constitution. And in so doing, they become inculcated against the critique of civil authority precisely because they are acting on higher authority. (p. 72)

Most academic discourse surrounding the western land rights movement emphasizes the history of populism in the American West (Massip, 2019), or challenges the position of the Bundys in relation to legal philosophy and public lands (Blumm & Jamin, 2016; Pason & File, 2021; Ruple, 2018). For the Bundys, however, the crux of the issue is the divine role of the constitution, and the apocalyptic results in any infringement on that role. Mormonism has a robust historical and contemporary relationship with millenarian sentiments (Blythe, 2020; Underwood, 1999). Importantly, an 'americanization' of traditional protestant apocalypticism developed within Mormonism over time. Popular and colloquial theories among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints depict the constitution as eventually "hanging by a

thread”, and that the intervention of Latter-day Saints will be imperative for the survival of America and the rights and liberties afforded by the constitution. Blythe (2020) refers to the contemporary place of Mormonism in conservative politics (and we may add western activism here) as arriving at a crucial ‘Mormon moment’.

Media responses to Bunkerville and Malheur are varied. After the election of Donald Trump and the January 6<sup>th</sup> protests at the US capitol, mainstream media accounts were more concerned with the populism, conspiratorial ideology, and political-religious conflation they view as typifying contemporary American conservatives (Feldmann, 2021; Klepper, 2022; McEvoy 2021; Pazzanese, 2021; Vyse, 2021). Transparently, the Trump administration is a key point of fascination of media coverage. Bond and Neville Shepard (2021) argue that some of Trump’s popularity and charisma come from his invocation of “presidential eschatology”. They posit that he speaks in eschatological terms that resonate with millenarian sentiments in conservative populations of the United States. Retroactively, media accounts portray the events of Bunkerville and Malheur as symptoms of a more central malady within American conservatives (de Villiers, 2019).

Media accounts of Bunkerville and Malheur take insights from academic literature on millenarianism and domestic terrorism and apply them liberally to Bunkerville and Malheur. A particularly prevalent theoretical tool is the idea of relative deprivation theory (Laternari, 1963; Thrupp, 1970). Relative deprivation theory asserts that millenarianism and eschatological movements can be understood as reactions to material and sociopolitical disadvantage by minority groups. The idea of deprivation is explicitly and implicitly present in media accounts of the western land rights movement. Moghaddam (2005), for example, argues that material and political disadvantage is the *first* step in his metaphor for the psychology behind terrorist actions.



Furthermore, Moghaddam argues that if objective disadvantage is not present then the perception of disadvantage is enough to move individuals closer to terrorist action. Media portrayed the Bundys and other participants in Bunkerville and Malheur as finding comfort in a millenarian ideal that empowered and emboldened them to domestic terrorism. Given the theoretical assumptions of deprivation, and the stark political contrast between the two, media has a hard time approaching a point of understanding participants in Bunkerville and Malheur. By associating the western land rights movement with right wing extremism and terrorism, media and government discourse explicitly shows how concerned it is with understanding, predicting, and even controlling behaviors of participants in Bunkerville and Malheur. However, at present, the disparate vantage points between participants and responders will likely prevent any meaningful understanding between the two. Given the current developments within moral psychology with moral foundations theory, I aim to shed light on the understanding of those behaviors.

### **Moral Foundations Theory**

Moral foundations theory (MFT) has a theoretical lineage in Shweder's (2003) contributions to Kohlberg's (1968) stages of moral development. Kohlberg approached moral development as a principle of ontogeny with discrete steps an individual would experience across their lifespan. The six discrete stages of moral development are typically reduced to three broad categories of pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional (or principled) development. Within Kohlberg's models pre-conventional moral reasoning understands morality in relation to self: moral behavior is accomplished through extrinsic motivation and hedonism is the operating principle behind moral behavior. Conventional morality appeals to the authority of others and community, and begins to be internalized into an individual acting in accordance with

the norms and morals provided by their social context. Postconventional or principled morality was an internalization of morals to the individual level, in which a moral individual would acknowledge the capacity for their social structure to be incorrect in relation to principles of conscience.

Shweder (2003), through cross-cultural research, conceived of moral development as differences in possibility of expression rather than differences of placement upon a developmental or linear process. Shweder's three ethics theory contains three primary sources of ethical reasoning: autonomy, community, and divinity. These sources of ethical reasoning loosely, but not directly, can correspond with the preconventional, conventional, and postconventional stages of moral development of Kohlberg. Haidt studied directly under Shweder, and originally claimed that moralizing occurs universally in three distinct domains of life: 1) Harm/Care 2) Fairness/Reciprocity and 3) Hierarchy/Respect (see Shweder & Haidt, 1993). Eventually Haidt's research called for the addition of in-group/out-group loyalty and purity/sanctity (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Moral foundations theory asserts that the six foundations represent the universal, cross-cultural, and cognitive basis of all moral expression with some emphasis on moral judgments.

Haidt's moral foundations theory is a social intuitionist and modular theory of moral psychology (Haidt, 2001; Haidt 2007; Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008; Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Both the modularity and the cognitive-intuitionist components of the theory are accepted in the paradigms of neuroscience and cognitive psychology respectively. The social intuitionist assertion of MFT is that moral modules are informed by rapid-fire cognitive dispositions which are informed by cultural context in across an individual's life. These dispositions began as evolutionary responses to needs or problems within our environment. MFT combines elements of dual process theory,

evolution, and modularity. In sum, the foundations of human moral expression and action are the result of innate and intuitive evolutionary cognitive modules (Flanagan, 2017). Moral foundations theory is appealing in a multidisciplinary sense: moral foundations are universal (and therefore comparable across individuals), but are shaped and influenced by the environment which accounts for variability across cultures (see Dogruyal et al., 2019). Haidt argues that the adaptive moral foundations can be found in cross cultural research, but emphasizes the divide of liberal and conservative politics in his public work *The Righteous Mind* (Haidt, 2012).

MFT has six ‘foundations’ which support moral action. According to Graham et al. (2013), each foundation has the following necessary features: a) the foundation meets evolutionary challenges/problems, b) the foundation is naturally and adaptively ‘triggered’ by certain contexts, c) the foundation exists beyond its intuitive triggers, d) the foundation is linked to certain emotions, and e) the foundation has affiliated virtues and vices. The foundations are Harm/Care, Fairness/Reciprocity, In-group/Loyalty, Authority/Respect, and Purity/Sanctity. Initially empirical research supported five modules; however, Haidt (2012) proposed a sixth module which was instructive for his analysis of contemporary American politics: liberty/oppression. MFT categorizes moral judgments as capable of expression in positive or negative ways: an individual can object to an action because it does harm, because it does not provide a morally justifiable level of care, or some combination therein. According to MFT, foundations of moral judgment meet an adaptive challenge, have associated adaptive triggers, are co-opted in contemporary society to have culturally relevant triggers, are accompanied by particular emotions, and allude to relevant virtues and vices (Haidt & Joseph, 2007). Haidt explores each foundation as it is expressed in the context of American political discourse and difference between conservatives and liberals.

The foundation of harm/care is, according to MFT, based on the evolutionary need to provide care for one's own suffering children. The foundation is meant to assist in meeting the adaptive need of caring for our relatively helpless offspring. Haidt (2012) argues that the foundation of harm/care extends beyond our own internal states, and is triggered intentionally by political parties and organizations to sway our opinion and influence our behavior. As is the case with other foundations the 'triggers' in activating a particular moral foundation for judgment vary and change rapidly. In contemporary political discourse, Haidt (2012) argues that the foundation of harm/care is utilized to sway opinions about issues such as animal cruelty, humanitarian crises, and wounded veterans. The characteristic emotion of the harm/care foundation is compassion, and the relevant virtues are kindness and being caring. The inverse of virtues associated with care is the vice of cruelty.

The foundation of fairness/cheating meets the adaptive challenge of reciprocal altruism (Trivers, 1971). Haidt (2012) suggests that in humanity's evolutionary past, individuals and groups benefited more by forging a middle ground between constantly helping others and only acting selfishly. The forming of a foundation of fairness/cheating created a modular intuitive system that would allow for humans to best reap benefits of cooperation with non-kin. The adaptive triggers to the foundation of fairness/reciprocity are instances of cheating, cooperation, and deception. Contemporary political triggers of fairness/cheating are specific to American political aisles. On the American political left fairness/cheating is invoked to highlight wealthy and powerful groups exploiting those beneath them while simultaneously not paying their fair share or abusing (cheating) rules of economic systems. Haidt compares the Tea Party movement of the American right as a political movement rooted in moral judgments of fairness, proportionality, and cheating (Haidt, 2012, p. 160). Individuals experience the emotions of anger,

gratitude, and guilt in association with the foundation of fairness/cheating. Social virtues and vices associated with fairness/cheating are fairness, justice, honesty, trustworthiness, dishonesty, and ‘crookedness’.

MFT ties the foundation of in-group/loyalty to adaptive challenges of threats to kin groups in humanity’s evolutionary past. A moral foundation pertaining to loyalty to the in-group helped and helps human beings gain advantage from group cooperation. MFT suggests that sports teams and social/political organizations provide contexts replete with triggers for in-group/loyalty. These triggers activate the same modular moral systems that existed in evolutionary past in dealing with threats or challenges to the survival of the immediate kin-group. Group pride, belongingness, and vehemence at treachery are all emotions characteristically associated with the moral foundation of in-group/loyalty. Loyalty, self-sacrifice for a group, and patriotism are each virtues extending from this foundation; treason and cowardice are vices directly associated with in-group/loyalty.

MFT adapted the foundation of authority/subversion directly from one Fiske’s (1991) four basic kinds of social relationships: authority ranking. MFT invokes findings from research in primates and other social animals to suggest that hierarchical formations are built into human behavior from our evolutionary past as reflected in the behavior of other species (de Waal, 1996). The authority/subversion foundation evolved in response to the relative adaptive benefits of hierarchical organizations. Haidt posits that current triggers of an authority/submission foundation “include anything that is construed as an act of obedience, disobedience, respect, disrespect, submission, or rebellion, with regard to authorities perceived to be legitimate” (Haidt, 2012, p. 168). Bosses, organizational hierarchies, and respected professionals carry the possibility of triggering this moral foundation. Emotions accompanying the foundation of

authority/subversion largely centralize on fear and respect. Deference and obedience are virtues associated with this foundation; disobedience and ‘uppitiness’ are vices associated with authority/subversion.

The foundation of sanctity/degradation triggers our reactions to waste, disease, impurity, and taboo. MFT asserts that this foundation has straightforward evolutionary roots, but that its social application makes it likely the most diverse of all moral foundations. Evolutionarily, humans had to meet the challenge of cultivating an omnivore’s diet. This challenge, referred to as the ‘omnivore’s dilemma’ required early humans to be willing to try new things without risking disease or mortal harm (Rozin, 1976; Rozin & Fallon, 1987). Early triggers to the foundation were signs of infection, disease, impurity, and potential disease in food items and other individuals. MFT asserts that the refined and unique sense of disgust of humans became varied and expandable as they were applied to ideas and concepts. Ideas and concepts seen as taboo or sacred inform contemporary triggers of the sanctity/degradation foundation. Disgust is the emotion primarily associated with this foundation. According to MFT, virtues and vices stemming from the sanctity/degradation foundation are as diverse as its contemporary triggers. Temperance, chastity, piety, and cleanliness are all examples of virtues, but since disgust and sacredness are opposing process of the same foundation, they can be applied to a myriad of ideals.

In each of the initial five foundations, MFT researchers argued that moral foundations met particular criterion, supported by empirical research: foundations are common in third-party normative judgments, foundations elicit automatic affective evaluations, foundations are culturally widespread, foundations have evidence of innate preparedness (e.g. nonhuman primates and infants), and foundations correspond to evolutionary models of behavior (Graham

et al., 2013). The final foundation of liberty/oppression is a newer foundation compared to the other five. Haidt (2012) suggested that the liberty/oppression foundation was borne out of revision to better accommodate to libertarian political ideology in his research, but that it also “supports the egalitarianism and antiauthoritarianism of the left, as well as the don’t-tread-on-me and give-me-liberty antigovernment anger of libertarians and some conservatives” (p. 215).

Haidt (2012) argues that moral appraisals (and their modular foundations) have occasional substantive differences between American political groupings left and right, but emphasizes hierarchical differences in organization. According to Haidt, American liberals bias the foundations of care/harm, liberty/oppression, and fairness/cheating in their moral actions and sentiments. American conservatives utilize all six foundations. Furthermore, Haidt proposes that liberals and conservatives are each generally willing to “trade away” or de-emphasize a foundation for others. Liberals are more likely to de-emphasize fairness/cheating for care/harm, and conservatives are more likely to de-emphasize care/harm for any other foundation.

Moral foundations theory is not without its own critics. Domain-general accounts of morality accuse MFT as confounding cognitively identical moral systems as disparate (Gray & Keeney, 2015). Others suggest that while MFT descriptively provides insight into moral problems in contemporary politics, it doesn’t actually provide momentum in solving them (Musschenga, 2013). Two theoretical orientations, contemporary to MFT, provide the greatest contrasting insights to questions unanswered by MFT (Simpson, 2017). Moral Dyad Theory (MDT) suggests that all moral violations can be understood by their relationship to a single principle: harmfulness (Gray et al., 2012). MDT capitalizes on findings that the foundation of harm/care is the most pervasively prioritized across research. Despite this, research by proponents of MFT support the general principle of moral pluralism built into the categories of

MFT (Graham et al., 2013). A second contemporary theory to MFT is Relationship Regulation Theory (RRT; Rai & Fiske, 2011; Simpson & Laham, 2015; Simpson et al., 2016). RRT argues that moral psychology should forgo attempting to reduce moral behaviors to concrete rules or discrete classes of morals. Instead, RRT argues that right and wrong are more linked to the relational context of moral situations as well as how an individual construe relational context. RRT emphasizes the importance of pertinent social relationships in an individual's capacity to construe any act as right or wrong.

Simpson (2017) highlighted one of the greater concerns/problems of MFT in its ability to account for individual differences of activation despite having universal applicability. MFT argues that moral foundations are cross-culturally universal but simultaneously changed and influenced by an individual's culture. This means that two individuals may disagree on the contents of foundations while abstractly endorsing the foundation to an equal degree. The content of a foundation, on an individual level, influences the stimuli that would activate that foundation. In addition to activation-specific differences, research suggests that individuals may judge the same moral violation differently on contextual factors, such as actors involved in the moral problem or the meaning behind the behavior (Simpson et al., 2016). As MFT is largely a descriptive way of approaching moral judgments, the particularities between foundation endorsement and foundation activation introduce a direction in which MFT should be researched in earnest. As will become clear, themes of relational and contextual differences in foundation activation are a key finding from my analysis of the present data. For the purposes of this research, MFT and RRT are both useful and synergistic theoretical tools. Utilizing MFT enriched the inductive analysis of discourse I performed between participants and responders of Bunkerville and Malheur. I utilized MFT to provide a valid and meaningful categorical



measurement of moral foundations between the two groups. My research directly contributes to the theoretical and methodological implications of MFT, as well as the way that social scientists approach events such as Bunkerville and Malheur.

### **Methods**

In the current project, I chose to compare and contrast discourses and interpretations of the events of Bunkerville and Malheur. These discourses and interpretations do not neatly belong to two monolithic voices. In many respects each interpretation contains its own assumptions, group alignments, and dispositions that distinguish it from others. However, discourse surrounding the events can be sympathetic to the participants or opposed to their actions. For simplicity of analysis, I grouped data into two primary vantage points: participants and responders. Conservative media outlets, select members of the Bundy family, the Bundy family's official social media groups, the People's Rights network, Sovereign Citizens, 3 Percenters, Oath Keepers, supportive ranchers/locals, and others embody an axis that I am calling 'participants'. Conservative media outlets did not participate in a literal sense, but some members of this axis acted as amplifiers to the messages and sympathized with the rationales expressed by direct participants. National media outlets, local news coverage, independent media coverage, and select government entities (e.g. executive administration, justice department, BLM, and FBI) belong to an axis that I am calling responders. Just as amplifiers of the participants' messages are grouped in with participants, responders often acted as direct participants. For example, BLM agents were participants in the tensions of Bunkerville and Malheur. Furthermore, the conventions of 'participants' and 'responders' bring linguistic baggage. In utilizing these monikers, I do not espouse a position rooted in value judgment. In the cases of Bunkerville and

Malheur, the Bundy's can be seen as responding to a perceived threat just as they can be seen as participating in terrorism.

I utilized a cultural schema analysis (Quinn, 2005) of an existing database which contains social media correspondence, news coverage, courtroom transcripts/documentation, and audiovisual files surrounding the events of Bunkerville and Malheur. Cultural Schema analysis is an inductive approach to analyzing data primarily described as discourse. Cultural schema analysis is a distinct form of discourse analysis in that it concerns itself primarily with exploring “the cultural meanings that infuse people’s talk” (Quinn, 2005, p. 35). The data were collected by researchers and research assistants who searched through news and media publications in connection to the events of Bunkerville and Malheur. The database contained 107 PDF files, 31 text files, and 21 audiovisual files. The data emphasizes direct social media correspondence from groups like The Bundy Ranch, and national/local media coverage of both Bunkerville and Malheur. The database focuses on media produced during and shortly after the occupation in 2016, with some later additions.

Discursively, media coverage of these events has surrounded other relevant events which predate and follow Bunkerville and Malheur. As such, the data reflects some references and discourse which recalls and relates the specific events with branch Davidians in Waco, Texas in 1993, as well as the January 6<sup>th</sup> protests at the US Capitol in 2021. Ultimately, however, the data centered on the events and discourses (from both participants and responders) of Bunkerville and Malheur. Ultimately from the types of data listed above, the analysis centralized on rationales and judgments between participants and responders. The analysis contained 84 responder judgments/rationales across 29 responders, with emphasis on prominent journalists who covered the events of Bunkerville and Malheur consistently. The analysis also contained 90 participant

judgments/rationales across 23 responders, with heavy emphasis on leadership within participants (e.g. Cliven Bundy, Ryan Bundy, LaVoy Finicum, and Ammon Bundy). The analysis was a cultural schema analysis which utilized moral foundations theory as grouping for a content analysis of the discourse.

Cultural schema analysis looks for patterns that can be taken as evidence for consistently shared meanings. In particular, Quinn's (2005) approach highlights keywords, metaphors, and reasonings for possible categories of cultural schema analysis. In the context of this project, I chose to analyze media and government discourse and shared sentiments in covering/explaining Bunkerville/Malheur and compare it against the discourse (keywords, metaphors, reasonings) of the western land rights movement. As the results will show, coverage skews heavily towards explicit reasonings over keywords and metaphors. As is often the case, the types of reasonings were moral in tone and form, so Moral Foundations Theory was utilized in the analysis to help group reasonings between participants and responders.

Moral psychologists, when implementing MFT in their research, have utilized standardized questionnaires and vignettes (Clifford et al., 2015; Davies et al., 2014). In this project I based my own analysis primarily on cultural schema analysis of discourse with moral foundation theory serving as a structure for the content of said analysis. The Bundys and other participants frame what happened in terms of morals and truth. The Bundy's messages are about existential threat, injustice of government, and intervention to protect a divinely sanctioned mantle. Responder's interpretations are similarly moral in nature, but substantively distinct. At an initial glance, the government's and mainstream media's moral appraisals are firmly rooted in the harm done and laws broken by participants in both Bunkerville and Malheur. These concerns fit into the moral foundations put forward by Haidt and others (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt,

2007). Entering into this analysis, I hypothesized that the moral discourses from the western land rights movement would be varied in their invocations of the above foundations. I also hypothesized that the media's analysis and discourse would eschew topics of liberty, oppression, sanctity, or subversion.

In this research I analyzed the dataset for consistent keywords, metaphors, and rationales within the discourses of participants and responders. From this analysis, it became clear that while consistent keywords and metaphors existed within the data, I decided to centralize on participant and responder rationales, as they straightforwardly led to an analysis based on the categories of MFT. I defined rationales as explicit attempts to explain the events of Bunkerville/Malheur and discourse which centralized on causal relationships or contributing factors. I then combined rationales with explicit moral judgments as the two categories frequently converged and overlapped within the data. I utilized Haidt's (2012) account for moral foundations to create an initial codebook and grouped rationales and judgments into the six moral foundations: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, and liberty/betrayal. Currently there is no precedent for a MFT codebook, the coding criteria I created for this research is included in appendix A. Examples of judgments and rationales from both participants and responders into each moral foundation are included in appendix B.

As an example for the process of coding, the following quote came from some of the closing conclusions and arguments made by Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB) journalist Leah Sottile: "They see themselves as saviors of the constitution, but they're mostly trying to save themselves. This new thing they're trying to build would be for their own benefit. They would reap the rewards at the expense of not just desert wildlife, but all the people who are serving

prison time on their behalf. That's not just selfish, that's cowardly. And the fact that their motto is 'whatever it takes', that's dangerous." Here, Leah introduces (as a responder) rationales behind the Bundy's behaviors in Bunkerville and Malheur: acting as saviors of the constitution. Leah also provides some explicit moral judgment about the Bundy's being selfish, dangerous, and cowardly. This specific instance of data contains two coded instances of responder judgment/rationale and two coded instances of moral foundations: fairness/cheating and harm/care. The rationale provided for the Bundy's behavior is acting as saviors to the constitution, but ultimately interested in profiting selfishly is a rationale rooted in ultimate the unfairness of the Bundy's behavior. The explicit judgment Leah levels against the Bundy's is based out of the foundation of harm/care, stating that their ideals are fundamentally dangerous. Each instance of rationales/judgments from participants and responders was taken and coded for any invocation or argumentation of moral foundations as laid out in the codebook.

In utilizing inductive and deductive methods, I hoped to avoid some of the potential assumptions of government agencies and mainstream media; I aimed to take the western land rights movement's arguments, rationales, and worldviews seriously from their own account. I also strived to take their concerns seriously, without dismissing it as fringe, aberrant, or inconsequential a priori. Furthermore, the contribution of Haidt provides a language of perspicuous contrast between sides of an issue that frame their arguments in very different ways. The methods implemented were chosen explicitly to arrive at emic interpretations of events from both participants and responders via induction. However, conclusions drawn from cultural schema analysis are not necessarily truly from within. Here, it helpful to utilize Berry's (1999) distinctions between emic, imposed etic, and derived etic approaches to researching cultural groups. In short, deriving an etic approach allows for research to adapt its line of questions,

methods, procedures, and research conclusions to reflect the reality of the cultural group being studied (cf Rogoff, 2003, pp. 30-32). I believe cultural schema analysis provided this space in which I could approach the emic understandings and interpretations of participants and responders of Bunkerville and Malheur in a grounded and valid way.

The nature of cultural schema analysis was confined to public statements and broadcast messages, as semi-structured interviews were not an option. The record of the discourse is archival, and cannot adapt to some of the themes and schemas that emerge from initial data analysis. However, given the database and methods, it was possible to approach the moral value structures of the western land rights movement, and to apply a codebook of MFT to that data. Moral foundations structures can be compared and contrasted to those of government entities and mainstream media sources to demonstrate some of the intractable moral worldviews between the two.

This project represents an attempt on my part to utilize assets from both cultural schema analysis and methods which traditionally accompany moral foundations theory. The theory, methods, and data are all intentionally enmeshed. My own intellectual heritage is rooted in psychology and anthropology with some greater emphasis in ethnographic methods and writing. Shweder (1996) argued that “the difference between the premise of qualitative research and the premise of quantitative research is ontological or metaphysical” (p. 178) and that if there is a significant divorce between qualitative and quantitative research it does not as much concern counting versus contextualizing as much as it does worrying over *what* to count and the importance of findings from said counting/measuring. In reviewing and discussing my own methods and the ontological/metaphysical implications therein I would further look to Shweder’s (1994) writing:

Qualitative research exists because (again using Thomas Nagel's argot, in paraphrase) not everything really real is something from no point of view. The real things studied by qualitative researchers must always be identified (and ultimately explained) at least in part by reference to the unobservable subjective experiences (for example, sensations or feelings) and the nondeducible meanings that are on-line in the mental life of particular (types of) situated observers (that is to say, by reference to some "native point of view"). This is so because of the kinds of properties studied in qualitative research are the properties associated with "consciousness." Those properties derive from the (perhaps inherently "mysterious") capacity of "qualitative" beings to symbolize, to form concepts, to be aware, to have experiences, to want, to value, to choose – in other words, to have a mental life... In a sense the aim of ethnography (and of all qualitative research) is to elucidate the way *qualia* are underspecified and/or underdetermined by *quanta*. The aim is to show how something suprasensible and non-deductive (a value, a meaning, a purpose, a rationale) has been historically or culturally added to the world of *quanta* to make the real world more complete. In the world of *quanta*, the world of objectivity, all things can be directly grasped and measured and there is nothing more to a thing beyond what calculation can provide. In a world of *qualia*, measurement and calculation (and even research design) are fine as far as they can go, but they can go only just so far. That is one reason why the real things studied by qualitative researchers (including our own

accounts of those things, which being “accounts” are also *qualia*) must be historicized and contextualized if they are to be understood. (pp. 179-180)

Shweder’s (1994) analysis of the more insightful differences between quantitative and qualitative research apply to my own efforts in method. I actively attempted to utilize methods that speak to *qualia*. In other words, the realness or completeness of our analysis of groups like the Bundy family, sovereign citizens, right-wing political parties, militia groups, etc. must rely heavily on (and be supported by) their own expressions, sensations, values, and rationales. To my great fortune, Haidt’s moral foundations theory could be used complementarily with the qualitative methods of cultural schema analysis. Within psychology, MFT has the composite benefits of being in a language of quantitative methods and analysis, being relevant/current in discussions among those who study moral psychology, and a theoretical heritage sympathetic to ideals of contextualization upon which MFT was built (cf. Shweder, 2003).

The nature of the data as being direct discourse is a departure from traditional approaches to MFT. However, I argue that the data being discourse – especially discourse in embedded and applied contexts – is a particular strength of this research. MFT concerns itself with the actual domains (or set of all triggers) of judgments based in moral foundations. MFT roots itself in evolutionary and adaptive origins of moral foundations as they are utilized by political powers and entities to sway opinions one way or another. The data from my research approaches moral foundations as they are discursively approached in everyday contexts with real moral stakes and consequences. The complexities that arise out of the content analysis of moral foundation from participants’ and responders’ rationales/judgments reflect the complexity of those applied contexts. It is a context that I argue MFT research should interact with more straightforwardly. The statistical power and validity afforded proponents of MFT through items like the MFQ have



been worthwhile and instructive research endeavors, but my research takes the ideas and principles of MFT to the next step in emphasizing the actual domain of moral foundations.

## Analysis

### Results

Table 1 below depicts the raw counts of coded moral foundations from rationales between participants and responders. As will be explored more hereafter, the content of the rationales themselves are essential to understanding the difference in moral frameworks between participants and responders. The raw numerical differences between participant and responder, however, are also informative. Responder (media, government entities, etc.) data skewed heavily toward rationales and judgments rooted in the foundation of harm/care and authority/subversion. Participant rationales and judgments spanned the foundations more evenly, but the foundations of liberty/oppression and harm/care were invoked most frequently. Figure 1, in the supplemental materials, also depicts the quantitative difference in moral foundations between coded rationales between participant and responders.

**Table 1**

*Total Moral Foundations Coded from Participant and Responder Rationales*

| Group       | No. of Foundation Instances |          |         |           |          |           | Total |
|-------------|-----------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------|
|             | Harm                        | Fairness | Loyalty | Authority | Sanctity | Liberty   |       |
| Participant | <b>28</b>                   | 14       | 17      | 16        | 11       | <b>36</b> | 90    |
| Responder   | <b>30</b>                   | 9        | 5       | <b>36</b> | 14       | 9         | 84    |

*Note.* This table depicts the total rationales and judgments from the current dataset coded into moral foundations. The names of each foundation are shortened for spacing. The two most frequent moral foundations for each group are shown in bold.

My analysis of the data centered on the content of moral foundations between participants and responders. The content of those foundations speak to the applied moral nature of Bunkerville and Malheur. Moral foundations theory provides useful categories for viewing and understanding moral judgments; however, real-life moral situations often blur the neater lines of category and classification. Importantly, Haidt posits that there is no question-begging way to hierarchically arrange the possible moral foundations as they inform moral judgments (Flanagan, 2017; Haidt, 2012). In the case of MFT questionnaires the survey as administered provides control of the specificity of the moral quandary/offense in question. Conversely, the events of Bunkerville and Malheur have intricate contexts and whatever specific action is being judged comes with far-reaching moral weight and implications. In coding for themes of moral foundations I found foundations of harm/care, fairness/cheating, authority/subversion, loyalty/betrayal, sanctity/degradation, and liberty/oppression among moral rationales originating from both participants and responders. However, the content of those rationales and judgments were often starkly different. In an applied moral world *what* the offense is matters just as much as *who* is doing the offending.

The importance of entities actively engaging in moral/immoral behavior in relation to MFT's classification raises important questions. Who is doing the harming? Whose authority is being subverted? To whom is which action unfair? In *The Righteous Mind*, for example, Haidt (2012) explains that the foundation of authority/subversion is the largest foundation within MFT:

It is more complex than the other foundations because its modules must look in two directions – up toward superiors and down toward subordinates... The current triggers of the Authority/subversion foundation, therefore, include anything that is construed as an

act of obedience, disobedience, respect, disrespect, submission, or rebellion, with regard to authorities perceived to be legitimate. (p. 168)

The content of my analysis of the data hinge on the word ‘perceived’ in Haidt’s quote above. In providing rationales for the events of actors in Bunkerville and Malheur, both participants and responders are attempting to unpack events while also providing insight into their perceptions of legitimacy and authority (among other important qualifications for other foundations). Continuing the example of authority/subversion responders communicate their moral judgment on the grounds of authority/subversion with important assumptions in mind, namely, that the government is the superordinate authority in the equation. This does not reflect the rationales provided by participant; it’s entirely the opposite of what participants communicate. According to participants the government is subordinate to the ultimate sovereign power in the United States: the people, and more specifically the people’s authority to govern themselves individually and locally. Thus acts of obedience, disobedience, respect, disrespect, submission, and rebellion are all present in responders and participants moral appraisals of Bunkerville/Malheur, but they fundamentally disagree on the subjects of these actions.

### **Floating Signifiers**

The lack of agreement on who is doing what action between participants and responders is one point of disagreement. There is also an interesting lack of consensus between participants and responders on what terms mean what. In analyzing the data I frequently came across terms and phrases which carried significant moral weight without directly pointing to a single moral foundation. Both participants and responders utilized these terms precisely because they can be applied in multiple moral contexts. Terms such as “terrorist”, “trespasser”, “menace”, and “tyrannical” are each moral terms but with polysemic and often ambiguous judgments. In

defending himself against accusations of trespassing on public lands Cliven Bundy asked “Who is the trespasser? Who is the one out here with, like, 200 armed agency [sic] surrounding my home and my range and parts of Clark County? Is Cliven Bundy doing those things? Or is the United States government doing these things?” Here Cliven is demonstrating that when discussing trespassing there is no clear agreement over which trespass is the most morally important to the situation. Additionally, Cliven provides a window into the overlap between moral foundations. Cliven portrays the government as threatening his home and community with armed agents. Within Cliven’s portrayal, I would argue that there are at least four potential moral foundations present. The emphasis on armed agents suggests Cliven judges the potential harm they can cause. The mere presence of the government as an actor speaks to foundations of both authority/subversion and liberty/oppression. Lastly, by grouping his home with other areas of Clark County, Cliven suggests that the threat extends to his community which is typically associated with the foundation of loyalty/betrayal.

Ambivalent terms such as ‘trespasser’ above are empty signifiers. Claude Levi-Strauss (1987, pp. 63-64) suggested the term when describing concepts such as mana which carry undetermined possibilities of signification. In other words where some signifiers contain a specific agreed-upon referent, others do not. The latter are empty (or floating) signifiers. In moral rationales and judgments, the referent can often apply to multiple moral foundations or all moral foundations. In discussing his potential platform as he then ran for governor of Nevada, Ryan Bundy utilized a frequently-occurring empty signifier in discussing rights. “Well, it's not just a speedy trial, but it's all the rights within the Bill of Rights and others. Of course, we could go through each one of them like we just did with the speedy trial there, but they're all being violated.” Similar frequently used terms among participants are the ideas of a tyrannical

government, abuses, injustices, unjust circumstances, and even in the Bundy's informal motto of 'doing whatever it takes'. The term "violated" within Ryan's quote above is morally loaded when coming from the categorization of MFT. It speaks to the judgment but not the *kind* of violation. Of course, within the current classification of MFT the foundation of liberty/oppression seems most appropriate as Ryan is speaking directly of rights, but often the language is left open-ended. One can violate something by hurting it, just as one can violate something by degrading the sanctity of it, etc. For Ryan – and for participants in Bunkerville and Malheur generally – the government's actions in both Bunkerville and Malheur are a violation of rights which is harmful, unfair, subversive, oppressive, a betrayal of the governing forces, and something that degrades the sanctity of a divinely appointed constitution.

That the participants of Bunkerville and Malheur would utilize the broadest foundations possible in their moral appraisals is not surprising when considering moral foundations theory. Haidt emphasized that the diversity of moral foundations utilized by more conservative Americans gave rise to what he called the conservative advantage. Haidt argued that the conservative appeal to voters was in its utilization of the entire possibility of intuitive foundations which, morally, appealed to rural Americans more than a liberal emphasis on care or social justice. Across the moral rationales provided by responders and participants, 21 came from participants and 6 came from responders. Responder's empty signifiers were terminologies such as terrorist, menace, and perceived injustice.

Both participants and responders utilize empty signifiers in both their appraisals and their approach to the reality behind Bunkerville and Malheur. Take, for example, the concept of the constitution. The Bundys and participants in Bunkerville and Malheur give specific mention to the constitution, and among interviews with media or in their court proceedings would often cite

directly from a pocket-version of the constitution they carried on their persons. The constitution, however, is a signifier for different things between participants and responders. In 2016, the Bundys and other individuals who had recently taken over the Malheur wildlife refuge invited locals of Burns, Oregon to attend a meeting at the town hall where they extended invitations for others to tear up their grazing contracts as the Bundys had done. Scott Franklin, a fourth generation rancher of the area had an interaction with Ryan Bundy which explores this divide:

SF: I'm going to ask you a question. Are we a nation of laws? No? So we just break the laws all the time and we're okay.

RB: We are a nation of laws, and this is the one that's being broken [pulls out pocket constitution]

SF: Please. So there's the constitution in your hand that's as it's written, and then there's the Constitution as you guys define it and argue it, and that's what you've been doing. But in the end, who decides what the Constitution says? The Supreme Court.

RB: (at the same time as 'The supreme court') The people.

Here, Scott Franklin is alluding to the specificity of the Bundy's interpretation of what the constitution means. For responders within the data the Bundy's interest in the constitution is ironic, as it gives authority to extensions of the state which enforce the law and manage public lands. For participants in Malheur and Bunkerville the constitution is a divinely-appointed document that interacts and enchants their worldview. Frequently the Bundy's would assert that the constitution was "hanging by a thread", and this motivated their actions of protest in both Bunkerville and Malheur. Leah Sottile interpreted the Bundy's relationship to the constitution in the following way:

“Ryan Bundy can recite the Constitution word for word, but it's not simply memorization. His interpretation of it is his own, based on a very close reading of the text, he questions every capital letter and piece of punctuation. Most of us let the Supreme Court do our constitutional scholarship for us, and we agree to abide by their decisions, not Ryan. He dissects the literal framework of it, comes to his own conclusion, and refuses to budge... But as Ryan talks, you see this other side of the family, this darkness, this paranoia and suspicion and a deep, deep arrogance that they are absolutely right and the other side is absolutely wrong, and that that belief gives the family permission to bend facts to fit their purposes.”

The constitution is an example of a signifier that has diverging interpretations and meanings for responders like Leah Sottile and participants like Ryan Bundy. For participants, however, a correct interpretation of the constitution is, in part, what justifies their actions. If participants' interpretation of the constitution is taken seriously then their actions at Bunkerville and Malheur are based off of an internal logic (not lack therein). In other words, participants at Bunkerville and Malheur professed a worldview which directly engages with the efficacious collapse of American society. And the certainty of that collapse hinges on proper defense of the constitution as an inspired document (per the white horse prophecy). The difference in interpretation of a signifier like the constitution is an important example of what distinguishes moral judgments between participants and responders made on foundations such as liberty/oppression.

In my analysis I will take each of the emerging themes of moral foundations from the data, and discuss the important distinctions between their content. I will explore the foundations in order of their frequency between participants and responders. As is the case with floating

signifiers, the nature of harm, authority, group-loyalty, and all other important concepts intrinsic to MFT are very much interpretable and are expressed in particular ways.

### **Harm/Care**

Responder and participant rationales rooted in harm/care emphasized judgments on the basis of harm caused. Within each foundation there is a possibility of evaluation on grounds of a moral virtue or a moral vice. In the case of harm/care moral evaluations can be made on harm done to something/someone or one's obligation for caring for something/someone. In light of the particularly violent end to the Malheur wildlife occupation, participants and responders framed their moral judgments and rationales in terms of harm done more than care neglected. The judgments and rationales provided by responders tended to emphasize inherent harm from breaking a law and violence by threatening.

Responder's usage of the official response of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the Malheur wildlife refuge occupation in early 2016 reflects some of the association between illegal action and harm. Journalist Tad Walch (2016) in his article *LDS Church condemns seizure of Oregon federal facilities by militia citing Mormon beliefs*, quoted church authorities: "This armed occupation can in no way be justified on a scriptural basis. We are privileged to live in a nation where conflicts with government or private groups can — and should — be settled using peaceful means, according to the laws of the land" (para. 2). Walch (2016) further commented that leaders of the Bundy's own faith have discouraged "all-consuming patriotism" (para. 21) and suggested the Bundys were among those "... who are participating in or provisioning private armies and making private preparations for armed conflict" (para. 22). Walch's association between lawfulness and harm is explicit. While having the benefit of challenging the doctrinal legitimacy of the Malheur wildlife occupation, the



language of conflict, peaceful means, and accordance to laws of the land is clear. For responders, the Bundy's lack of observing laws often *is* the harm that supports moral appraisals and explanations of the events of Bunkerville and Malheur.

Frequently the association between arms and lawlessness was housed in metaphors of cowboys. One responder stated that the Bundy's ostensible victory in Bunkerville was because of their potential to harm: "They won by playing cowboy, bringing bigger and more guns to a shootout... It was like the Old West, but where the outlaws told everyone that they were the heroes." Leah Sottile suggested that those drawn to the Bundy's were "people who feel like they've been wronged by the government, people who are eager for a gun battle and are willing to die." Another participant commented that "At Malheur, there were armed men patrolling a government facility. They took their guns up a fire tower and dug battle trenches in case the FBI tried to come in. But in court, the fact that all those things are illegal, that didn't matter."

In their appraisals of events, participants see the empty signifiers as a call to violence because of the inherent harm caused by breaking the law and because of the militia's preference for keeping weaponry. Ryan Bussey, a responder, stated that "[The Bundys] get the benefit of all this violence or all this intimidation without having to pay claim to it, because it's for them and with them, but it's not of them." The Bundys in both Bunkerville and Malheur mention that their motto is to "do whatever it takes", but for responders this is a call for more harm. If Cliven really was focused only on land rights, maybe his movement wouldn't be so scary... But Cliven's marching orders aren't that clear. They're up for interpretation by each person sitting in that room, and he's telling them to do whatever it takes... the Bundys promote violent actions just by talking about public lands.".

For participants, the aftermath of Bunkerville and Malheur are an example of what harm the western land rights movement is capable of doing to those compelled to action. The court cases are puzzling outliers of a straightforward case mishandled by federal prosecutors in Nevada, and a one-off exception of an acquittal in Oregon. Responders argue that the cost of the leadership behind participants in Bunkerville and Malheur is steep and saturated in harm to those outside of Bundys: “Whatever it takes is perhaps the Bundy’s most dangerous message. It motivates their followers and justifies any action. ‘Whatever it takes’ incites people to violence. Look what’s happened because of it. LaVoy Finicum heard whatever it takes at Bundy ranch, ripped up his grazing contract, drove to Oregon, and tried to pull a gun on police officers at a traffic stop... All the men from Malheur and Bunkerville who are found guilty are in jail, some of them for years, if not the rest of their lives, because they were willing to do anything.” Within the data responders framed the events of Bunkerville and Malheur in terms of their legality, and expressed judgments rooted in harm on the fact that participants were bearing arms and thus threatening government entities and others in their law-breaking.

The content from participants’ evaluations based in the foundation of harm/care emphasized the harm the government has been inflicting on ranchers’ ways of living, the threats and escalating actions from government agents bearing arms, and the death of LaVoy Finicum. Participants would, understandably, provide rationales and judgments that would emphasize their commitment to nonviolence while simultaneously emphasizing the government’s threatening presence.

The perception of harm on the Bundy’s ways of life played a key role in the outcome of their court proceedings in Oregon. Government prosecutors emphasized the Bundy’s infractions of the law in trespassing, depredation of federal property, and conspiracy to obstruct federal

officers. The Bundys emphasized depicting their family struggles, the difficulty of making a life for themselves in the American West, and the overt threatening behavior on that way of life the government presented in both their managing of public lands and their response to protest “long trails of abuses”. One juror reported in summarizing the case and their deliberation: “This case is about the death of rural America. And that has got me thinking. If your farmers don't have the ability necessarily to prosper in those venues in which they're going to raise, whether it's logging or animal stuff, it just got me thinking a lot about that.” Ultimately the message of harm to the Bundys and rural Americans’ way of living resonated enough for the Bundy’s acquittal.

Frequently participants described the events of Malheur as inherently nonviolent. Some would emphasize their rights to protest and bear arms, while others would altogether utilize terms such as “nonviolent”, “peaceful”, and even “safe place to exchange ideas”. Participants phrased their own utilization of firearms as an extension of their rights to bear arms, while questioning and judging agents of the government in their usage of firearms. Cliven Bundy in recounting the events of Bunkerville stated that government agents “stuck their guns down our throats”. An important interaction occurred between LaVoy Finicum and a reporter who asked him “If [government forces] come in here and try to arrest you, they point a gun at you, they try to put cuffs on you. How far are you willing to take this?” to which Mr. Finicum responded “Well, Don’t point a gun at me. You don’t point against [sic] them unless you’re going to shoot them. That’s the first thing you’re taught. It’s don’t point guns at people.” In hindsight we can glean some unfortunate foreshadowing from Finicum’s response. His judgment is not rooted in the possession of firearms as much as aiming and intent.

LaVoy Finicum’s death became a significant point of rationale and judgment for participants in Malheur. The surviving leadership of Malheur viewed Finicum’s death as

premeditated murder, and an intentional message of harm. “They had to kill LaVoy. It's not that they accidentally kill him where he just happened to be in the right position in the wrong spot. They had to kill LaVoy. LaVoy had a message out there that they didn't like. They had to kill him, and they did it the fastest and easiest way they could do it.” Ryan Bundy asserted that government agents called him prior to and claimed they would kill him and that “this will be the next Waco or Ruby Ridge”. Other participants claimed that LaVoy’s death instilled terror among them, and increased their paranoia that the government was targeting them for additional violence.

The data of what harm is legitimate harm and the actors on either end of a harmful action are contested ideas between participants and responders. Responders capitalized on the harm of breaking law as well as the potential threats of carrying firearms. Participants capitalized on the threatening presence of the government as well as the actual violence in the case of LaVoy Finicum’s death. This trend of different emphasis on actors/offenses continues between participants and responders throughout rationales and judgments coded into moral foundation categories.

### **Authority/Subversion**

As stated before, Haidt (2012) views authority/subversion as a complex moral foundation that is bidirectional. The foundation of authority/subversion accounts for moral judgments of those in power or above a given agent as well as those beneath who may be acting out of insubordination, etc. Participants and responders centralize their rationales and judgments on the role of the federal government in relation to both Bunkerville and Malheur. The western land rights movement is intrinsically concerned with the nature of public land management, local rights, and the role of federal government in the management/use of land. Rationales and

judgments rooted in authority/subversion were the most frequent foundation invoked by responders and the second-most invoked by participants.

From the data on responder rationales and judgments, responders emphasized the actions of participants as particularly subversive to the social structure of society provided by a federal government and its intrinsic authority. The subversion is explained as being motivated by desire for control, and is most frequently spoken of in relation to law. Leah Sotteli utilizes a significant portion of her coverage of Bunkerville and Malheur in an attempt to understand the complicated relationship between participants and the government. She argues that a combination of sovereign citizen ideology, cultural government mistrust stemming from the atomic era, specific interpretations of Mormon doctrine, and flaws such as greed within the Bundy family motivate the leadership of Bunkerville and Malheur to resist the government as they did; “Sovereign citizens believe they are independent nations unto themselves. And when you're your own nation, you don't have to abide by the country's laws. Federal courts aren't valid. Federal judges aren't real judges. Things like taxes and grazing fees to federal agencies don't apply to you.

In the aftermath of Malheur, President Trump utilized his executive authority to pardon the Hammonds. The Hammonds were charged with arson, and this sparked the momentum for participants to congregate at Malheur. Trump’s pardon was viewed as subversive to social structure despite originating from the then executive branch of the government. One responder evaluated the pardon of the Hammonds as sanction for illegal activity: “[it is] ridiculous and disgraceful that the commander in chief is now providing those who break the law with what will be interpreted as a rallying cry for future unlawful action.” Here, as in the evaluations based on harm/care, responders root their moral judgments in relation to the concept of lawfulness. According to responders’ judgments, participants’ behavior was subversive to the authority of

the government and that a lack of follow-up on penalizing that behavior would act as an invitation for future subversion via lawbreaking.

Responder judgments focused in on the concept of control. According to responder explanations and judgments, the Bundys issue is “not about cattle. It’s not even about land rights or freedom, at least the way most people think about it. It’s about the lengths people will go to to create a reality they can control.” Another journalist responder stated that Cliven Bundy in influencing Bunkerville and Malheur was “seizing power, rather than working with what he’s got.” According to some responders “The fight has become about how much power you can grab, regardless of right and wrong. Cliven’s just better at it than anyone else.” At the heart of authority/subversion the question for participants is one of legitimate domination. Control of land and resources by the federal government is agreed-upon socially and subjected the proper checks and balances. Responders judge the efforts of participants to gain control of lands into public hands as subversive to the broader collective authority that the federal government represents. Often this judgment comes as a flat rejection, responder Aaron Weiss claimed that “Cliven Bundy believes he is grazing his cows on his land, and he’s going to claim it’s not federal government land – it’s actually county land, but it’s not.”

The fundamental difference in content of evaluations between participants and responders on grounds of authority/subversion is over the framing of power dynamics between a federal government and its collective citizens. For participants the issue of government overreach is enmeshed in a lack of understanding about the ultimate authority in the United States. In his closing self-defense in Portland, Oregon Ryan Bundy claimed that “The people have to insist that the government is not our master... They are our servants”. Participants view the government as attempting to gain more power over locals and individuals. As such, the events of

Bunkerville and Malheur were protests about the government's confusion over its own authority. Cliven Bundy takes this disagreement as far as asserting that he doesn't "recognize the United States government as even existing." And Cliven further voices his issue with grazing fees which sparked the standoff in Bunkerville as follows: "I would be happy to pay my grazing fees if I hold grazing fees to the proper government. That brings us to the point of who does own this land? How does the federal government own 90% of the state of Nevada? I thought we were sovereign state. I am the manager of this land because of my right."

Participants viewed the events of Bunkerville as a demonstration of their local and sovereign rights, and evaluated the government response in Malheur as a violent response to the truth of their message. Participants' rationales and judgments about authority/subversion reflect a less reactive and immediate judgment than harm/care. Participants approach the issue of authority with explicit reasoning about the history of land management and the power the federal government currently has over public land. The Bundy's convey their mistrust over the government publicly in terms of the service that government was meant to provide: "as [the government] changed, you realize that they were now trying to manage you out of your business rather than provide a service they were supposed to provide."

In both Bunkerville and Malheur participants spoke frequently in terms of local interests and authority. In Bunkerville, Cliven Bundy claimed that the federal government had no right to collect his grazing fees, and while he would eventually refuse to pay the fees outright, Cliven initially attempted to pay some of his fines directly to Clark County, Nevada. Cliven publicly declared that he has "no contact with the federal government" and would regularly proclaim that the federal government has "no jurisdiction over criminal matters". In Malheur participants often communicated their interest in working with, and their deference to, locals in Burns, Oregon.

While most of their evaluations and rationales will be covered more closely in the foundation of loyalty/betrayal, it is important to note that participants express authority as something that is legitimate when held locally or as an individual.

The Bundy's and other participants in Malheur experienced direct validation in the results of the judicial process in Oregon. Responders viewed the jury's verdict as a completely unexpected surprise. When viewing the differences between participants' and responder's utilization of authority/subversion as a foundation for moral evaluation, responder's surprise is in the dynamic movement of conversation away from law or power to the Bundy's argument about the perception of land use. Kevin Sally, a Portland-based attorney reflected on the Bundy's trial saying "...the more I thought about it, I thought it also, to some degree, kind of presupposes the answer to what a lot of this case was about in at least some people's mind, which is, do citizens kind of have a right to object and disagree with what the government does with land that it considers to be its own?" The system 1, intuitionist, evaluation of responders that illegal activity is wrong because it is subversive proved to be less important to the judicial proceedings in the case of the Bundys.

### **Liberty/Oppression**

As explored previously, the foundation of liberty/oppression was considered to be somewhat provisional by Haidt (2012). Iyer et al. (2012) developed liberty/oppression as a response to libertarian feedback in surveys who felt that the five foundations didn't account for their morals, and to account for differences between fairness and proportional equality. A moral foundation of liberty/oppression in terminology is present in many moral judgments and rationales from participants in Bunkerville and Malheur. However, unlike other foundations the perception of the government as oppressive by participants is often housed in terms of other



foundations. For example, when a participant comments that “we need guns to protect ourselves from the tyrannical government” the dual foundations of harm/care and liberty/oppression are present. The government was a key actor for considering and evaluating the events of Bunkerville and Malheur between both participants and responders. Responders emphasized the authority that the government has through law. Participants emphasize government overreach as a hierarchically superordinate rationale and judgment in both the cattle disputes of Bunkerville, and the occupation-protest of Malheur.

Crowe (2021) argues that the libertarianism of the Bundy’s is exceptional precisely because of the radical action taken against the government. Crowe further argues that the libertarian constitutionalism of the Bundy’s is “one that stakes out a small-government position that regards almost any federal action as federal overreach and views nearly all federal control as federal oppression” (2021, p. 53). Crowe argues that, in holding both constitutionalism or traditionalism in tandem with radical behavior, the Bundy’s radical libertarian constitutionalism “both speaks in the name of the most traditional substantive values of the political order and, at the same time, seeks the displacement- by violence if necessary- of the basic procedural norms of that order” (2021, p. 54). Crowe’s analysis is reflected within my own data on the Bundy’s and participants’ rationales/judgments.

Participants viewed violation of rights as oppressive, and expressed that such violation both justified and called-for a disobedient response. Ryan Bundy, in an interview, claimed “When such laws are made that begin to violate our rights, our privileges and freedoms, we are under no obligation to be subject to them or to the laws that are in violation... in other words the federal government does not have jurisdiction over criminal matters.” Participants such as Annette Fuentes viewed government efforts as explicit and oppressive attempts to control the

United States population: “With Cliven and Carol and all of them. It was wrong that was done to them. It was truly wrong. And they were facing life in prison. The Bundy stood for their rights. They were locked up for two years. My God, this should have outraged people. Two years of their life gone. For what? Yeah. Because you have a government that wants to control everything.”

Concepts such as freedom, liberty, rights, and tyranny are at the apex of participant’s evaluations. The Bundy’s frequently express that as the higher-order reason for all that they do: “We’re after freedom. We’re after some liberty... my statement to the American people is I’ll do whatever it takes to gain our liberties and freedom back.” The government’s response to participants’ actions often is taken as evidence of tyranny and malfeasance, hence participants’ expressions of being “100% willing to lay [their lives] down to fight against tyranny in this country.”

Responder discourse that invoked ideas of liberty and oppression were fundamentally different than participants. First, responders frequently provided rationales of participants’ behaviors on grounds of liberty/oppression but did not often make explicit judgments on those grounds. In other words, responders understood the importance of liberty/oppression as thematic to participants, and housed their explanation of participants in similar terms, but did not utilize liberty/oppression as grounds for judging participants. Second, responders viewed the oppression and injustices communicated by participants as largely epiphenomenal. Frequently participants utilized terms such as “perceived”, “imagined”, or “believed” prior to evaluative terms such as “injustices”. Responders viewed the perceived oppression as an aspect of paranoia: “Cliven and Ryan Bundy brought up this idea a lot. When I talked to them, Cliven told me the government was out to get him and they’d stop at nothing to ruin him.”

Some responder rationales of participants' behavior attempted to sympathize. Occasionally responders would, when considering the Bundy's family history or the difficulty of ranching in the American West, express sentiments such as: "I get how [Waco and Ruby Ridge] looks like the government is coming after folks it can't control, how it's willing to shoot the people it deems dangerous." or "I can see now how if you're upset with the government or felt like you couldn't trust them, you might buy into everything, Cliven says." Ultimately attempts at understanding the more complex motivations behind participants' behaviors in Bunkerville and Malheur do not view perceived oppression as sufficient reason to redeem harm against the law or subversion against the federal government. Leah Sotteli arguably aimed to be the most understanding (and comprehensive) in her attempts to report on the nuance behind participants' motivations. However, even as an investigative journalist she does not go as far as claiming empathy: "...even though they aren't really victims of anything more than changing times, their message is desperate. The end of the world is near, and that desperation both justifies violence and resonates with other desperate people. This is not empathy, really, or sympathy, but I feel like I finally understand all the different pieces..."

Participants' elaborate views on liberty/oppression coupled with responders' skepticism over claims of oppression shed light on the complicated nature of liberty/oppression within proponents of MFT. Haidt offers the insight that when the first five foundations were tested in earnest, complaints about liberty, freedom, or tyranny being unrepresented could be explained by the inherent size/complexity of authority/subversion. Similar to the concept of empty signifiers, participants invoked liberty and oppression as open-ended evaluations of the immorality behind the government's actions. However, Liberty/oppression as a moral foundation shared an openness to invite or invoke other moral foundations as well as being something culturally and

circumstantially significant in Bunkerville and Malheur. The strength of my data is that a specified foundation of liberty/oppression, made in response to libertarian ideology within American politics, speaks directly to the motivations and actions in both Bunkerville and Malheur.

### **Sanctity/Degradation**

The foundation of Sanctity/Degradation differs in content between participants and responders similar to Liberty/Oppression. Sanctity, be it in the constitution, in rights, or in specific Latter-day Saint doctrine, is a moral good among participants of Bunkerville and Malheur. As a moral good, it was utilized a foundation upon which to make moral judgments and rationales. Responders keyed into the importance of religious sentiment and sanctity as a source of explaining participants' behaviors, but did not (just as was the case with liberty/oppression) utilize it for their own moral judgments. Primarily, participant discourses that invoked themes of sanctity or degradation were in attempts to situate the importance of religious motivation relative to other ostensible contributing factors.

Participants in Bunkerville and Malheur framed their motivations and judgments in both the sanctity of the constitution as well as the importance of personal revelation. This moral foundation was among the least explicitly invoked among participants and responders. Despite lack of exact mention, looking to divinity and religious sentiments as important to understanding the motivations behind Bunkerville and Malheur is appropriate. Sanctity enchanted and surrounded participants' sentiments towards the constitution and towards their own responses to perceived calls-to-arms. Ryan Bundy, in answering how much his family's faith played into their decision to stand up against the government, claimed "Very much so, because, we do believe that the our founding fathers were also inspired to create the Constitution that they did."

The message of participants about oppression, government overreach, or mismanagement of public lands was venerated as an issue of truth, not opinion. Frequently participants would discuss the events of Bunkerville and Malheur as the government's inappropriate response to a truth that has a sanctity of its own. After the aftermaths of the Nevada trial Cliven Bundy exclaimed to reporters "We're not done with this. If the federal government comes out after us again, we will definitely tell them the truth.", and further elaborated that the government's motivations to kill LaVoy Finicum were "to put a stop to the truth and the message we were sharing."

Participants framed their own personal motivations for Bunkerville and Malheur as responses to individual revelation from God. LaVoy Finicum, communicated that while his motivations for being at the Malheur wildlife refuge occupation were not "religiously motivated action" that God did tell him to go to the refuge. Another participant explained that "when the spirit speaks, it often comes in a still, small voice where it's more of a feeling, more of a thought, and you realize what you have to do. The diversity of religions present at Bunkerville and Malheur reflect the reality that one single interpretation of doctrine or scripture was not particularly important to participants in order to behave as they did. The Bundy's specific cultural and historical connection the Nay Book and the white horse prophecy explain their own motives, while rationales grounded in other moral foundations likely led to the cohesion of participants with differing faiths. In addressing the white horse prophecy, Ryan Bundy claimed "Whether the Church calls it doctrine or not, we've got quotes from several prophets reiterating that. And what the Church's official position on it or not, I don't know. I take the words of the prophets, both modern and previous ones, seriously, and that's what I've read. That's what I've heard. That's what I believe." Ryan's belief in the government as representing a real threat to the

constitution qualifies his and others' concerns that the constitution is, in fact, "hanging by a thread" as prophesied.

Responder rationales of Bunkerville and Malheur concluded that sanctity only played a role in the events in as much as religious motivation was being conflated with political motivation: "the Bundys are saying that they are defending the constitution, which means they're defending God. This explains why the Bundys never really waiver when they talk about their ideas." To responders, religious motivation was an emboldening or catalyzing factor in the events of Bunkerville/Malheur: "their religion is telling them they're right. If God was on your side, you'd be pretty confident too. But it's more than simple Sunday school stories. The Bundys see themselves as fighting for the future of the country, which is currently hanging in the balance, just as they were told it would be."

Responders view the utilization of scripture and its ostensible sanctity as a problematic behavior by participants. Responders would claim that scriptural invocation by participants was largely "sought justification" or "permission to disregard the government". As was the case with their attempts at explaining events on the foundation of liberty/oppression, responders attempted to engage with the experienced realm of sanctity but did not house their own judgments therein. In their explanations, however, responders often make conclusions without sufficient evidence. For example, Matt Harris spoke with a journalist and explained that "they have this apocalyptic worldview that Jesus is going to come again to claim his kingdom. As loyal as God's servants there are certain things that we have to do to prepare the way for Jesus' millennial return, including saving the constitution and the republic. If we have to. And this is how the Bundys approach this." Based on my own analysis of the data concerning evaluations and rationales provided by participants including the Bundys, I would argue that it's not abundantly clear if the

Bundys are acting out of an interest to expedite Christ's return or prevent the conditions that proceed it; Participants rationales for their own behaviors often spoke of cessation and prevention, and generally eschewed specific predictions on scriptural grounds. It is evident that the White Horse prophecy plays into the internal logic behind the Bundy's ideology and actions. However, their own communications emphasize a desire to correct overreach and prevent further abuses, not usher in the end-times.

### **Loyalty/Betrayal**

Participants and Responders utilized the foundation of loyalty/betrayal in explicit references to local communities' interests or desires as a moral basis of judging or explaining the events of Bunkerville and Malheur. Proponents of MFT assert that the foundation of loyalty/betrayal goes beyond agreements/arrangements and taps into an evolutionary predisposition for behaviors that are consistent with groups to which an individual belongs. The importance of local authority and approval was of emerging importance to participants in Bunkerville, and was an explicit concern/rationale in Malheur. Participants argued for their legitimate interest in accommodating to local opinions, as well as restoring dominion over land to local populations. Responders' invocation of loyalty/betrayal was typically on the grounds to judge participants' rationales as incomplete or inconsistent.

Across all foundations, responders gave rationales and judgments on the basis of loyalty/betrayal fewer than any of the other moral foundations. Responders quoted official statements from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or criticisms from other Latter-day Saint members to suggest that participants' scriptural or sanctity-oriented messages were more fringe and unrepresented by a majority within their faith. It was utilized as an indirect judgment on the division within Mormons as to the legitimacy of the Bundy's and others'

behaviors in Bunkerville and Malheur. Similar techniques were used to claim that the Bundy's argument that they have rights to the land by dint of the time their family has lived generation to generation in Nevada "And from what I found, it's only by polygamy that Cliven can selectively find ancestors who've been in this area for so long. To make Cliven's claims true, you have to accept a family history built on plural marriage, which means incest and child brides and a lot of things that our society has decided aren't legal or moral." Here responders outline the deviance of the Bundy's family history in relation to sentiments across the broad public of the United States as well as challenging their local authority as the product of generations of residents in Nevada.

Participants in Bunkerville and Malheur expressed interest in restoring the power to communities across the American West, particularly in governing and managing public lands. Participants explicitly claimed they wanted the public to be more involved, and to "reclaim their resources. Participants challenged the legitimacy of the federal government's claims to public lands, saying that it belonged to the people by "right of years of productive beneficial use". This was particularly present in rationales surrounding Malheur in which some participants claimed that those being charged with occupying the wildlife refuge were "guilty of a community service act". In early January, 2016, Ryan Bundy told Oregon Public Broadcasting reporters "This is their county – we can't be here and force this on them... if they don't want us to retrieve their rights, and if the people tell us to leave, we'll leave". This sentiment reflected participants' strategies to hold meetings in city halls and to encourage others to do as they had done.

Participants' attempts to demonstrate solidarity with local native American communities while simultaneously attempting to demonstrate the government's mismanagement of resources demonstrate the nuance of group legitimacy and loyalty among participants. Leaders like Ryan Bundy, Ammon Bundy, and LaVoy Finicum were public in showcasing the state of the wildlife



sanctuary in tending to Native American artifacts. Malheur Wildlife refuge is located on land that is designated to the native Paiute people. Early responders noted a comparison between participants' stated problems with the federal government and the Paiute people: "They talk about their motives, about wanting to continue to live as they have, to provide for their families. These are the very same claims native people made a hundred years ago as they were being forcibly removed from their homelands or being confined to much smaller land," At Malheur occupiers released videos showing loose collections of native American artifacts, stating that the government had left them in this disarray, and expressed an interest in meeting with local tribe leaders to return the artifacts to the tribe directly.

The response of Paiute authorities and members of the Paiute nation, however, were not overwhelmingly sympathetic to participants at Malheur. The Paiute response expressed some similarity that land was the primary concern for participants, but outside of that their actions were overwhelmingly condemned. The tribe claimed that participants were "desecrating sacred property" with their presence. Tribal response emphasized that the sites were protected, and that the federal government's management of the land did not prevent their use. One member claimed: "This land belonged to the Paiute people as wintering grounds long before the first settlers, ranchers and trappers ever arrived here... We haven't given up our rights to the land. We have protected sites there. We still use the land." Another member protested the occupation on the grounds of sanctity/degradation: "Imagine if I went to Washington, D.C., to the cemetery where all the military are and dug a hole and made a latrine out of it, like they did to my people's burial grounds... that's the only way I can explain it to non-natives."

Participants in Malheur continued a message of solidarity with groups they assessed as understanding their resistance to oppression. In a Portland-based protest aimed to garner support

for participants in Malheur, Nate Seim spoke publicly to a gathered crowd about participants' solidarity among participants and other oppressed demographics: "We're not separate, we're not divided. They're abusing the black community the same as they're abusing the patriots... They're abusing the Indians and stealing their land exactly the same." Participant's message of resisting "authoritarian bureaucracy" at the local level even extended beyond Malheur into the Black Lives Matter protests of 2019-2020. After Malheur, Ammon Bundy's political efforts became more localized to Boise, Idaho where he lives with his family. Ammon initially expressed solidarity (to the surprise of many media responders) with the message of defending the police. Ammon Bundy claimed "It was the law enforcement who took my family to prison for two years and lied about almost everything, and it will be the law enforcement that strips this people of their unalienable rights... I am much more concerned about tyranny than I am anarchy. I can handle anarchy, but I don't want to have to go against a standing army to try to defend my liberties." Ammon has since altered his official stance in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement, but the initial overlap in ideology was over the importance of local authority and intervention before police or federal.

Participants utilize the foundation of loyalty/betrayal in specific ways. They would frequently express deference to a local authority whilst decrying a superordinate federal authority. This specific definition of what constitutes a legitimate in-group (i.e. local over federal) is precisely what differentiates participants in Bunkerville and Malheur with media and federal responders. It is surprising, however, that responders did not utilize a foundation of loyalty/betrayal more frequently when explaining the events of Bunkerville and Malheur or making moral judgments of participants' behaviors therein. Participants would claim that their critics would utilize the term terrorist, or the derogatory moniker 'ya'llqeida'. However, in my

own analysis, I found no systematic mention or judgment of disloyalty to country by responders. More frequently, responders concerns of disloyalty were housed in a language that, as explored previously, made more explicit mention of harm done to law (foundation of harm/care) or subversion to recognized federal authority (foundation of authority/subversion).

### **Fairness/Cheating**

Haidt (2012) views triggers of the fairness/cheating foundation as contextualized politically within events that embody reciprocity or cheating. He further contextualizes differences between political left and right in relation to fairness and cheating as such: “Everyone cares about fairness, but there are two major kinds. On the left, fairness often implies equality, but on the right it means proportionality...” (pp. 160-161). Within my own data, evaluations and rationales related to the foundation of fairness/cheating were heavily grounded in the particulars of Bunkerville and Malheur as well as the events which followed. Participants’ judgments surrounded the changing role of government as unfair, actions of the government as dishonest/unfair in courtroom contexts, and fairness as an extension of ownership or proportional use of land. Responders’ judgments and rationales centralized on the unfair advantage of participants’ protests as majority-white men, punishment for breaking a law as fair consequence, and unfair/uneven observation of law.

Participants, and especially leaders of Bunkerville and Malheur, expressed their distaste for the government in its changing role towards ranchers and locals of the American West. The Bundys express that the government was ostensibly created to be of benefit to the American population, but that through bureaucracy, law, and nefarious interest in power/dominion that benefit has been replaced. The judgment from participants is that the government is unfairly approaching its obligation to ranchers with taxpayer’s resources at its aid, Cliven Bundy claimed

that the central issue to Bunkerville was “our federal government taking over private properties adversely or using the taxpayers dollars after they ruined the ranchers to buy it.” Participants’ argument that the government is managing ranchers out of their business instead of providing services to help contains elements of multiple foundations: harm, subversion, oppression, etc. Participants occasionally use arguments of fairness/cheating to accentuate their more frequent concerns about harm or oppression.

Participants viewed the government as acting unfairly or in a duplicitous way in both communications and behaviors. Participants expressed that the government’s response to their protests were unfair: bringing in more weapons and surrounding/surveilling them. Government actors in Bunkerville and Malheur played into the perception of participants that the government is dependably unfair or clandestine in its behavior. After a phone conversation with a government agent in which Ammon Bundy claims he was told he would be killed he told reporters in an interview: “I called him back the next morning to see if he had recorded the phone call, and he said no, he hadn't recorded the phone call. Well, guess what? That recording found its way to court, which, again he lied. They always lie. The government always lied. They always lie. You can count on it, okay? But what was interesting about the recording is that only about half the conversation was there.”

The lack of transparency in the government’s behavior ultimately led to Cliven Bundy’s acquittal in the court cases of Nevada surrounding Bunkerville. Federal prosecutors withheld evidence that would make the Bundys look more favorable to a jury. This behavior further demonstrated some of the validity behind the Bundy’s and other participants’ skepticism about the government’s willingness to behave fairly or honestly. Given the government’s behavior (surveillance, informants/confederates, withholding evidence in court, etc.) the Bundy’s belief

that the government would (unfairly) “create a situation in which they would be justified” or “create a situation where it looked like [the Bundys] attacked them”. This “creating a scenario” speaks to participants’ belief in the unreliability of the government. More even-handed responders concluded that in Nevada “prosecutors broke the rules, and that fed into the Bundy’s paranoid suspicions”. In the case of the Bundys and participants in Bunkerville and Malheur, paranoia may be an inappropriate term as the persecution and unfairness was not a delusion but the reality of the situation.

Participants’ rationales around their claim to public lands speaks to Haidt’s (2012) analysis above, that right-leaning moral judgments on the grounds of fairness/cheating are about proportionality. Haidt claims that conservatives in America who make moral claims on the foundation of fairness/cheating believe “people should be rewarded in proportion to what they contribute, even if that guarantees unequal outcomes.” (p. 161) This line of reasoning partially explains how participants would phrase their claims to public lands. Cliven originally claimed that his authority over public land came from years of “productive beneficial use”. The rationale of fairness as an extension of ownership also applies in their appeal to the local Paiute nation of Oregon mentioned above in relation the foundation of loyalty/betrayal. Participants in Malheur phrased their interest in having Native Americans visit and collect native artifacts in a language of rightful or fair ownership. Participants publicly called for tribesman to come claiming “We want to make sure these things are returned to their rightful owner”, “The rightful owners need to come back and claim their belongings”, or explaining their presence as being “so people can reclaim their resources.” This line of rationale suggests that an ethical reasoning based on fairness/proportionality was not something participants in Malheur extended exclusively to themselves, but to the Natives who had used the land alongside ranchers.

Responder rationales and judgments coded in the foundation fairness/cheating argued that the participants in Bunkerville and Malheur were simultaneously acting off of unfair advantage and receiving fair consequences to their behavior. Responders emphasize the fact that overwhelmingly participants in Bunkerville and Malheur were white males. Some participants argued that the message of the oppression from the Bundys and other participants was not taking into account inherent systemic unfairness that is generally advantageous to people like participants; Annette Magnus a responder from Battle-Born Progress in Nevada argued “this notion of somehow the white man has been wronged in this country, and so they're playing into that kind of fear mongering and, frankly, hate mongering that's kind of prevalent among that militia types.” Magnus further argued that the myth of unfairness, despite participants’ inherent benefits from societal imbalance “emboldened” participants to “do things no one else but them could get away with.” Other participants drew parallels between government responses to difference kinds of protests, suggesting that protestors of pipelines across Native land are met with arguably more violence than the events of Bunkerville and Malheur.

Responder judgments more consistently emphasized that participants in Bunkerville and Malheur appeared to be “picking and choosing which laws to follow” and that participants’ arguments “pick selective details from actual facts and tell the story they want to tell”. Within the data, responder rationale suggested/argued that participants had an unfair or impartial outlook on their obligation to be subject to law and their observation of said law. The ultimate example of fairness and consequences brought forward by responders, however, came from the death of LaVoy Finicum. Greg Bretzing, special agent over FBI in Portland, defended the decision of agents to use lethal force by suggesting “actions have consequences”. For responders the context of Finicum’s death (having a loaded gun on his person, reaching for his jacket pocket, nearly

hitting an agent with his vehicle, attempting to pass the roadblock) qualified as actions with unforeseen but potentially fair consequences. The law acts as a key and qualitative distinct component within responder rationales/judgments. Based on the foundation of fairness/cheating, the law is something by which equality can be judged; according to responders participants are simply facing fair consequences of not acting with that equality in mind.

### **Content of Foundations**

Across all foundations the content between what elements, actors, or actions should serve as the basis for moral judgment are fundamentally different between participants and responders. This suggests that some of the unifying categorizations of moral judgments within MFT diverge and break-down in interesting ways when moral judgment is as applied as it has been for the events of Bunkerville and Malheur. Careful analysis raises important contextual questions from moral judgments. Categorically, participants and responders all argue and assess the situation as involving fairness, harm, oppression, etc. However, as my analysis indicates, important contextual and relational questions remain unanswered by simply assigning a shared category of moral evaluation type. What constitutes fairness? Who is, in actuality, receiving the most harm from whom? Is oppression legitimate, or is it perceived oppression unsubstantiated in reality? Careful analysis of the content of the moral foundations supporting participants' and responders' rationales and judgments beg the question that more qualitative and inductive research can answer. This is a process of research that is laden with cultural values, worldviews, and visions of the good.

My research typifies what happens when MFT – something rooted in a theory of social intuitionism – is taken to a morally applied setting. I agree with the assessment that a system 1 account of thinking applies to moral judgments. However, much of our moral discourse lies in

realms of deliberation, argumentation, and time. Much of this research, for example, hinges on the processes of institutions such as investigative journalism and penal law. We trust and give authority to these institutions in our societies, but they are deliberative processes that are intended to transcend initial or intuitive moral judgments. At the same time these processes are transparently saturated with moral reasoning.

I argue that the differences in content within the same moral foundations between participants and responders are a result of complex cultural, political, and individual ideologies. Participants in Bunkerville and Malheur reflect the western land rights movement broadly. They are typically involved heavily in local efforts to manage land, they are largely constitutional and libertarian in ideology, and they view government oppression as a legitimate threat to the stability of the world. Proponents of Moral Foundations Theory argue that ‘innateness’ is dangerous to assume but are willing to put forward that the foundations within MFT act as a rudimentary “rough draft” upon which societies fill in more specific moral worldviews. My research suggests that subgroups within those societies can and do fundamentally disagree on how and when to utilize moral foundations in their discursive expressions. Participants and Responders of Bunkerville and Malheur utilize the same foundations but build them and define them in importantly different ways. The potential of MFT to provide a language through which different groups can communicate their moral differences is more easily said than done. While moral psychologists can utilize MFT to compare and contrast moral evaluations, their applications are completely enmeshed in webs of significance spun by cultural groups. Responders and participants did not ever approach a language of empathy that would be required for any meaningful level of understanding or comprehension of one another’s viewpoint.

## **Discussion**



In his popular writing, Haidt (2012) suggested moral foundations theory as an explanation for why people were divided by religious belief and political sentiment. Haidt emphasized the intuitionist aspects of MFT, while arguing that human beings were not inherently selfish or self-serving, but that they are capable of “transcend[ing] self-interest and becom[ing] simply a part of a whole” (p. 370). The closing message of Haidt’s intuitionist and collectivist view was that it was a difficult yet possible to engage with others who live in moral matrices other than our own which exist as diverse combinations of the same moral foundations. The findings of my research underline events and aftermaths in which the engagement between groups can be seen as unsuccessful. Responder discourse, in addition to having more influence and a wider audience, is rooted in moral foundations separate from participants in Bunkerville and Malheur. In many respects the function of responder discourse was to give an accounting for the behavior of participants – to judge its merits and moral worthiness – not to understand or negotiate.

The misunderstanding between responder rationale and participant moral worldview has implications for media discourse. However, misunderstandings surrounding events of Bunkerville and Malheur more importantly implicate the actions taken by state actors over its citizens. The difference in moral foundations and their communication within the context of Malheur came at the cost of violence and the death of LaVoy Finicum. Participants were largely defensive, and the millenarian perspective underpinned and highlighted their moral outlook. In escalating tensions, or violently confronting leadership (in the case of Malheur), government entities directly play into the predictive outlook of participants and validate their perception of urgency. The existential threat perceived by ranchers in the American West is often reinforced and bolstered by the behavior of the federal government in relation to land in the American

West. Within the context of recent American history, it is little wonder that Waco, Texas was of frequent mention in coverage of Bunkerville and Malheur. In the events of Branch Davidians, predictions of government intervention through were ultimately fulfilled to the letter by extensions of the state. Whatever prognosticative capacity responders or academics or state entities prescribe to groups with religious motivations, the state frequently behaves precisely as it is anticipated to behave – or even as it is announced to behave. In the context of Malheur participants anticipated unfairness, subterfuge, and harm. For the state to anticipate any moral advantage it must behave in ways that err toward moral discourse and negotiation over overt enforcement of law. I view the results of Bunkerville against Malheur to be instructive in this sense: how did extensions of the state resolve Bunkerville peacefully? What more could have been done to negotiate with participants in Malheur? As was often the case, responders to either event would morally evaluate that an infraction of law occurred and that little else mattered morally. This appraisal missed the message and purpose of participants entirely.

Data from the federal court cases of Nevada and Oregon demonstrate that when the narrative and moral worldview of participants is given a stage (beyond reciting what laws are being broken), messages of care/harm and justice/oppression do resonate with others and can receive validation. The moral foundations of harm, oppression, and fairness brought forward by the Bundys were taken seriously by jurors and judges. The outcomes of both trails demonstrate the complexities of arguments made on the bases of various moral foundations. Ryan Bundy, for example, managed to heavily invoke oppression and harm in representing himself in trial. Ryan's accounting and testimony give an example of how argumentation utilizing moral foundations requires finesse and particular elaboration. It isn't enough to state that harm was done or

oppression was present, it matters who was doing the harm and who was receiving the oppression.

Haidt's studies of moral foundations emphasized the internalization of key foundations along American political aisles/sides. However, in higher stakes moral contexts it would appear that dynamics of power are an essential consideration. The existential threat that ranchers like Ryan Bundy and his family felt from the federal government resonate beyond harm done and oppression. In other words, the actors involved in moral situations and their relationships to one another matter just as much as which moral foundation is being triggered within a given moral judgment. Responders viewed harm done by the Bundys to public land and to social structure broadly. Participants viewed harm done by the government to ranchers and locals of the American West. The emphasis and importance of actors and power dynamics in moral evaluations often means that when participants and responders do utilize the same moral foundation it in no way points to them talking about the same thing.

Relationship Regulation Theory (RRT) provides further insight, when paired with my data and analysis using an MFT approach. My results echo the questions of RRT to MFT in emphasizing the importance of who, relationally, is doing what in moral judgments. Some of the greatest differences in content of moral foundations invoked between participants and responders was the orientation of victim to perpetrator. MFT is a largely descriptive account of moral judgment. MFT provides information on the neurological foundations of morality in its modular approach. MFT builds on research into processing and decision making by being a system 1, intuitionist theory of morality. MFT also theorizes about the evolutionary origins of our moral foundations. However, MFT when applied inductively becomes much more complicated and less straightforward. In some respects, I view my research as answering the question of: what

happens when the moral rubber meets the road? The answer is that it depends entirely on the cultural and social context. In the context of my research, the deeply embedded nature of moral reasoning and judgment takes the same categories of moral foundations and transforms them into unique expressions of moral worldviews.

In discussing limitations of this project, I greatly appreciate the perspective of Luttrell (2000) in her contribution to the discussion of methods in anthropological spheres. I view her sentiments as being insightful and valuable across disciplines. Where her insights were referencing ethnographic methods and life-story analysis specifically, they most certainly apply to this research and any good social science. Methods, theory, and data can and should be understood as producing gains while simultaneously taking losses. Moral foundations theory and cultural schema analysis were specifically chosen for the data of this project. In making that methodological choice, I wanted tools of analyses that enriched the direct discourse coming from both participants and responders. The most substantial ‘losses’ in utilizing cultural schema analysis come from a reliance on verbalized expression which typically must be paired with behaviors and actions to be properly triangulated. Fortunately, in the cases of Bunkerville and Malheur the explicit moral evaluations and rationales were accompanied by observable action. The losses of MFT are in its relative categorical rigidity and descriptive nature. However, I believe cultural schema analysis is an appropriate method, given the inductive goals of my project. I similarly believe that the theoretical insights of moral foundations theory were beneficial to comparing and contrasting the varieties of moral possibility represented between participant and responder. Thus, despite these trade-offs, these “good enough” (Luttrell, 2000) methods provide a decent fit for what I was seeking to accomplish.

A limitation to this project was the inability to incorporate interview data to adapt to insights from cultural schema analysis. Under ideal circumstances, consistent moral rationales and themes could have been mentioned and questioned directly through semi-structured interviewing. As the analysis currently stands my project deals with public expressions from participants during the events. This means the results speak very much to a relatively narrow window of time with little ability to speak to the dynamics of moral reasoning and rationale. Upon completion of this project, for example, Ammon Bundy is running in Idaho's 2022 gubernatorial election. Ammon has been actively participating in city-hall protests and demonstrations concerning government responses to Covid-19, and discourse surrounding him does not centralize on the events of Bunkerville or Malheur. I would argue that it is entirely likely that the passing of time has affected the nuance of participants' moral evaluations and worldviews – something outside the scope of my data.

As the data of this project was overwhelmingly public level discourse and media documentation, the option of interviewing was not possible. This brings additional “baggage” to be weighed and considered in interpreting results: how much of what participants or responders expressed on a public level legitimate in pointing to internal states or ideational spaces? While I believe the perceived urgency of the situation coupled with the intensity of making stands against one's own federal government speak in favor of validity, interview and additional data collection would be ideal instruments in verifying and demonstrating the consistency of moral foundations and rationales from both participants and responders.

The moral foundations questionnaire (MFQ) is traditionally utilized in research assessing an individual's moral structure; However, I believe the qualitative approach to archival data sufficiently demonstrates the conclusions from my own analysis regarding individual moral

structures of participants and responders. Part of the true qualitative and cultural emphasis of my research comes from the moral saturation of Bunkerville and Malheur. The events are, by most accounts, incredibly intricate and require cultural and historical contextualization for understanding fully the implications of both events. To speak to that “messiness” of both events, I view the lack of MFQ present in my research as a necessity. That the standardization, operationalization, and measurement of moral foundations is robust and empirically demonstrated is not at all in question, however, it cannot be applied to the past conventionally. Furthermore, taking MFT on the road should be of great interest to moral psychologists broadly: if our metrics work within contexts providing internal validity that should excite us about the prospect of testing for external validity where the real moral world lies.

In addition to correcting for the aforementioned methodological blind spots, future research should endeavor to approach moral and cultural worldviews of American conservatives in ways distinct to psychology and anthropology. Research should be done on the mental experiences and existential threats that American conservatives feel they increasingly encounter. If we are to accept Haidt’s conclusion of diversity in moral foundations from American conservatives, then the onus is further on us to broaden our approach to studying morality in conservative populations. Applying a methodological heuristic of survey/questionnaire as the foundation for all predictive or explanatory science as it relates to conservatives is not dissimilar from American liberal’s lack of accepting the diversity of conservatives’ moral foundations. In light of that moral diversity and complexity, future research must integrate both quanta and qualia, measured and interpreted behaviors.

At the time of my dissertation, research is currently ongoing as to the importance/legitimacy of the foundation of liberty/oppression. While this research could

contribute somewhat to that discussion, it is more important to note that the foundation of liberty/oppression was essential in approaching an analysis of the moral rationales in Bunkerville and Malheur. MFT does not look to qualitative research as proof of concept as much as it does massive aggregate surveys with high statistical power. As discussed before, the addition of the sixth foundation was in response to individuals of more libertarian ideologies responding to the MFQ. However the western land rights movement's cultural ideals, worldviews, and moral outlooks are intrinsically linked with ideas of liberty and oppression. The sixth foundation was completely essential in this research. It does, however, raise the question of what kind of foundations might exist in other applied moral contexts outside of the traditional five.

Just as Haidt's work on moral foundations demonstrated, this study echoes the disconcerting conclusion that media and government coverage of American conservatives often translates the moral sentiments of American conservatives – like those in this study – into its own moral discourse instead of attempting a more empathetic approach. When we further consider the political and moral tilt of social science broadly, we may conclude that a starting point of estrangement might be a risk more often than one of empathetic theory and methods. This is not to say that conservatives' voices do not have representatives or amplifiers in contemporary media; the niches of conservative news and commentary are well established. The real task for social scientific research is to encapsulate our ostensible objectivity within the world of the qualitative and embodied. Coupled with American conservatives' distrust of postsecondary education (especially as it concerns political influence on students) this research goal stands out to me as particularly difficult. However, as discussed in the introduction to this work, social scientific researchers should feel compelled to rise to that standard.

## **Conclusion**

Jason Van Tatenhove is a former spokesman for the Oath Keepers. In July of 2022, Jason appeared before a select committee investigating the events of the January 6<sup>th</sup> Capitol protests. In response to questions about the potential of militia groups such as the oath keepers, Jason indicated “we’ve had the potential from the Bundy ranch on”. Jason was a participant at Bunkerville, Nevada, and his linking of the events of Bunkerville to January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 were welcome among media commentators. The problem of the western land rights movement and the boldness of the militia groups in those events became chronologically more clear. Media argued federal response to Bunkerville and Malheur was too soft, and the lack of accountability behind the events led directly to January 6<sup>th</sup>. Clearly, the moral concerns that inform the behaviors of participants in Bunkerville and Malheur matter. The linking of these events to the Capitol attack highlights the reality that moral worldviews inspire drastic moral actions.

I asked some difficult questions in phrasing the problem behind my own research questions and hypotheses in this study. I would like to return to those questions by way of conclusion. How do social scientists make sense of the events of Bunkerville and Malheur? This question, of course, extends far beyond my own attempt at empirically yet empathetically approaching Bunkerville and Malheur. At face value we might (somewhat cynically) conclude that social scientists simply do not make sense of either event, or that whatever sense they have made is so removed from the reality of those events as to make it less than meaningful. However, this question can reorient our attention to the “meta” of research. We may more appropriately begin to ask ourselves how do social scientists interact with the moral weights and problems involved in Bunkerville and Malheur? We begin by recognizing that we cannot exist from a position of nowhere in particular. In this we take a much-needed step towards the transparent when it comes to our own values and assumptions as they inform our research. The next



questions I posed were directly entailed in my project's methodology: What values are dynamically at work in western land rights movements? What values are at stake in the interpretation of these events, and what does that mean to the broader public? What motivates not just the actors involved, but the distinct interpretations of actors' actions by law enforcement, media, government, or the actors themselves?

My research contributes to research that utilizes MFT in a few important areas. First, the emphasis on the difference of actual triggers for moral foundations points to the complicated and misleading nature of two different groups utilizing the same foundations. By emphasizing this, I hope to point to an area of potential fruitful research that addresses the theory underpinning MFT. Haidt's main utilization of MFT between political groups has been reliant on looking at the hierarchical organization of those foundations as opposed to the application of those foundations in moral contexts. Lastly, my research points to the applied validity of liberty/oppression being a distinct foundation for moral judgments. My research focuses on contexts which incorporate libertarian ideologies within conservative political movements directly, but the context speaks to the potential import of distinguishing between liberty/oppression and authority/subversion.

My research also contributes to the methodological implications of MFT. For all its diverse appeal within sub disciplines of psychology, MFT has not yet been utilized in a qualitative context. The descriptive and intuitionist facets of MFT make qualitative research seem a difficult fit. However, my research shows that qualitative approaches to data analysis which incorporate MFT are fruitful and give meaningful insights into moral judgments and morally motivated behaviors. The implementation of MFQ in moral foundations research has been essential in demonstrating robust validity and reliability of measuring foundations within

populations. However, more can and should be done to look at how moral foundations change our understanding of applied and discursive moral judgments. This requires a minor methodological shift, but my research demonstrates that it can be done with substantial benefit to the external validity of the results of analysis.

My research also contributes to the academic literature on Bunkerville/Malheur and the western land rights movement. In practice academics should recognize an empathetic approach to the discourse surrounding both sides of events like Bunkerville or Malheur. My data also allude to the relative control of the narrative media outlets have in presenting and shaping both the basic dissemination of historical facts and the moral framing of arguments (both for an against participants). My research can contribute to the research of heavily applied or morally fraught situations. Social scientists often must approach these situations with methods and analyses that will allow for the greatest amount of empathy as well as appropriate units of analysis. What participants have to say about Bunkerville and Malheur is an essential component to include in scientific considerations of those events. Participants' rationales and moral outlooks speak to their moral worldview. Scientific approaches of that worldview render judgment on the consistency of that worldview from our own rules, values, and logic.

Data from my project indicates that the story very much has two sides. From the perspective of media and government extensions, scattered groups of militiamen and disgruntled ranchers felt deprived by the government, broke the laws of said government, and struggled to accept the consequences of their actions. According to responders, participants should be understood within the moral evaluative framework of harm done, stability of society threatened, and misguided faith. The values and morals of participants tell a story of oppression, of a dynamic tilt in power that, if unchecked, engenders further problems. Participants speak and

understand the world through a lens of potential calamity at the intersection of divine sanction and political governance.

In the language of MFT the results of this research echo conclusions drawn from MFT early on (see Graham et al., 2009): conservatives (in these events, participants) utilize more moral foundations in their moral judgments than those of the political left (in these events, responders). The content of the moral foundations, however, suggests that while participants and responders utilize the same moral languages (stemming from the same moral foundations) they are constructive entirely distinct narratives and meanings from those foundations. My research points to differences of content in constructing and discursively approaching moral judgments and rationales behind morally motivated behaviors. Participants felt that the harm done to the law was entirely subordinate to the harm done by federal overreach and oppressive tactics of governance. Responders argued in a near-exact opposite fashion: the harm to the law was the real harm of Bunkerville and Malheur, and the tactics and control exerted by the government are entirely necessary for the continued stability of society. This is just one example of content difference; across each moral foundation participants and responders constructed their narratives and arguments around substantively distinct moral outlooks. While MFT provides an essential language of comparison for these moral outlooks, I believe more research should be done in applied contexts such as Bunkerville and Malheur.

I have attempted to demonstrate that there is informative, descriptive value in striving for a language of perspicuous contrast (Taylor, 1985) between our descriptive metrics and the qualitative complexity of the moral lives we study. It is one thing to understand the Bundys or other participants as radical constitutional libertarians who use diverse moral foundations in their judgments. It is an entirely different thing to research their discourse from within, and to give

their moral worldview the due diligence it deserves as it colors the lives they live. My research demonstrates that categories within MFT have value to us inasmuch as we couple them with meaningful qualitative methods and approaches. I believe that in striving to approach and understand the moral worldview and moral values of a group, we can better assist the scientific effort of predicting, explaining, and describing behaviors.

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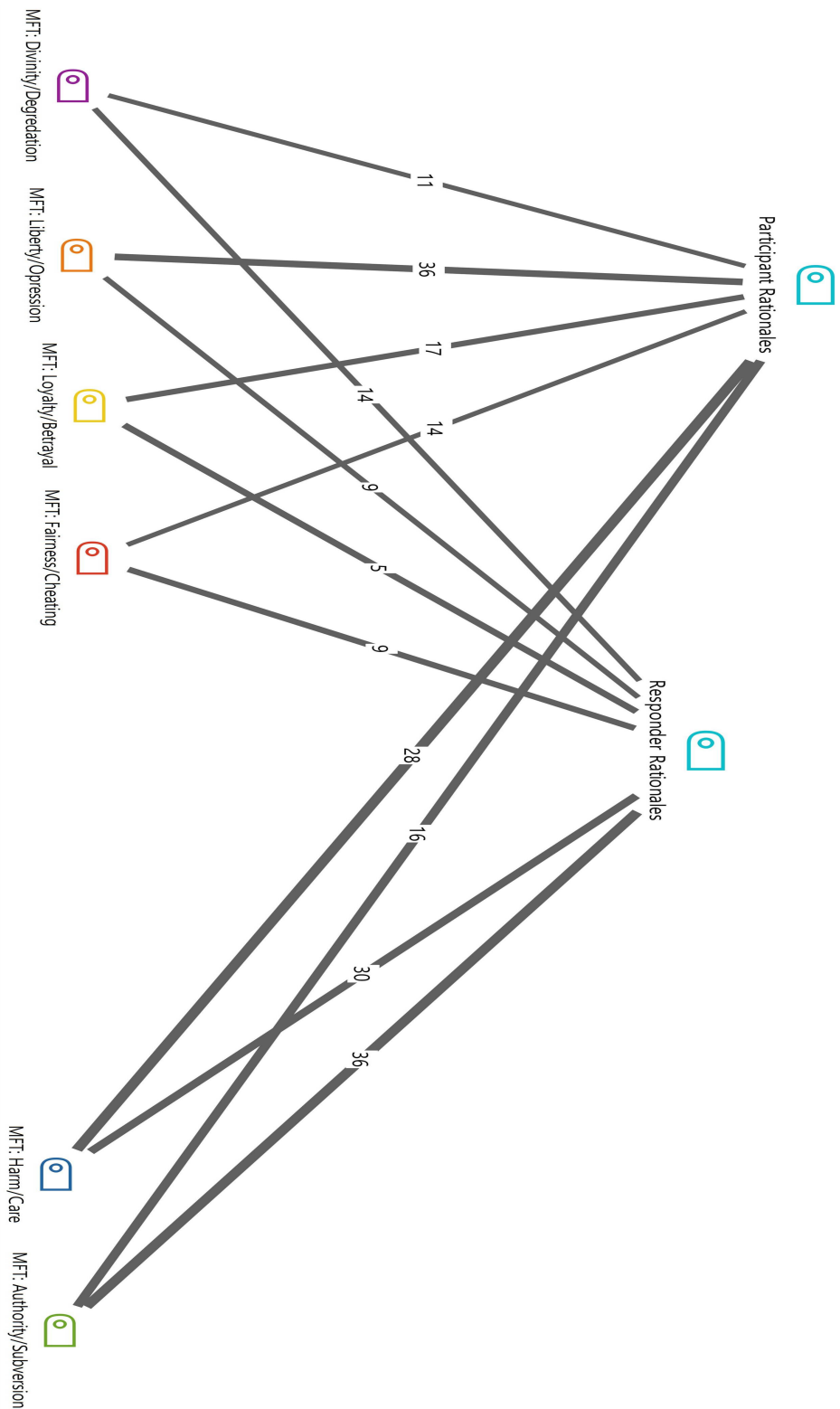
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# Moral Foundation Distribution Between Rationale Authors

## Supplemental Materials

Figure 1



## Appendix A

### Moral Foundations Codebook

**Harm/Care:** Judgments and rationales based in harm/care include overt references to threats, weapons, and needs for protection. Rationales and judgments may invoke the innocence or harmlessness of a group in relation to threats/violence. Any reference of violence, injury, or death is also included in this category.

**Fairness/Cheating:** Judgments and rationales based in fairness/cheating include imbalance of expectation or abuse of a system. Linguistically this foundation is invoked more directly (e.g. fair share, cheating, unfair). Rationales/judgments may relate the imbalance of fairness metaphorically or directly express the unevenness of powers/events.

**Loyalty/Betrayal:** Judgments and rationales based in loyalty/betrayal include appeals to localized group wishes/wants, references to subgroups and their wishes, and evaluations about the consistencies of behaviors to said groups. Issues of patriotism and terrorism belong in the category of loyalty/betrayal, since the foundation works to include higher-order societal groups as well as smaller local subgroups.

**Authority/Subversion:** Judgments and rationales based in authority/subversion take the form of discussion legitimacy of dominion, proper governance, lawfulness, and jurisdiction. Arguments over rights to act or restrict are based in authority/subversion (as opposed to loyalty/betrayal). Issues of control and social cohesion belong to this foundation and are bi-directional to either end of a given power hierarchy.

**Sanctity/Degradation:** Judgments and rationales based in sanctity/degradation are diverse. Straightforwardly, arguments and judgments on the basis of something's sanctity or divine nature belong to this category. More nebulously the 'wrongness' or 'aberrance' of an idea may also stem from this foundation, especially if a judgment is housed in that ideas disgustingness. Similarly the elevation of a particular moral good (outside of the other foundations) which infuses arguments/rationales may qualify for this foundation.

**Liberty/Oppression:** Judgments and rationales based in liberty/oppression are linguistically specific. References to tyranny, oppression, overreach, abuse of power (at the governmental/institutional level), freedom, liberty, and rights all fall under the category of liberty/oppression. The concept of injustice may also be used contextually as an extension of this foundation (over fairness/cheating).

## Appendix B

### Example Codes

| Group Rationale | Moral Foundation  | Example  |
|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| Participant     | Harm/Care         | And you do realize that they wanted to kill me, too. They put several bullets into the truck triangulated to kill me where I was sitting. The problem was I had moved positions, and therefore their bullets messed. Except for one is still there. And it's still there. It's in my shoulder, and it hurts me every day.  |
| Participant     | Harm/Care         | I feel sorry for any federal agents that want to come in here and try to push us around, but if they're going to come bring violence to us, well, if that's the language they want to speak, we'll learn it.   |
| Participant     | Fairness/Cheating | And they either wanted to create a situation where they would be justified in killing us, and then the American people would feel that that is a good thing, because they were going to create a situation where it looked like we attacked them or whatever the case, or they were going to create a scenario where they could then prosecute us and place us in prison for the rest of our lives. They wanted us dead, either by bullet of the gun or behind steel doors.  |
| Participant     | Fairness/Cheating | -and in that conversation, he told me specifically that he would kill me. And he said that this will be the next Waco or Ruby Ridge. He told me that. I called him back the next morning to see if he had recorded the phone call, and he said no, he hadn't recorded the phone call. Well, guess what? That recording found its way to court, which, again he lied. They always lie. The government always lied. They always lie. You can count on it, okay? But what was interesting about the recording is that only about half the conversation was there. |
| Participant     | Loyalty/Betrayal  | We're not separate, we're not divided. They're abusing the black community the same as they're abusing the patriots... They're abusing the Indians and stealing their land exactly the same.   |
| Participant     | Loyalty/Betrayal  | It's crucial that you understand what's going on here, what this issue is truly about. It's about our federal government taking over private properties adversely or using the taxpayers dollars after they ruined the ranchers to buy it.   |



| Group Rationale | Moral Foundation     | Example  |
|-----------------|----------------------|--|
| Participant     | Authority/Subversion | I would be happy to pay my grazing fees if I hold grazing fees to the proper government. That brings us to the point of who does own this land? How does the federal government own 90% of the state of Nevada? I thought we were sovereign state. I am the manager of this land because of my right - The court says Cliven Bundy is trespassing on United States property. |
| Participant     | Authority/Subversion | And I have no contract with the federal government. This court has no jurisdiction over this matter. When the federal government have supposed to have an army that comes against the people.  |
| Participant     | Sanctity/Degradation | We're not done with this. If the federal government comes out after us again, we will definitely tell them the truth.  |
| Participant     | Sanctity/Degradation | Well, it was prophesied, Joseph Smith prophesied that the Constitution at one point would hang as if it were by a thread. In other words, the strength that used to hold it up would not be there, that it would be almost unto destruction.   |
| Participant     | Liberty/Oppression   | Right now, things are sensitive... I don't need this turning into some media thing. We are not trying to be malicious in anyway shape of form. The oppression ... we want it to stop.  |
| Participant     | Liberty/Oppression   | With Cliven and Carol and all of them. It was wrong that was done to them. It was truly wrong. And they were facing life in prison. The Bundy stood for their rights. They were locked up for two years. My God, this should have outraged people. Two years of their life gone. For what? Yeah. Because you have a government that wants to control everything.             |
| Responder       | Harm/Care            | At Malheur, there were armed men patrolling a government facility. They took their guns up a fire tower and dug battle trenches in case the FBI tried to come in. But in court, the fact that all those things are illegal, that didn't matter.  |
| Responder       | Harm/Care            | If Cliven really was focused only on land rights, maybe his movement wouldn't be so scary. Maybe they'd start a letter writing campaign to Zinke, flood him with appeals to turn over even more public lands.  |

But Cliven's marching orders aren't that clear. They're up for interpretation by each person sitting in that room, and he's telling them to do whatever it takes. X recognizes it too, that the Bundys promote violent actions just by talking about public lands.

| Group Rationale | Moral Foundation     | Example   |
|-----------------|----------------------|---|
| Responder       | Fairness/Cheating    | <p>P1: -and this notion of somehow the white man has been wronged in this country, and so they're playing into that kind of fear mongering and, frankly, hate mongering that's kind of prevalent among that militia types.</p> <p>P2: By claiming to be victims, X says the Bundys are giving hope to all these white men who failed in their own lives and are feeling less and less relevant in society. She says it emboldened these guys to do things no one else but them could get away with.</p> |
| Responder       | Fairness/Cheating    | Actions have consequences   |
| Responder       | Loyalty/Betrayal     | White House press secretary Sarah Sanders described the Hammonds as upstanding citizens, a claim the former official says is widely debated among members of their community.   |
| Responder       | Loyalty/Betrayal     | To make Cliven's claims true, you have to accept a family history built on plural marriage, which means incest and child brides and a lot of things that our society has decided aren't legal or moral.   |
| Responder       | Authority/Subversion | Cliven Bundy believes he is grazing his cows on his land, and he's going to claim it's not federal government land. It's actually county land, but it's not.  |

| Group Rationale | Moral Foundation     | Example   |
|-----------------|----------------------|---|
| Responder       | Authority/Subversion | And that's the recurring theme with Clive and Bundy and the federal government. The fight has become about how much power you can grab, regardless of right and wrong. Cliven's just been better at it than anyone else.  |
| Responder       | Sanctity/Degradation | And the Bundys are saying that they're defending the constitution, which means they're defending God. This explains why the Bundys never really waver when they talk about their ideas.   |
| Responder       | Sanctity/Degradation | It's because their religion is telling them they're right. If God was on your side, you'd be pretty confident, too. But it's more than simple Sunday school stories. The Bundys see themselves as fighting for the future of the country, which is currently hanging in the balance, just like they were told it would be |
| Responder       | Liberty/Oppression   | All these men had troubles in their lives long before they met the Bundys. But it was Cliven and his sons who assured them that their problems weren't their fault. Instead, the Bundys gave him a scapegoat. The government was out to get them personally.  |
| Responder       | Liberty/Oppression   | If you believe the Bundys, then you believe the federal government is trying to enslave the American people.  |