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# Negotiating Human Rights Abuses through the Moral Foundations Theory: An Attempt to Understand the Moral Motivations behind the Male Guardianship System in Saudi Arabia, Female Genital Modification, and Child Marriage.

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UNDERSTANDING

Claremont McKenna College

Negotiating Human Rights Abuses through the Moral Foundations Theory:

An Attempt to Understand the Moral Motivations behind Female Genital Modification,  
Child Marriage, and the Male Guardianship System in Saudi Arabia

Submitted to:

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and

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For

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## NEGOTIATING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES THROUGH MORAL UNDERSTANDING

**Abstract**

The idea that there are universal human rights that can, and should, be enforced has been an increasingly wide-spread and popular belief, as well as a controversial one. Concerns of cultural relativism contrasted with stances of universalism spark an impassioned debate that permeates the dialogue of human rights today in all spheres: social, academic, and even those professional spheres that are tasked with creating and enforcing the laws regarding these issues. What does psychology have to say about this? After all, if it is a universal phenomenon, it must span across time, culture, and difference, and there must be trends in our human nature or similarities in our psychology that allow us to claim universality. One psychological theory, the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) can help shed light on this issue. MFT holds that universally, as human beings, we share five grounds of moral foundations on which we make our judgments and take action: Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Authority/Submissiveness, Sanctity/Degradation, and Loyalty/Betrayal. While we are all born with the capability to act and reason on these, our cultures shape us to emphasize different foundations and it is in that shift that conflict arises. What one group sees as right, and based in moral justification, another sees as wrong and as a violation of human rights. This paper attempts to use MFT to understand the moral foundations underlying three case studies of practices internationally seen as human rights abuses, female genital modification, child marriage, and male guardianship in Saudi Arabia, and provides suggestions for methods of effective intervention based in MFT.

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## NEGOTIATING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES THROUGH MORAL UNDERSTANDING

Negotiating Human Rights Abuses through the Moral Foundations Theory**INTRODUCTION**

In the mid-1950s, while the threat of female genital modification was becoming grounds for political asylum in North America and Europe, adolescent girls in Kenya defied a ban on female genital modification and attempted to excise<sup>1</sup> themselves (Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000). In Bangladesh, while the age of marriage was officially changed to be legal starting at age 18, the majority of girls in the country began to pay off the police and continued to marry earlier, arguing that their safety was at risk without a husband (Chowdhury, 2004). In the early 2000s, as women in Saudi Arabia attempted to challenge the prohibition on women driving, and support the eradication of the male guardianship system, the majority of women in the country decried these movements as an unnecessary shift away from tradition that posed a danger to their safety (Bulman, 2016). Each of these examples demonstrates a deeply-rooted practice that is seen by some as immoral and by others as motivated by morality. Such differences in perspective can be celebrated, but they can also lead to conflict when one group tries to act to change or eradicate the practice they see as wrong. So, who is right? If women in Africa are fleeing their countries and seeking asylum because they do not wish for their children to go through female genital modification, or if girls in East Asia are being denied an education they want because they have to get married, or if women in Saudi Arabia are being beheaded for defying laws that are in violation of international declarations, does the world have the right, or perhaps even the obligation, to intervene and stop these

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<sup>1</sup> Excision is the practice of total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons (WHO, 1997).

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practices? Are there certain traditions that are ‘universally wrong’ and hence should be eradicated? If there are, how can intervention effectively stop what is ‘wrong’ if two groups are not in agreement with what is right and wrong? These are the questions that inspired me to begin researching this topic.

During the summer of 2015 I interned at a law clinic that worked on cases of asylum for women fleeing female genital modification in Africa. When I read the affidavit of one woman seeking asylum, I felt deeply disturbed by the practice and the consequences this woman and her daughter would face for foregoing the practice and defying the tradition. To me, it seemed unjust, however, the practice is still willingly and honorably carried out in 29 countries and more than 125 million girls alive today have undergone the practice (“New statistical report on female genital mutilation shows harmful practice is a global concern,” 2016). Learning this challenged my sense of right and wrong, and assumptions of universal rights and values. If female genital modification is still a popular practice, and one that is looked forward to, it must be motivated by a psychological disposition, by something that those who carry it out feel or believe that I, in my westernized thinking, might not understand. I was curious to figure out what perpetuates this act, and others like it that so many see as unjust, thus I embarked upon this thesis topic. What are the motivations and morals that drive ‘human rights abuses?’ If we can come to understand *why* people do the things they do, we can understand better how to intervene in an efficient way and minimize through negotiation such abuses without neglecting the values that motivate them. Such an interdisciplinary approach of psychology and human rights is necessary to fully understand the people, practices, and cross-cultural perspectives in question.

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History has shown that competing cultural perspectives have been the source of many misunderstandings, conflicts, and barriers to communication and cooperation among many groups. Cultural differences can be polarizing as they can engender perceptions of otherness that seem to be mutually exclusive, where, if one group is right in their views, the other must be wrong. This is especially true when it comes to the fundamental causes of human rights violations. What some cultures in the West might see as ‘morally wrong,’ such as female genital modification, child marriage, and the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia, other communities and cultures fully embrace. At the same time, non-Western cultures ridicule or even scorn beliefs and practices in the West, such as, fervent nationalism and individual liberties (Bell, Nathan, & Peleg, 2001). It has been difficult for certain groups to identify the similarities in perspectives and thinking they share with the other group, and this tends to lead the groups to “undermine each other’s priorities and to diminish the prospects of developing truly universal standards of human rights and more effective mechanisms for achieving them” (An-Na’im, 1992). Intractable conflicts and disagreements arising from these competing cultural perspectives have led to an increased interest in both tolerance for difference as well as the imposition of universal values, adding yet another complexity in the clash between cultural relativism (the belief that an individual’s judgments and actions should be understood in terms of that individual’s culture) and universalism (the belief that an individual’s judgments and actions should be understood in terms of universal standards). On the one hand, Universalists assert that there are certain morals and values we all adhere to and therefore are able to create a document enumerating the universal rights that must not be violated (Brown, 1996). Whereas, on the other hand, the Cultural

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Relativists argue that morality is relative to some group and is “based on values shared within a particular group” (Brown, 1996) where these members determine what is permissible and impermissible. This debate has largely been centered around what we, as a global community, can (or cannot) consider right and wrong. This type of prescriptive approach—where the world community would intervene to establish universal standards—arose from a great need for such standards after the atrocities of World War II. The belief in universal values has a much longer history going back to ancient times, and was forcefully articulated during the Enlightenment era and the age of revolutions that followed. However the devastating human rights atrocities of the Holocaust produced a major international commitment to the promotion and practice of universal human rights, and the international infrastructure (e.g. the United Nations, and international law) to enforce them (Cooper, 1999). Conferences, such as the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Prosecution of the Crime of Genocide, and the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, were held, systems of judgment, such as the International Military Tribunal were created, and documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), were drafted and put into effect (Dunoff, Ratner, & Wippman, 2015). The world felt a need for order and justice, and this became a global matter. This indignation spurred a range of actions incorporating these ideas of universality, however, while it was efficient for the immediate post-Holocaust period, the following decades were characterized by conflicting approaches to rights due to differing cultural perspectives (Hernández-Truyol, 2002).

It seemed that universal standards were effective when crimes were dramatically egregious, such as the Holocaust or the systematic, mass annihilation that is genocide,

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regarding Darfur, and Rwanda, but not otherwise in cases such as child marriage, the male guardianship system, and female genital modification. So then a question arises: given that we have these competing cultural perspectives but also a desire for universal standards, what can we do to reconcile the two? If there are certain practices that one might see as immoral, and as a violation of human rights, is there a path for effective intervention? Psychologists in the field of social and moral psychology have looked at the question of moral conflicts and some of their theories are applicable to answer these uncertainties.

The Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) is the key tool that will allow us to explain many aspects of these culture wars, including the specific issues that “become battlefields, the polarized debates, and the inability of the [different]<sup>2</sup> sides to even understand each other because their moral visions were based on deep differences in the very foundations upon which moral arguments could rest” (Graham et al., 2012). MFT is widely and commonly used to explain the culture war within the United States but has not been applied to international human rights debates and prevention, which is what I am to do in this interdisciplinary research. MFT maintains that although morality varies across culture and that different cultures sometimes disagree about what is morally permissible and impermissible, there are many similarities and recurrent themes in the foundations of these perspectives. These cultural psychologists, Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham, have identified five moral foundations they believe are innate. They posit that

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<sup>2</sup> This originally said “both sides” referring to the conservatives and liberals in the United States. However, it is generalized to cultural conflicts in general, yet the example of the American culture war is extended through the paragraph to demonstrate their point.

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each culture then constructs virtues, narratives, cultural practices, and institutions on top of these foundations, thereby creating the unique moralities we see around the world, and conflicting within nations too. The five foundations are Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation. These five foundations compose a “first draft” of the human mind and depending on which foundations different cultures choose to embrace, reject, suppress, or ignore, each group will have different beliefs, concerns, values, and prescriptions, that lead to different, and thus, at times controversial<sup>3</sup> actions. These differences in reliance on moral foundations lead to variations in moral intuitions that are rooted in interactions of biology, cultural socialization, and individual experience, and thus it is difficult for someone on the outside, with opposing moral intuitions, to understand how anyone can hold distinct moral intuitions (Ditto & Koleva, 2011). This is what Ditto & Koleva call, the empathy gap, and it can make intergroup violence more likely as each group can view the other as having unfounded and wrong moral intuitions.

This inability to understand the other, and thus to reject someone’s views and subsequently reprimand and castigate him/her, is a common occurrence, however, this approach rarely leads to any success in whatever aims an interventionist group may have. It is undoubtedly difficult to change the moral views a group has and impose a different set of views on them after years of cultural learning and intuitionism. However, if someone did have that aim of trying to stop particular behaviors they view as wrong, I

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<sup>3</sup> Any mention of controversial in this paper is a reference to an action or judgment that may be *seen* as controversial by an outside group or dissenting members of the ingroup, but does not represent my opinion of whether the act is right or wrong. It is merely that there is debate about it and its characteristic value of right/wrong is controversial.

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believe MFT could lead to a successful intervention. MFT provides a way for someone to understand how a person could hold different attitudes across issues that seem to engender moral concerns, and can also provide novel approaches to persuasion and attitude change. Understanding the different foundations that a particular group emphasizes and prioritizes, could help an activist reframe their efforts in terms of those moral foundations particular to the group they are working with, rather than imposing their own moral intuitions on this group and urging that they understand them (Graham et al., 2012). It is in this direction that this paper will follow and the attitudes and behaviors we will examine are those of non-Western groups in developing countries who continue to engage in religious and cultural practices that have been deemed human rights abuses by the international community.

Child marriage, female genital modification , and the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia are all morally motivated traditions that are seen by many outsiders as morally wrong. These traditions are morally motivated because the individuals who behave this way believe that it is *right*, and that judgment is based on which moral foundations they emphasize most (Graham et al., 2012). Consequentially, because these emphases are not consistent across cultures, many outsiders see such practices as violations of our universal human rights and so many human rights activists aim to intervene and stop such practices. However, as the moral issues at the heart of these conflicts are rooted in different intuitions, merely denouncing such practices is not likely to be fruitful. Instead, activists must first aim to understand the moral foundations that lead to such judgments, decisions, and actions, and then frame their concerns in terms of those moral foundations. Morality is understood through cultural lenses and given that we

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have this challenge of enforcing human rights and preventing harm and suffering, we need a new approach that can propose novel, effective, ways to prevent such harm. My interdisciplinary synthesis will first explain what the moral foundations are, then why these five foundations (Care, Sanctity, Authority, Loyalty, and Fairness) were chosen, and how each person comes to acquire these and then shape them differently. Once a background of the psychological theory is presented, the theories will be applied to each of the three case studies: child marriage, female genital modification, and the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia. The research presented here does not set out to prove which practices are right and which are wrong, but rather, it approaches the challenge of preventing violations of human rights from a psychological perspective. It demonstrates where psychology, morality and culture intersect in the realm of human rights abuses.

In the conclusion, my thesis offers proposals for how one might be able to articulate conflicting morals in a common language in a productive way for effective intervention. It is my hope that through such an interdisciplinary approach, we might be able to come closer to understanding why certain groups act the way they do, and furthermore, identify an effective approach for ameliorating violent, repressive practices that harm women and girls and human rights more broadly.

### **THEORY**

#### **Moral Foundations Theory**

"Moral conviction fuels conflict and is at the core of many of the most contentious issues in the world today and throughout history (Skitka et al., 2005)." Moral conviction provides a motivational source and justification for actions and judgments that

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some might see as violent or wrong. However, our acts are "judged as morally right or wrong depending on whether they obey or violate some moral rule" (Darley & Schultz, 1990), and the fact that different groups adhere to and emphasize different moral foundations in decision-making and actions, makes it difficult to universally qualify judgments and actions as right or wrong and good or evil (Skitka, 2011). The differences in our moral foundations affect our moral convictions and because "the social practices of a culture can be regarded as moral imperatives" (Schweder, 1987), the sphere of morality is culturally defined (Darley & Shultz, 1990). However, where does this morality come from? Although "right and wrong" might differ across cultures, there are still some things that we see as universally wrong, like killing an innocent five-year old child for fun (Brown, 1996) and so why are moral judgments sometimes similar across cultures but at other times so variable? Psychologists Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham created the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) to try to answer these questions. The theory draws on many other well-established earlier theories to create the most comprehensive model to date.

MFT attempts to identify the universal domains of morality. Haidt and Graham aim to identify the "irreducible basic elements" (Graham et al., 2012) needed to understand the moral domain. They acknowledge past theories, such as the well-known moral psychologist's, Lawrence Kohlberg, monist theory of morality. Kohlberg believed that justice was the one (and only) irreducible basic element that was needed to represent and understand the breadth of the moral domain. He believed that the one virtue and moral that everyone shared, regardless of culture or experience or climate, was justice (Kohlberg, 1971). Another common monist belief for our universal moral foundations is

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sensitivity to harm (Gray, Young, & Waytz, 2012), "or related notions of generalized human welfare or happiness" (Harris, 2010). These monists believe that all judgments, actions, and overall manifestations of morality come from an underlying psychological tendency to implement and act on this basic virtue/moral foundation. However, there were problems with this monist theory, namely that, psychologists began to find examples in which the morality of certain groups did not follow one true path, but rather two, or more, that could not be derived from simply 'justice' or 'sensitivity to harm.' For example, Gilligan (1982), found that the morality of girls and women followed a moral motivation of justice *and also* one of care. As monist thought grew to be more challenged, pluralist theories grew in quantity and depth.

MFT adheres to a pluralist view, a view that allows for more than one virtue or driving moral force of judgments and actions. While Kohlberg and his monist theories might have dominated the field of psychology, pluralist theories definitely existed and were rooted in ancient philosophy as is evident by Aristotle's theories of virtue. Aristotle was one of the earliest pluralists, advocating for many virtues that people could (and should) learn to obtain if they wanted to be excellent people (Aristotle, 1999). One important point to note here is that Aristotle believed people *ought to* act virtuously, (i.e. generously, courageously) to be a virtuous person. He believed in this prescriptive notion of the virtues and our morals, just as other psychologists had gone on to do after him, such as Elliot Turiel in his definitions of the moral domain (Nucci & Turiel, 1978). Turiel referred to prescriptive judgments of justice, rights and welfare, and believed that morality was about "how individuals *ought to* relate to, protect, and respect other individuals" (Turiel, 1983). This prescriptive view also claimed that rules that were not

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linked to justice or care were social conventions, however, psychologist Richard Shweder and the creators of MFT believe that such a view relies on only a subset of moral concerns, specifically the ones highlighted and emphasized in Western societies. Thus, , Shweder and a few other psychologists (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997), went on to propose what they felt was a more universal view of the moral foundations, demonstrated in their “big three” theory. MFT then expanded upon Shweder’s theory and the pluralist theories of moral psychology to create their five domains of morality.

The three domains, or universal moral codes, proposed by Schweder et al. (1997) were, autonomy, community, and divinity. He believed that the ethic of autonomy led people to value and rely on concepts of "harm, rights, and justice, which protect autonomous individuals" (Shweder et al., 1997). The ethic of community relied on concepts such as duty, respect, and loyalty, "which preserve institutions and social order" (Graham et al., 2012). The last ethic he proposed, that of divinity, pertains to concepts such as purity, sanctity, and sin, that "protect the divinity inherent in each person against the degradation of hedonistic selfishness" (Graham et al., 2012). Shweder believed that all people around the world talk in these three "moral languages" and that peoples' judgments and actions are motivated by one, or even all, of these three domains. In his view, the judgments we make and actions we take are all to further or protect the concepts within these domains, and depending on the group, some of these concepts are suppressed and others are greatly emphasized. Graham et al. wanted to extend this theory even further and explore other possible candidates for moral foundations that motivate actions and judgments in different cultures across the world. Haidt and Joseph (2004) tried to explain such an exploration for the concerns, perceptions, and moral reactions

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that consistently arise in moral codes around the world, as a search for "universal taste receptors" upon which the world's many cultures "construct their moral cuisines" (Graham & Haidt, 2007). In their interesting and visual analogy, they explain that although the human tongue has a mere five taste receptors (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami) cultures have enormously different cuisines that are culturally constructed and shaped by their history as well, and this large variety of cuisines ultimately pleases a mere five innate universal taste receptors. It is a fitting analogy to explain how it is possible that we have innate moral foundations upon which our different (due to cultural shaping and historical events) judgments and actions are founded that lead to an extremely diverse set of values and practices, but that all boil down to the same existing evolutionary explanations. Haidt and Joseph (2004) identify five universal, innate, moral foundations, or "taste receptors," that they believe are the best candidates.

As mentioned above, the five candidates are Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation. But before we delve into the posited foundations, we must address why humans are morally minded creatures to begin with. The psychologists provide us with reasoning to explain why we should believe that human beings come equipped with "an intuitive preparedness to feel flashes of approval or disapproval" (Haidt & Joseph, 2004) toward events or actions taken by others. Their belief rests on four main claims: 1) nativism, 2) cultural learning, 3) intuitionism, and 4) pluralism. An explanation of these four shaping mechanisms will help us understand why we are able to represent, understand, and explain the breadth of the moral domain in such "irreducible basic elements" (Graham et al., 2012) and how different judgments, actions, and attitudes, come to be so deeply rooted in morality, thus

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provoking conflict and irritation from any “counter-attitudinal challenge” (Mullen & Skitka, 2002).

## The Four Main Claims Explaining the Roots of our “Moral Mindedness”

Nativism is the first claim Graham et al. (2012) present and it can help to explain why even in divergent cultures we can find similar motivational elements that arise in nearly all of them. Graham et al. believe that there is a first draft of the moral mind. They believe that, “the human mind is organized in advance of experience so that it is prepared to learn values, norms, and behaviors related to a diverse set of recurrent adaptive social problems” (Graham et al. 2012). It is important to note that the idea that the foundations are innate does not entail that these foundations show up in all human cultures or that they are “universally visible” (Graham et al., 2012). It merely means “organized in advance of experience” (Graham et al., 2012) and so it should be expressed in some form through most human cultures. The first draft, according to Graham et al., is organized in advance of experience by the adaptive pressures of our evolutionary history—this is an important point because it signals the combination of both an innate sense of morals (this first draft), but also a learned one that comes from evolution and adaptive pressures. In 2004, Haidt and Joseph co-authored an article on specifically this theory of nativism called, *Intuitive Ethics: How Innately Prepared Intuitions Generate Culturally Variable Virtues*. In this article, they contrast the nativist approach with the empiricist approach, ultimately claiming that they believe in a modified nativist view which holds that morality is both innate and learned. Empiricists believe that all things moral: knowledge, beliefs, actions, etc., are learned in childhood. They do not believe that a moral faculty or structure is built into the mind and any similarities across cultures result merely because

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human beings have faced similar problems in the past and often developed similar solutions (Haidt & Joseph, 2004).

The nativist approach on the other hand, maintains that knowledge about issues such as “fairness, harm, and respect for authority have been built into the human mind by evolution” (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Nativists believe that as long as children are raised in a reasonable environment, they will come to value these ideas even if they are not taught, hence, the differences in culture are “due to local variation in the implementation of moral knowledge” (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). However, while one of the pillars mentioned above is nativism, the psychologists in this paper, including Graham et al. (2012) believe in a modified nativist view, that is, that morality is both innate and learned. In a TED talk that Haidt gave in 2008 (Haidt, 2008), he explains that we all come equipped with an internal soundboard that has all the same levers (not necessarily starting in the same places) and all the same ranges and capacities for sound. Then, as we grow, learn, and adopt the values of our cultures and groups, we move the levers and for some, the bass is more prominent than the treble and vice versa.<sup>4</sup> The different sounds each culture makes is capable of being made by all since the foundations are the same, but the sounds we value differ and cultural learning can help explain why this is so.

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that Haidt does not imply that there is a set notion as to whether bass is better than treble or vice versa—there is not one moral foundation that is better than another or that ‘makes a nicer sound’ when emphasized. The analogy is rather a way to help visualize the concept of nativism—that we are all born with this internal sound board, set with levers able to be manipulated and adapted, and to help us understand MFT in general that cultures and people are different depending on which levers they choose to manipulate and which foundations they choose to emphasize.

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Cultural learning refers to the idea that “the first draft gets edited during development within a particular culture” (Graham et al. 2012). Graham et al., along with other psychologists, argue that this must be the case because if it were not, and cultural learning had no formative role, then the ‘first draft’ would be the final draft and there would be no variations across cultures, which we know is not true (Shweder et al., 1997). Graham et al. provide an example to help demonstrate how we acquire and develop culturally-specific knowledge that is then presented automatically and intuitively. They present first a girl raised in a traditional Hindu culture who is taught to bow, touching her head to the feet of the respected elders or guests. They argue that by the time this girl reaches adulthood, she will maintain the culturally-specific knowledge that leads her to automatically initiate these movements when she encounters an elder or respected stranger. The psychologists contrast this experience with a girl raised in a secular American household who will not be raised with such traditions nor will she be presented with such experiences that will require her to act like this. Thus, she may reach adulthood without the “specialized knowledge or ability to detect hierarchy or show respect for hierarchical authorities” (Graham et al., 2012). I do not think the psychologists mean here that Americans cannot revere elders or respect important figures, however, they aim to make the point that this moral foundation of Authority/Subversion will not be as greatly emphasized as it is in the Hindu culture. On the sound board of morality, the lever of Authority/Subversion will be raised in the Hindu society whereas it will either stay the same, or at least not be as high as it is in the Hindu society, for the American girl. Both girls started off with the same moral foundations and the same ability to learn the culturally-specific knowledge, but in the Hindu community, “culture and psyche worked

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together to generate a host of more specific authority-respecting abilities” and in the secular American society, “such new abilities were not generated” (Graham et al., 2012). Thus, while they both had the same initial draft, it was shaped differently in each case, leading to cultural variation in thought and practice. These ‘edits’ to the initial draft of the moral mind are important and necessary because they are what allow for the child to “successfully navigate the moral matrix they actually experience” (Graham et al., 2012).

Intuitionism is the third pillar on which MFT rests. Graham et al. believe that our moral reasoning is motivated; that it is, “shaped and directed by intuitive, often affective, processes that tip the scales in support of desired conclusions” (Graham et al., 2012). These intuitive processes allow our moral judgments to happen quickly because intuitions come before any type of strategic reasoning. Thus, most of the judgments we make and actions we take every day do not derive from conscious intentions, but rather, from intuition that is fueled by features of the environment, and outside the realm of conscious guidance. These psychologists define intuitions as the “judgments, solutions, and ideas that pop into consciousness without our being aware of the mental processes that led to them” (Graham et al. 2012). They go on to explain that moral intuitions are a subclass of intuitions and it is here that feelings of approval and disapproval are activated. These feelings of approval and disapproval toward certain things is part of an “intuitive ethics” that human beings come equipped with, and it provides an “innate preparedness to feel flashes of approval or disapproval” towards different patterns of events (Graham et al., 2012). These ‘intuitive ethics’ lead one to make quick decisions on moral dilemmas (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Haidt and Joseph (2004) noted that when presented with

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different moral dilemmas, such as the Heinz dilemma,<sup>5</sup> people tend to decide within two seconds which course of action they should take, or in this case, whether or not Heinz should steal the drug, because they have a quick intuitive feeling when presented with the problem. When asked why they chose the way they did, people then search for justifications and supporting reasons that coincide with their decision. Thus, it is very important we understand this intuitionism because it is the most innate and automatic piece of decision making that happens outside the realm of consciousness, and thus it is one of the most helpful clues we can receive to better understand the moral foundations and how those are shaped by culture.

Haidt and Joseph (2004) came up with four intuitions they believe underlie the moral systems that cultures develop, building “incommensurable moralities on top of a foundation of shared intuitions” (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). They believe that the four with the best evidence thus far regard, suffering, hierarchy, reciprocity, and purity. Intuitions fall into categories and MFT can help us understand how these intuitions make us morally sensitive to small or local instances of unfairness or disloyalty. Furthermore, in understanding these automatic moral intuitions, we can “develop new approaches to moral education and to the moral conflicts that divide our diverse society” (Haidt & Joseph 2004). They reason this on the grounds that, if we know what intuitively pushes someone to act, we might even know better than they do what their motives are and how

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<sup>5</sup> The Heinz Dilemma is an example of a moral dilemma that presents two typically conflicting choices. Heinz’s wife is deathly ill and he does not have the money to buy the drug to save her life. The question then posed to the reader is whether or not Heinz should break into the pharmacy to steal the drug to save his wife’s life. (Professor Valdesolo’s Social Psychology Class, 2013).

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the decisions they make and actions they take will manifest such intuitions. It is also important to understand that there are multiple intuitions and moral foundations because of the concept of pluralism, which is the fourth pillar.

Pluralism is the notion that since there are many recurrent social challenges, there are multiple moral foundations. Before MFT, many psychologists, like Kohlberg (1971) and Joyce (2006), aimed for parsimonious theories of morality where they could reduce the entire moral domain to one or two principles (Graham et al. 2011). Principles such as kin selection and reciprocal altruism were principles that comprised prior theories of morality (Dawkins, 1976; Hauser, 2006; Joyce, 2006). However, there is no principle in evolutionary biology that assumes parsimony is a design element of the mind. Earlier when speaking about the nativist view, we noted in the ‘first draft’ an evolutionary process whereby “innate mental structures are likely to be responses to adaptive challenges that faced human beings for millions of years and subsequently created conditions that favored reproductive success of the individuals who could solve these problems most effectively” (Graham et al., 2012). Therefore, while there are possibly more moral foundations than these five, the pillar of pluralism allows for there to be at least these five foundations in MFT and supports the theory in that way, providing justification for it and rejecting theories of parsimony or of monists.

These four claims are the pillars of MFT, for if any one of them were to be proven wrong, or rejected in the future by psychology in light of new theories, MFT would not stand. These four pillars allow us to identify five candidates as the moral foundations that have been shaped through nativism, cultural learning, and intuitionism, and made possible by pluralism. The foundations are Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating,

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Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation. I aim to explain what these foundations are, explain the criteria for foundationhood, and why the psychologists believe these are the best candidates to be our innate, universal, moral foundations.

## The Five Foundations

Graham et al. (2012) believe that innate mental structures, like MFT, are “responses to adaptive challenges” humans have faced throughout the centuries. The Care/Harm foundation is based on the adaptive challenge of caring for vulnerable offspring. Graham et al. explain that the intuitive reactions of female mammals have been “optimized to detect signs of suffering, distress, or neediness” in their offspring and this led them to raise more children to adulthood than other mammals that were less sensitive. Thus, the functional systems that made it “easy and automatic to connect perceptions of suffering with motivations to care, nurture, and protect” (Graham et al., 2012), are what have comprised this Care/Harm foundation. This also coincides well with the intuitions posited above because one of the domains was suffering, and this intuition to mitigate suffering is intuitive because for many years it was the adaptive challenge that groups had to face and those who did not demonstrate a sufficient amount of care, did not survive and prosper. For example, Graham et al. provide an example of a woman who cares for her children and tries to mitigate their suffering when they cry or look hurt. However, her sister does not do the same and she does not emphasize the Care foundation as much and her offspring subsequently do not survive. Of course that does not always happen, but it is an illustration of how typically the traits for survival are the ones that are passed on and those that can become innate intuitions, formed from the repeated challenges we have faced as a species.

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The Fairness/Cheating foundation came about as a response to the challenge of navigating and reaping benefits of two-way partnerships. Graham et al. explain that those who were more competitive and who were more aware and conscientious of cheating, and thus played “tit for tat” (Graham et al., 2012), were the ones who had an advantage and generally succeeded over those who did not think that way. It is also interesting to note that the triggers that evoke a use of/reliance on the foundation of fairness/cheating used to be about “cheating, cooperation, and deception” (Graham et al., 2012), and it took place between direct interaction partners. Today, we associate it more with marital fidelity, and even broken vending machines sometimes when we feel as if we are ‘cheated’ if the machine takes our money but does not give us something in return. This idea falls under the intuition of reciprocity where we are intuitively moved to act to remedy situations without reciprocity. Graham et al. make sure to note the adaptive challenge which people have had to overcome for centuries and the intuition with which people react to such challenges today, including certain situations in which they might act in such a way, thus gaining a better understanding of the roots of our moral foundations. Along with this analysis, they also provide the characteristic emotions that describe how people feel about moral foundations, and the relevant virtues that describe what people are like who manifest these morals. For those who are cheated, characteristic emotions are anger and guilt; for fairness, it is gratitude. When it comes to relevant virtues, people who come to be known as “good partners for exchange relationships are praised as virtuous with words such as fair, just, and trustworthy” (Graham et al., 2012).

The Loyalty/Betrayal foundation is the third in this list and it maintains that intergroup competition has been decisive for survival and the adaptive mode has been to

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form cohesive coalitions (Graham et al., 2012). Threats and challenges to the group by other groups made cohesive coalitions the winning teams in such intergroup competition, which was decisive for survival. Thus, “those whose minds were organized in advance of experience” (Graham et al., 2012) to make it easier for them to form these coalitions, were more likely to succeed and overcome the adaptive challenge of such intergroup competition. Any threat or challenge to the group was a trigger originally, and today, it has moved on to be that people feel loyalty to their nations, not necessarily their ‘groups’. The emotions that accompany loyalty are group pride, and those that accompany betrayal are rage and hostility towards traitors. Relevant virtues to this moral foundation are loyalty, patriotism, and self-sacrifice, thus, those who are loyal might be characterized in this way (Graham et al., 2012).

The Authority/Subversion foundation began with the adaptive challenge of forging beneficial relationships within hierarchies in order to survive in dominance hierarchies. This is one of the most important foundations for this paper, I would argue, because most of the practices, if not all in at least some slight way, appeal to this foundation and emphasize it greatly in their judgments and actions. Graham et al. (2012) explain that the intuitive pattern of hierarchy undergirds the moral system because those minds that are “structured to navigate such hierarchies in advance of experience and forge beneficial relationships upwards and downwards, have an advantage over those who fail to perceive or react appropriately in these complex social interactions.” Naturally, those who can show obedience, and deference, to figures of authority will be the ones who succeed in this system. But those who choose not to do that, or cannot do that as easily because it is not as intuitive, will not succeed in a hierarchical culture.

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Characteristic emotions are respect and fear and these will be very evident in the cases we examine. This foundation is especially important because it is one whose virtues can be considered most controversial. Obedience and deference “are virtues in some subcultures, but can be seen as neutral or even as vices in others” (Graham et al., 2012). Graham et al. (2012) have administered a Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ) to many people of different nations, groups, and cultures around the world, and while the Care and Fairness foundations generally remained steady at a relatively high emphasis for each group, what changed were the extents to which each group emphasized Authority/Subversion, Loyalty/Betrayal, and Sanctity/Degradation (Graham et al. 2009). These three have relevant virtues that are at the core of this exploration and we will see them soon in the case study examples.

Finally, the Sanctity/Degradation foundation originally was the response to the attempt to avoid communicable diseases. Initially, there was concern about diseased people and this invoked the intuitive domain of Purity. The characteristic emotion of this foundation is disgust, and this is thought to be an “adaptation to the powerful adaptive challenge to avoid the risks presented by pathogens and parasites” (Graham et al., 2012). However, while the characteristic emotion of disgust is still the result of any type of deviation from Purity or Sanctity, or any Degradation, the current triggers for Sanctity have moved away from disease and into realms of sexuality and even immigration. The relevant virtues are no longer healthiness, but also temperance, chastity, piety, and cleanliness (Graham et al., 2012). This is also an incredibly important foundation because the practices we will look at will also invoke Sanctity and Purity as an important, if not the most important, foundation for justifying human rights abuses.

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These five moral foundations have clearly arisen from a need to overcome challenges throughout the centuries and now that we have established that there can indeed be moral foundations that are innate and universal, we can begin to understand why the psychologists chose these five foundations and what criteria they used to determine this. Graham et al. (2012) provide criteria of "foundationhood" to explain why they believe these are the five best candidates and to provide a grounds for other values to count as foundations. The five criteria are, 1) a common concern in third-party normative judgments, 2) automatic affective evaluations, 3) culturally widespread, 4) evidence of innate preparedness, and 5) evolutionary model demonstrates adaptive advantage (Graham et al., 2012).

#### Criteria of Foundationhood

The first criterion indicates that the value in question should be one that people are concerned that others carry out. Graham et al. explain that, "the sorts of third-party violations that people in a community react to is a good guide to where moral foundations should be sought. If a potentially moral issue never shows up in gossip, then that's a reason to doubt the existence of such a foundation" (Graham et al., 2012). This is because humans live in "moral matrices" that provide a framework against which people can judge the actions of others. Thus, when third parties are judged for cheating, failing to repay favors, or taking more than their share for example (Dunbar, 1998), this is an indication of the moral foundations that these societies value in their moral matrices and wish to uphold. Graham, Haidt and Nosek, (2009), found many examples of "people condemning third parties for violations related to each foundation" thus furthering the proof that the five foundations listed are not arbitrary.

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The second criterion maintains that not only do we have a moral intuition that leads us to automatically judge something as wrong or right, but we have automatic evaluations that come along with those judgments. These evaluations are reactions “with a specific flavor to it, such as cruel!, unfair!, sick!, subversive! (Graham et al., 2012) and so on. These reactions relate back to a moral foundation: unfair to Fairness, sick to Sanctity/Purity, and cruel to Care/Harm, thus these reactions can help us determine the foundation that is valued. So, if such a moral reaction is elicited quickly and easily at some type of stimulus, then that is good evidence for its foundationhood. Graham et al. (2012) support this claim with references to fMRI studies that have shown people having “rapid, affectively-laden reactions to being cheated, and those reactions tend to activate the brain areas related to emotion” (Rilling et al. 2002). They have found similar support for images that activate the Care foundation (Luo et al., 2006) and stories, like that of sexual violation, eliciting automatic reactions in the Sanctity foundation (Parkinson et al., 2011). If a “rapid and affectively-laden judgment is triggered,” (Graham et al., 2012) that is a good sign that it is moral foundation-material.

The third criterion posits that the foundation must be culturally widespread and this is one of the most important criteria for this paper, because as we are dealing with cross-cultural perspectives, it is critical to have a theory that accounts for morality across cultures. This criterion states that the case for foundationhood becomes stronger for a candidate when the candidate is found “across WEIRD<sup>6</sup> societies, agricultural societies, and hunter-gatherer societies” (Graham et al., 2012). Each of the proposed foundations

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<sup>6</sup> An acronym used in Psychology to abbreviate for: Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic, societies.

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passes this test. For example, Reciprocity and Fairness is an important moral concern in all societies (Brown, 1996). Care is another foundation that has yet to be identified as not of concern in a particular society (Fiske, 1992). However, when it comes to Authority, Loyalty, and Sanctity, there is an important point we must note to understand why it is still possible to be regarded as a culturally widespread foundation. Graham et al. (2012) maintain that it is not necessary for a foundation to be *visible* in all human cultures for it to be a foundation. Earlier I explained that the foundations are innate, but innate does not mean that it is shown to underlie the morality in each culture, but rather that it is a foundation that is “organized in advance of experience” (Graham et al., 2012) and so we should expect to see it in some form in most human cultures. This can help explain why hunter-gatherer societies are generally egalitarian and do not have values of authority or submissiveness (Boehm, 1999). Rather than believe that they lack the innate cognitive structures that allow one to implement hierarchical relationships, Boehm (1999) explains that hunter-gatherers “generally find cultural mechanisms of suppressing the ever-present threat of alpha-male behavior, thereby maintaining egalitarian relationships among male adults in spite of the hierarchical tendencies found among most humans” (Boehm, 1999). This can also help explain how some cultures turn virtue into vice, e.g. how “Nazi Germany turned compassion into the vice of softness” (Koonz, 2003). The fact that the five proposed foundations are culturally widespread is evident, and it is important not to let it become obscure by believing that its distortion or suppression signifies that it is not a foundation organized in advance of experience in all human cultures.

The fourth criterion is the evidence of innate preparedness. This posits that a value or behavior must be innate for it to count as a foundation. The psychologists make

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clear to emphasize the extent of innateness necessary for foundation capability. They explain that all human societies face similar challenges and so it is possible that they came up with similar solutions to these challenges, but this evidence of a similar behavior or ability would not be ample evidence to prove it is innate. Instead, the case for innateness is strengthened when a behavior or ability is “found in non-human primates and when it can be shown to emerge in young children before they have been exposed to relevant teaching or reinforcement” (Graham et al., 2012). Graham et al. have aimed to show this is the case with their five moral foundations and have searched for evidence that confirmed these morals exist early on in other primates and young children. For primates, they appeal to De Waal (1995) who has found that the “building blocks of human morality are present in other primates.” They found that the building blocks have been shown for the Care foundation with examples of empathy and nurturance (Preston & De Waal, 2002), for the Loyalty foundation with examples of coalitional behavior and inter-coalitional conflict (de Waal, 1982), and the Authority foundation regarding rank and deference (Boehm, 1999). The evidence of the five foundations as innate in young children is also ample and supportive of this theory. Recent findings in developmental psychology strongly support this criterion. Sloane, Baillaregon, and Premack (2012) have found that infants are sensitive to third-party violations of fairness. Infants are also aware of ingroup/outgroup distinctions and prefer members of their ingroup, (Kinzler, Dupoux, & Spelke, 2007), demonstrated by helping those who are similar and in their ingroup, hence activating the Loyalty foundation (Hamlin, Mahajan, Liberman, & Wynn, 2012). These findings strengthen the case for innate preparedness and if any proposed

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foundation has similar building blocks, it is on the right track to being considered for foundationhood.

Finally, the fifth criterion ensures that there are adaptive advantages of “certain innate mechanisms that are among the modules comprising each foundation” (Graham et al., 2012) that led for this foundation to continue through each generation. The evolutionary model should identify how the feature conferred to an adaptive advantage for individuals compared to the members of that same group who lacked that feature (just as we explained in the Care/Harm foundation example of the two sisters caring for their offspring). If a value or moral has no clear adaptive challenge to mark it as unique or beneficial, then this is a point against it in determining foundationhood.

Based on this criteria, the five candidates introduced earlier are what Graham et al. believe are the moral foundations we all share and that are the most obvious and least debatable foundations. They acknowledge that this list is an initial list and not necessarily the final one and leave open the possibility for more foundations to be found. However, these five are sufficient to help us in understanding the motivations behind certain practices. Shortly, I will proceed by applying MFT to the case studies of three particular practices: female genital modification , child marriage, and the male guardianship in Saudi Arabia, hoping to distinguish on which moral foundations they base their judgments and actions. However, before that, it is important to get a better grasp of how preferences are converted into values and how these moral foundations influence so strongly cultural practices. One theory that will help us in this aim is Paul Rozin’s theory of moralization.

**Moralization Theory**

In their theory, Graham et al. (2012) claim that the moral foundations developed as a hybrid between being culturally shaped and being innate (due to facing similar challenges throughout history and then adapting these qualities for survival). Rozin's theory of moralization explains the process through which preferences are converted into values. Rozin explains that when an entity/activity acquires moral status it influences society and individuals in a more powerful way than when it was a mere preference, and this object/activity can attain moral status for an individual in two ways: experience and cognitive-rational theory (Rozin, 1999). The experience route merely entails one having an experience that causes one to adopt a new moral principle and subsequently, any activities that fall under the scope of that principle obtain moral value. Rozin explains the moralization of cigarette smoking in America to demonstrate this concept. He explains that over the past half-century in America, cigarette smoking has changed from a preference to a moral violation. The action elicits a sense of outrage for onlookers and even those who seem to have tolerated smoke-filled rooms fifty years ago when it was not a trigger of a moral foundation for us, are now outraged as well and "refuse to occupy a hotel room that has previously been occupied by a smoker" (Rozin, 1999). This is a critically important transformation because it demonstrates how preferences can turn into moral triggers, as explained above with MFT, and how at that point, such actions elicit the characteristic emotions, such as disgust in this example. There is a great amount of evidence linking reactions of disgust and cigarette smoking, as well as moral beliefs about smoking. Even those who lived in cigarette-tolerant cultures years ago, are now as negative as their grandchildren in their judgments of smoking (Rozin & Singh, 1999).

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Rozin goes on to emphasize the strength of contemporary moralization in stating that it is so powerful that “it seems to have erased decades of a totally different attitude and experience” (Rozin, 1999). This process of moralization is very important for understanding how certain preferences and values have come to be moralized and entered into the moral domain, but even more importantly, I believe it will prove to be a great tool among the methods of intervention when attempting to ‘negotiate abuses’.

The cognitive-rational theory, on the other hand, requires that one already has a moral rule, and there is some action or object that they did not know about before, but that falls under that rule. Therefore, when the individual finds out about that action/object, he/she will begin to see it as a moral object or action. For instance, the example that Rozin (1999) provides is that of a vegetarian. Suppose you are a vegetarian, but you love Jell-O. After two years of eating Jell-O, you find out that it is not vegetarian. When you find this out, you begin not to like Jell-O and you stop eating it. This is an example of moralization. We can use this theory in the subsequent case-studies to explain how certain practices come to be motivated by moralized values based on the foundations that each group/culture emphasizes. This theory will also prove useful in the intervention section because although it is difficult to change the views ones already has, the process of moralization provides one with an outlet, through the cognitive-rational theory, to find new (less ‘abusive’) moral views that fit in with the pre-existing ones. Activists who wish to intervene and affect change can promote the moralization of attenuated versions of the practices they see as harmful, just like America promoted the moralization of cigarette smoking as a moral violation. In understanding the process of moralization we learn how certain preferences can turn to values and how one can affect change through

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moralization. This theory, combined with MFT, allows one to recognize the moral foundations that underlie the process of moralization and better understand the adherence to practices that sparks debates in the realm of international human rights and is the source of much contention in the judgment of a label of morality.

Female genital modification, child marriage, and the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia, are three practices that have become moralized for the cultures and communities that carry them out, and thus are motivated by morality. In the next section I will attempt to uncover what those specific morals are, and specifically, in which moral foundations these values are based. In each case study, I will aim to highlight the moral foundation the practice is rooted in, how it has been moralized, and later, using this analysis, I propose suggestions for how one might be able to intervene and invoke effective change. There are many resources that outline the moral motivations of groups who perform these practices that are seen as human rights violations, but a special understanding of these motivations is enabled through the universal framework and cross-cultural sound-board that is MFT. With this approach I hope we can get closer to a greater understanding of the groups carrying out these controversial practices and thus intervene more sensitively and effectively than through imposing incompatible values due to a disbelief and indignation at the practices carried out.

**CASE STUDIES****Female Genital Modification**

Female genital modification (FGMo),<sup>7</sup> also known as female genital mutilation (FGM), or female circumcision, is a practice that “comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons” (“WHO | Female genital mutilation,” 2016). The practice is carried out in over 30 countries and “more than 200 million girls and women alive today have been cut” (“WHO | Female genital mutilation,” 2016) in the 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia where FGMo is most concentrated. The countries with the highest concentrations of FGMo are Mali, Egypt, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Somalia, each with prevalence rates for the practice of over 80% (“WHO | Female genital mutilation,” 2016). The majority of girls undergo the procedure before the age of 15 and it is recognized as a violation of the human rights of girls and women by the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (“Female genital mutilation/cutting,” 2016). FGMo is seen as a violation because it harms girls’ health a great amount and typically has many immediate and long-term complications. Immediate complications can include, “severe pain, excessive bleeding genital tissue swelling, fever, infections (tetanus), urinary problems, wound healing problems, injury to surrounding genital tissue, shock, and death” (“WHO | Female genital mutilation,” 2016) and long-term consequences include painful urination, urinary tract infections, menstrual problems,

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<sup>7</sup> I use the term FGMo here because it is the “value-neutral” term that has been used over the controversial “value-negative” term, mutilation. The terminology for this practice has been a topic of heated debate since the 1970s in the fields of public health and human rights (Denniston, G., Hodges, F., & Milos, M. F. (Eds.). 2008).

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diminished enjoyment of sexual relations, increased risk of childbirth complications, and psychological problems, among others.

In 2012, the United Nations General Assembly “adopted a resolution calling on the international community to intensify efforts to end the practice” (“Female genital mutilation/cutting,” 2016) and even more recently in 2015, the sustainable development goals established each year by the global community, included a goal to “eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and FGMO by the year 2030” (“Female genital mutilation/cutting | Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse | UNICEF,” 2016). Clearly, this is a great concern for the international human rights community, yet, such discourse is not prevalent in the countries where these practices take place. I will focus in this section just on FGMO and in the next on child marriage, but in each case, the proponents of these practices believe that what they are doing is *right* and the notion of such practices being a violation of human rights seems to be a creation of the countries reprimanding the practice. While there are advocates of this violation belief in these countries, opposing the practices as well, they are in the minority. How can a practice that is abhorred by so many and seen as a violation of a person’s rights to: “health, security, physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure ends in death” (“WHO | Female genital mutilation,” 2016) be valued and celebrated by so many others? Two philosophers attempt to provide an answer in their claim that, “the differences between cultures results from the difference in our belief system, not in our values. In this case, FGMO represents the universal value of initiation. It is the individualistic and hyper-progressive citizen who fails to understand the belief system of these communities which

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prioritize community over self and temporary pain over rejection of one's ancestral identity" (Rachels, 2003). While this reasoning does not completely explain the motivations of each group to respond the way they do to the practice, it establishes the grounds for a need of that explanation.

The author's belief that these different opinions do not arise due to a difference in values is consistent with MFT in that, our belief systems lead us to emphasize certain values over another and controversy arises when one group cannot believe or understand that the other would emphasize a certain value over another. For example, in the case of FGMO, it seems as though the groups that reject FGMO appeal to all the (medical) harm it will cause the girls, thus invoking the Care/Harm foundation and demonstrating their prioritization of that ("New statistical report on female genital mutilation shows harmful practice is a global concern," 2016). On the other hand, the groups that support FGMO seem to be prioritizing other foundations and associate the practice with rights, honorable initiation, and celebration. However, opponents of the practice seem to ignore, minimize, or miss these points when describing the practice as a "barbarous and heathen custom" (Schweder, 2000) carried out by "mutilators, murderers, and torturers" (Schweder, 2000). However, it is a tradition that, in Africa, is "rooted back to 4000 BC" (Hellsten, S. K., 2004) and today, at least 3 million girls are exposed to FGMO a year (WHO | Female genital mutilation," 2016). If opponents of this practice feel such indignation towards it and wish to implement change, they must first "learn the reasons why the traits under attack are present, the roles they fulfill, and their meanings to the people" (Foster, G. M., & Anderson, B. G. 1978). Thus, the rest of this section will be dedicated to applying

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MFT to FGMO to explore the moral foundations within which the practice is rooted and correspondingly to explore how it has been moralized throughout its expansive history.

The practice of FGMO is typically carried out as a rite of passage, a coming-of age ceremony, and a much-anticipated milestone in the process of initiation for a girl in the societies that perform the practice. According to psychologist Richard Shweder (2000), “most women positively evaluate its consequences...and feel empowered by the initiation ceremony.” There are three main types of female genital modification, some that are more severe or intense than the others. The practices can range from a partial or total removal of the clitoris, often referred to as clitoridectomy, to total removal of the clitoris and partial removal of the labia minora known as (excision) , to the most severe that is a process that “narrows the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal through stitching” (“WHO | Female genital mutilation,” 2016), often known as infibulation or pharaonic circumcision<sup>8</sup>. The procedure is typically followed by a ceremony where the mother presents her daughter as initiated into the community, womanhood, and in the family. One woman in Mali explained that she made sure her daughters had the procedure because “it ensures the woman’s strong place in the family,” (Fiske, Rai, & Pinker, 2015). The practice is also seen in some countries as a “preparation for marriage and procreation; it marked the end of sexual freedom, affirmed parental authority and

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<sup>8</sup> There is a fourth type of FGMO that is carried out in a fewer number of countries, called labia elongation. This is a practice where woman stretch and elongate the labia minora through manual pulling and it is mostly motivated by the Sanctity foundation because those who do not do this are seen as disgusting, repulsive, and less sexually desirable (Fiske, Rai, & Pinker, 2015) and evoke feelings of degradation. I do not include it here though because in the discourse of human rights violations, it is typically not considered.

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filial duty, protected one against the dangers of sexual intercourse, and ensured fertility as well as ancestral beings” (Shell-Duncan, B., & Hernlund, Y. 2000), and all of this is cause for celebration. The reason there exist these slight distinctions in beliefs about the procedure is because, as female genital modification is a practice that has such regional diversity, the emphases of values shift from country to country, and even village to village within countries. Some groups practice the tradition within a patriarchal society, whereas others, like the Kono women in Sierra Leone, live in matrilineal societies (Shweder, 2000). Some groups like those in the Middle East who practice FGMO appeal to religion and the Hadiths of the Muslim prophet as an authority, and others are not Islamic or religious at all (Shweder, 2000). Some groups greatly value “female purity, sexual restraint outside of marriage, and the social regulation of desire,” (Shweder, 2000) and see FGMO as a way to regulate those things, and others, such as the Gikuyu group in Kenya, do not view the practice in that way and do not regulate sexual relations before marriage. It seems that in each of these distinct regions though the practice of FGMO is motivated by the moral foundations of either one or all of the following:

Authority/Submissiveness, Loyalty/Ingroup, Sanctity/Purity/Degradation, and Care/Harm.

The Authority foundation is invoked in two distinct ways regarding FGMO: a demonstration of the authority and power of God for some, and a demonstration of the authority of the women in these societies for most. In some explanations of why certain groups continue to carry out FGMO, there are appeals to obeying the authority of God. Among the groups that practice FGMO and Islam, “the parents and the person circumcised are often motivated to have the surgery done because it is God’s will” (El

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Dareer, 1983). These men and women go on to cite hadith, sayings from the prophet that are not necessarily found in the Quran but that are merited as holy and divine because they come from the prophet. Many believe that it is a “religious duty to obey what they believe to be the prophet’s commands and circumcise women” (El Dareer, 1983). There are different hadiths that are cited in the explanation and moral justification of FGMO and they differ depending on which school of Islamic Jurisprudence one examines, but generally, they each either see the practice as obligatory, honorable, or preferred, in the wake of the idea that they must obey the prophet’s commands. This view that it is a religious requirement is held widely in many countries, but particularly in, Mali, Eritrea, Mauritania, Guinea, and Egypt (“Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting,” 2016). In one of the six major hadith collections, Sunan Abu Sawud is a hadith that explains and justifies the practice. One hadith from that collection is as follows: “A woman used to perform circumcision in Medina. The Prophet said to her: Do not cut severely as that is better for a woman and more desirable for a husband” (“Comparative Index to Islam : CIRCUMCISION,” 2013). The reasoning here is that since the prophet talked about circumcision, and condoned it, although conditionally, the duty to obey this authority can be carried out through the practice. These sorts of justifications are apparent throughout the hadiths which are mostly based on the same foundation of authority: “it is an act of obedience to God, and thus it is deeply and essentially moral” (El Dareer, 1983). Thus, the obedience of authority is a strong moral motivator in the direction of practicing FGMO, but it is important to believe that these foundations are not mutually exclusive and hence, although a community might appeal to the obedience of a religious authority as rationalization, they also can view the women as an authority as well. Not only will a

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girl “enter into a covenant with God, but she will also be honored and respected as an adult member of the community via circumcision” (Shweder, 2000).

The authority of women plays a significant role in this practice because it respects and furthers the authority of those in charge of the practice—the grandmothers, in the case of FGMo—and it grants authority to the other women involved, namely the mother and the daughter undergoing the procedure. This initiation “transform[s] girls into women, and mothers of initiates into figures of authority within the community” (Shell-Duncan, B., & Hernlund, Y. 2000). The women involved in the procedure are then respected as well as respectful. The grandmother is the one who arranges for the procedure and it would be a shame and an act of betrayal (invoking the Loyalty foundation here) if a young girl did not undergo the procedure, if she did not respect the authority of her mother, and if her mother did not respect the authority of the girl’s grandmother. However, rejection of submissiveness and appealing to authority seems to rarely be an issue. According to a woman from Sierra Leone, Fuambai Ahmadu, who has undergone the procedure, (and at the very late age of 22), the women who uphold the rituals of FGMo do so because they want to and because it allows them to “brace the legitimacy of female authority, and particularly the authority of their mothers and grandmothers” (Shweder, 2000). She goes on to explain it as a power the women have over men in society, and the desire to maintain that authority is a motivating factor for these women who continue the practice. A woman becomes “very trustworthy because she does not allow man to take advantage of her. She is her own person,” (Shweder, 2000) says Ahmadu, and it puts a daughter in a position of authority demarcating insider

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status, “you become a part of the group of elder women who have power in the society” (Khazan, 2015).

Contrary to this evidence of female authority, some FGMO opponents wrongly assume that the practice perpetuates patriarchal dominance and female oppression, but “if we look at the data across Africa, the support for the practice is stronger among women than among men,” say Shell-Duncan and Hernlund (2000). They go on to explain that in many instances, when laws have been put in place to ban the practice in Kenya and nearby countries, many girls began to protest and sing a song that sent the message of “*Ngaitana*”, or, “I will circumcise myself” (Shell-Duncan, B., & Hernlund, Y. 2000). There is a strong desire within the girls and young women of these societies who feel strongly morally motivated to carry out these practices to keep them alive. Accordingly, it has long been noted, by observers and researchers, that “girls and women tend to defend the institution more vigorously than their male counterparts” (Shell-Duncan, B., & Hernlund, Y. 2000). FGMO is almost always “controlled, performed, and most strongly upheld by women, although male kin do provide material and moral support” (Shweder, 2000), and the tendency for women to control the process reveals a female authority that is often overlooked by outsiders who project their own assumptions onto the practice” (Shell-Duncan, B., & Hernlund, Y. 2000). In many groups, it is not a form of oppression as the adolescent girls who undergo the ritual initiation, “look forward to it” (Shweder, 2000) and it does not promote a patriarchal society, as women are in charge of the practice and men merely offer the moral support behind the moral motivations that drive women to act on these values.

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The Loyalty Foundation can be a powerful explanation for the motivation behind carrying out the practice of FGMO as well, in many, if not all, communities with the tradition. Tied to the significance of initiation that this practice carries with it, is the idea that “the mutilated individual is removed from the common mass of humanity by a rite of separation which automatically incorporates him into a defined group” (Fiske et al., 2015). The Loyalty foundation highly values ingroup cohesiveness and the formation of coalitions, and one way this comes about is through traditions like FGMO. Earlier I discussed how those who formed these coalitions were more likely to succeed and overcome the adaptive challenge of intergroup competition (Graham et al., 2012). Well, one way to form this coalition, or at least to further define it, would be to have an initiation ceremony, like that of FGMO, in which “a child becomes an adult or an outsider becomes an insider through ritually controlled pain, [therefore weakening] the subject’s sense of empirical identity and strengthen[ing] his/her sense of attachment to a highly valued new center of identification” (Fiske et al., 2015). Any threat or challenge to the group was a trigger that invoked the sense of a need for loyalty and cohesiveness of all members in order to succeed against this threat, and thus it seems reasonable then to believe that the emphasis on the Loyalty foundation in these FGMO-practicing cultures arose through a process of moralization. The preferences to distinguish one group from the other in order to then assert dominance or hierarchical status, led to a need for a group of loyal members that would remain true to their community. Accounts as to how the tradition arose vary, but some include the belief that the “practice developed independently among certain ethnic groups in sub-Saharan Africa as part of puberty rites” (“FGM National Clinical Group - Historical & Cultural,” 2015). Thus it was a mere

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preference that, through the process of moralization, would acquire moral status and influence individuals in a more powerful way than before. Later in history accounts, it is noted that FGMO was “practiced in ancient Egypt as a sign of distinction amongst the aristocracy” (“FGM National Clinical Group - Historical & Cultural,” 2015). It seems to be that this practice transitioned from being a preference of each individual culture to celebrate the transition from childhood to adulthood, to something that was a real necessity in society in order to assert dominance and characterize ingroup loyalty. The practice grew to have moral value based in one of the five foundations, specifically that of loyalty to the ingroup, as it could allow members of a certain community to form a distinct cohesion with loyal members to defeat other groups.

To further support that this is now a tradition motivated morally, I can allude to many first and second-hand accounts that describe FGMO as a practice that “makes them one with us” (Shweder, 2000) and that “ethnic group loyalty is the best predictor of who circumcises and who does not” (Shweder, 2000). These accounts describe that in communities like these, “whose existence totally depends on absolute selfless loyalty” (Fiske et al., 2015), people cherish the practice. Girls in Somalia and Sudan, explained in an interview with Shweder that they widely believed that genital alterations improve women’s bodies and make them “more honorable because the surgery announces one’s commitment to perpetuate the lineage and value the womb as the source of social reproduction,” (Shweder, 2000) for this group to whom they are loyal. FGMO is an essential step into adulthood and a crucial element for group loyalty because otherwise, the sensations and notions of disgust and degradation that accompany non-circumcised women are potent enough to characterize the refusal of FGMO as betrayal. Further

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explanation of the Sanctity/Degradation foundation as a moral motivator for FGMO will greatly help to clarify this belief.

The Sanctity/Degradation foundation, I would argue, is the most emphasized foundation for moral motivation of FGMO across region, ethnicity, religion, and any other difference across communities that might exist. As discussed earlier, the characteristic emotion of this foundation is disgust, and it is the result of any type of deviation from purity or sanctity, or any degradation. The relevant virtues are temperance, chastity, piety, and cleanliness (Graham et al., 2012), and FGMO advocates for each of these and more. Two documentary producers, McKenna and Howarth (2009), created a documentary film that provides insight into the practice of FGMO and in doing so explained that the practice of FGMO in these societies, helps to “ensure female chastity which is the core moral value in most of these communities which emphasize honor and shame.” It is true that there is a great sense of shame that comes along with being uncircumcised and that is because “an overwhelming sense of disgust is felt for anyone who doesn’t do this” (Rozin, 1999). Rozin (1999) goes on to explain that “to find something disgusting is to desire no commerce or affiliation with it; it is beyond temptation” (Rozin, 1999). This is true in many communities that practice FGMO—Shweder (2000) explains that, a person whose “genitalia are not properly modified is a disgusting, horrific freak: her bodily oddity separates her from the most fundamental relationships and she would have no prospects for marriage and no one would want her as a lover.” Thus, the feelings invoked by the absence of modified genitals lead to a rejection of that person from the ingroup, as they are less likely to reproduce to contribute to the group’s longevity. This disgust serves as a “moral amplifier and an indication of

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moral feelings” (Rozin, 1999) that guide the judgments and actions made and taken by these groups. This disgust factor is invoked by the strong sense of degradation that accompanies not having modified genitals. For example, many women in Kenya, Egypt, Chad, Somalia, and Mali are repulsed by the idea of uncircumcised or unmodified genitals. To them, unmodified genitals are “ugly, unrefined, and undignified, and hence not fully human. Unmodified genitals are associated with life outside of or at the bottom of civilized society” (Shweder, 2000). Such emphasis on the negative consequences of forgoing the practice and on the importance on being clean and pure, allows FGMo to be a treasured practice rooted so deeply in the moral foundation of Sanctity/Degradation that ‘eradication’ of the practice is highly unlikely. This practice has primarily been moralized through the cognitive-rational theory in a way that it has acquired extreme moral status which allows it to “influence society and individuals in a more powerful way than when it was a mere preference” (Rozin, 1999). Next is a brief explanation of how this occurred.

Sanctity is a moral foundation that is emphasized more than others in the cultures that carry out FGMo. The Sanctity/Degradation foundation initially was the response to the attempt to avoid communicable diseases (Graham et al. 2012) and this was a widespread concern in many of the countries in Africa that support FGMo. For example, “traditional herbal medicines have been used to treat malaria for thousands of years” (Willcox & Bodeker, 2004) and there are many other examples that cite the use of herbal medicines as a “fundamental component of the African traditional healthcare system, [and] is perhaps the oldest and the most assorted of all therapeutic systems” (Mahomoodally, 2013). Thus, this initial concern to avoid communicable diseases was the trigger for the emphasis of the Sanctity/Degradation moral foundation in these

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societies and through both the cognitive-rational and experiential theory of moralization, FGMO came to be moralized and influenced by moral motivation in this foundation. Through the accumulated experience of performing the practice time and time again, people began to see this practice as a way to purify or cleanse a woman. One woman in Sudan explains that “one cannot leave a woman open, like the road that leads to Ondurman<sup>9</sup>...you need to cover (the opening) a little bit...a girl cannot be dirty and open...(and) the stream of urine cannot make noise or create a little fountain on the sand where it falls” (Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000). Thus, acts that may seem inconsequential or insignificant, such as the sound that urine makes when it falls, were moralized and transitioned from having a neutral significance to one that was accompanied by degrees of morality. As people began to learn through experience what could count as preserving sanctity and what could prohibit degradation, they began to view such acts as moral/immoral and thus, disgust began to result from any type of deviation from purity or sanctity, regarding FGMO. Shweder (2000) explains that “to call a woman uncircumcised, or to call a man the son of an uncircumcised mother, is a terrible insult,” and to forego such a practice is characterized as an act of neglect on behalf of the woman who was supposed to be in charge of organizing the procedure. This indicates then an emphasis on the Care foundation as well, wherein FGMO is seen as an act of care and love and its absence is an act of neglect or harm.

The moral motivation based on the Care foundation is demonstrated in the reasoning of many mothers when describing why they decided to go through with the procedure for their children. Women who carry out FGMO see it as an act of “love,

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<sup>9</sup> The largest city in Sudan

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identification, and a moral obligation” (Fiske et al., 2015) to fulfill an unbreakable commitment to their children regarding their wellbeing. Fear that their daughters will not be able to marry and have a good life motivates the decision to take the action, as does the desire for their girls to be an integrated and accepted part of the community, rather than an outcast. These are acts of care and concern for the wellbeing of their children, motivated by a mother’s desire to not see her daughters suffer, which was an initial trigger in facing the adaptive challenge for the Care foundation of protecting and caring for children. Abusharaf (2001), explains that, “for the mother and other family members, it [FGMo] is an act of responsible love, ensuring their daughter a bright and honorable future.” For proponents of this practice, it is the ultimate mark of care for one’s child to have them initiated into society. It is a practice filled with benefits and positive evaluations that aid a woman on her life path, including, but not limited to, its positive consequences regarding a girl’s “psychological, social, spiritual, and physical well-being” (Shweder, 2000). Traditionally and to a great extent today, “all concerned regard this as a morally necessary and highly virtuous” (Abusharaf, 2001) tradition. The tradition is motivated by the care for the wellbeing of one’s child and the removal of any potential harm. However, this is a point of contention in the international community. While it may be apparent to those practicing the tradition that it is morally motivated by care, “opponents will invoke the medical complications in order to demonstrate that these cultures are harming their offspring” (Obermeyer, 1999), thus attempting to minimize the care they show and feel, and turn more of it to harm. However, there are two responses I have to this contention.

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First, the appeal to the medical harm in the proportions that are stated is misrepresentative and poorly supported. As stated earlier, these complications can include, but are not limited to, urinary tract infections, menstrual problems, diminished enjoyment of sexual relations, increased risk of childbirth complications, and even death (“Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting,” 2015). One medical anthropology researcher, Carla Obermeyer, found that the research base alerting others to the devastating effects of FGMO, “contained numerous methodological flaws (such as small or unrepresentative samples, and no control groups) and vague descriptions of medical complications” (Obermeyer, 1999). Obermeyer then went on to conduct her own research with corrected methods and found that “the widely publicized medical complications of African genital operations are the exception, not the rule; that female genital alterations are not incompatible with sexual enjoyment; and that the claim that untold numbers of girls and women have been killed as a result of this ‘traditional practice’ is not well supported by the evidence” (Shweder, 2000). According to Obermeyer (1999), the support for these “alarmist claims that these traditions have ‘maimed or killed an untold number of women and girls’” relies on sensational testimonials and secondhand reports and their statistics are misleading and dubious. However, just because their sample may be unrepresentative or biased, it does not reject the validity of the fact that some women do experience such consequences and in that vein, the concern for the harm of these girls must not be rejected. The complications experienced by some are dangerous and frightening, however, many activists mistakenly take this approach of exposing the harms of the practice to convince its practitioners that they should abstain from such ‘cruel’ treatment. Applied social scientists have found that, generally, “interventions aimed at health-related

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behaviors are ineffective, and making claims to absolute moral and ethical knowledge in the face of practices that are acceptable in their own social context is not the best strategy for engagement with the people whose practices are perceived to be problematic by outsiders” (Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000). This is similar to what we have been exploring through MFT regarding the effort to understand others from their moral emphases rather than our own and researcher Bettina Shell-Duncan (2000), continues in this vein. She argues against the above-stated interventionist approach, claiming that it is not beneficial to talk about health risks in many African countries since people are likely to die from many other causes before they die from circumcision. She urges that “when it comes to identifying public health issues, populations are best served by both a holistic approach and what can be thought of as a sort of public-health triage” (Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000). Basically, the harm that many activists and activist organizations alert the global community to is real harm, however, it is not imminent nor so widely prevalent to be a major issue of concern for those who carry out the practice. While someone might see such consequences of a practice as harmful, the local circumstances prescribe a different reaction for the FGMO-practicing groups.

Putting the unrepresentativeness of the appeal to harm in the medical realm aside, I would respond to this minimization of care and over-emphasis on harm on the part of the opponents of FGMO with an appeal to MFT and the emphasis by different cultures on certain foundations. It seems that those who oppose FGMO believe that the harmful effects outweigh the supposed care that motivates the practice. In this instance, I would argue that this opponent values deeply the Care/Harm foundation, perhaps even over any other foundation. For the proponents of FGMO, however, I would argue that while they

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value the Care/Harm foundation, it is not the most emphasized foundation because girls are willing to tolerate the pain and the harm for the benefits that the practice brings.

These benefits are the ones discussed earlier that fall under the realms of Loyalty/ingroup, Sanctity, and Authority. Shweder (2000) explains that adolescent girls in Kenya look forward to the initiation. They are aware that “it is an ordeal and can be painful, but it is viewed as a test of courage” (Shweder, 2000) and represents civility, purity, dignity, beauty, and the benefits it brings (based on *their* values) outweigh the physical harm because the practice prevents the social harm that would accompany the absence of the practice. In a sense, the opponents and proponents are working with distinct definitions of harm: harm does not mean the same thing, or perhaps is just not valued in the same way, for one group as it is for the other, and this leads to certain efforts being lost in a sort of cultural-translation. Until those who wish to intervene stop using the judgment of the practices as harmful as a way to invoke change, they will not be able to speak a language in which they understand one another, nor create a grounds upon which change is possible.

**Child Marriage**

Child marriage is a practice that occurs mainly in Africa and Asia, but extends also to the Middle East and parts of Central America ("Foundation," 2014). Child marriage is defined as marriage of a child under 18 years of age (Nour, 2009), and the countries with the highest percentage of child marriage are Niger, Chad, Mali, and Bangladesh, all with rates of above 65% of women between the ages of 20-24 who were married before the age of 18 (the legal age of adulthood, according to Article I of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: (“Convention on the Rights of the Child,” 1990).

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The practice of child marriage has been around since recorded history of ancient times and it is rooted in the moral foundations of Authority and Sanctity. In many of the countries where child marriage still occurs, and at a pretty high rate, it is officially illegal. The United Nations and other international agencies have deemed child marriage a violation of human rights and children's rights and in 1979 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) declared child marriage illegal ("Text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," 1979). Many of the countries with the current highest rates of child marriage passed laws changing the legal age to marry to 18 years old, however, adherence to these laws is minimal and prosecution of the crime is seldom. I would postulate that this is partly due to the fact that members of the communities that carry out child marriages, are more morally motivated to follow their own traditions than they are to respect these international norms. The factors driving child marriage are intertwined so tightly and motivated so deeply by moral convictions that not pursuing the practice would be immoral and unthinkable (Chowdhury, 2004).

There are many factors driving Child Marriage today and we will focus on five of the most commonly cited when reading testimony or interviews with those who have taken part in the practice. Women and men who explain the practice appeal to social values, shame, protection, necessity to control a woman's personality, and poverty as the reasons motivating the practice (Chowdhury, 2004). Women are seen as having to obey authority because they are inferior and the gender differences and relations to power and authority will be discussed in subsequent sections relating to the Sanctity and Authority foundations. There are many in opposition to this practice and in their rejection of the

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practice, they cite the many harms the practice can bring, such as an increased rate of HIV/AIDS<sup>10</sup> (Nour, 2009), risks during labor and delivery (Lee-Rife, Malhotra, Warner, & Glinski, 2012), risks for infants (Lee-Rife et al., 2012), termination of education (Barr, 2015), health problems ranging from malnutrition and early death (Chowdhury, 2004), domestic abuse and violence including rape (Barr, 2015), abandonment (Barr, 2015), psychological problems and sexual disharmony and other maladjustments (Chowdhury, 2004). One scholar warns that a “dangerous combination of entrenched poverty and customs, deeply embedded in patriarchal societies is what continues to fuel the harmful practice of early marriage, particularly of girls” (Kamal, Hassan, Alam, & Ying, 2015). So, it is evident that the list can go on for the detriments of this “harmful practice” but what moral foundations are attached to these motivating factors and can we attempt to make sense of them in an effort to understand the perpetuation of this practice and the place it holds in these societies?

Social values have been and are weighty forces for child marriage today because in many, if not all, communities that carry out the practice, there is a perpetuated notion that it is “unthinkable for a woman to remain unmarried” (Chowdhury, 2004). There is no social status for a single woman, and even more than I suppose the shame and degradation that comes with not having status, these social values are based heavily in beliefs of purity and sanctity. One woman in a village in Bangladesh said that, “to marry off the girls is regarded as a divine command, and if girls are not given in marriage, it is believed that they will succumb to immorality which is a violation of their chastity” (Chowdhury, 2004). This is an incredibly elucidating point because it clearly establishes

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<sup>10</sup> Marriage by the age of 20 years is a risk factor for HIV infection in girls

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Sanctity as a moral foundation for child marriage. Many further quotes and interviews support such a belief. This is seen in claims that after a certain age, a woman will become disgusting, unwanted, and less worthy, for the family will have to pay more money to give her away than they would if she were younger (Chowdhury, 2004). Another girl from this town in Bangladesh, Dhaka, stated that, “my parents believed that to marry off their girls was a divine command, so Sajed Mian proposed, my parents felt it would be wrong and immoral to reject this eligible bridegroom” (Chowdhury, 2004). This view is one that is deeply entrenched in the community and stems from religious beliefs and certain interpretations of the Quran, thus also demonstrating an authoritative moral motivation. This is also why those who partake in child marriage believe that the girls in the family are a burden, because they believe the Quran says that these women cannot earn their own living, and if they do earn some money, they cannot contribute it to the financial support of their native family. Since women cannot contribute, neither financially, nor socially and since the men are the ones who must look after their parents throughout their life, then women are seen as a burden and thus in addition to it being a divine command to marry off a daughter, it also can be seen as a weight lifted off the family and in turn society’s shoulders. If we look at just Bangladesh, 87% of the population in Bangladesh is Muslim (Chowdhury, 2004), and so this appeal to authority of the Quran is one that guides this practice in these communities.

Shame is another consequence of not participating in child marriage that elicits the moral values of sanctity and purity. The societies in which child marriage takes place, put a great amount of “importance on female sexual purity because the good reputation of the lineage depends on it” (Amin, Diamond, Naved, & Newby, 1998). There are two

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central ways that girls can be 'impure' and bring shame and degradation to the family name. First, she can just be an older girl who is unmarried and bring shame to the family because it is as if she has not received any marriage proposals, and that would be a dishonor to the family and a degradation of the family name. Second, mature girls are "shameful for a family because these girls are perceived as being unable to control their sexuality" (Chowdhury, 2004). It is widely believed that unmarried mature girls will "leave home to have sex" and that "mature girls lose their good character when their husbands go abroad" so female sexuality is controlled through early marriage (Amin et al., 1998). This desire to maintain the purity and sanctity of these girls is so potent that it leads to a disregard of care or fairness to the girl because in order to marry her off early, she must leave school, terminate her education, and sacrifice many things for the purity of herself and her family's name. The consequences of shame and degradation that would occur otherwise are too costly to risk and the value of Fairness is not as heavily emphasized as it might be elsewhere.

Another driving force of child marriage is the idea that women must have guardians for their protection and safety, a motivation in the Care foundation I would argue. In Bangladeshi society it is believed that "women are unable to support and protect themselves and male guardianship is necessary to prevent possible rape" (Chowdhury, 2004). Rape is a large and real threat in Bangladesh where men use it as intimidation to demonstrate their dominant position and is used often to claim a girl as property when it is feared that she will be married off to someone else. One story of a girl, Fatima, in a report from Human Rights Watch, reported that a boy who wanted to marry her but was not eligible in the family's standards, took Fatima to the woods one day, raped her, and

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got her pregnant, and then claimed that he deserves for her to come back to him because he gave her a child (Barr, 2015). He only stopped calling and harassing her once she was married off to a new man and he threatened the troublesome boy. This is a common occurrence that makes marriage important in women's lives because many believe that girls are insecure if not accompanied by a man, and marrying a daughter off is a way to care for her and ensure her safety. One woman in Dhaka explains a case of a 25 year-old man raping a 7 year old-girl and says, "this is the reason we want to marry off our daughters at an early age. We are not so afraid of this happening after marriage" (Barr, 2015). Thus, this practice can be seen as an act of "kindness and loving parenting" (Barr, 2015) in which the parent sees getting their daughter married as the best option for them and for their safety-it is an act of care and kindness, alleviating their daughter's suffering (criteria for the Care foundation) and giving her the best life possible. The circumstances of the country, the danger, the possible degradation, and harm to one's loved ones and to one's reputation, is not outweighed by the possible unfairness that might come from ending an education early or increasing the risk of HIV, because those are not the immediate harms that threaten the values these people hold and the morals that motivate them to act. If those who care to intervene can somehow make the Care foundation weigh more, or find a way to lessen the degree to which they value the Sanctity/Purity/Degradation and Authority/Submissiveness foundations, perhaps they can come closer to attenuating this practice.

The necessity to control a woman's personality is another moral motivator for child marriage and it is fueled by the Authority/Submissive foundation. This is explicitly supported in many interviews and testimonies where submissiveness is a widely valued

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virtue. Chowdhury, (2004) explains that “from childhood, Bangladeshi girls are taught that women should always be under men’s control and this is one of the main reasons for child marriage.” A groom in the village of Dhaka in Bangladesh explains that he chose his wife, Hasina, because he thought that she would be submissive due to her young age (Chowdhury, 2004). Girls of a young age are chosen because they are “obedient and devoted to the members of the in-laws’ family” (Chowdhury, 2004), and this is a driving factor in child marriage today. This desire to maintain this hierarchy pushes men to choose younger brides and while women are deprived of education and of becoming self-reliant, the moral matrix of authority that means so much in this society is upheld and that is a success for them.

Poverty is perhaps the biggest exacerbating factor of them all for child marriage motivators. While poverty is not a morally motivating factor, it is what enlarges and emphasizes the other morally motivating factors that have been mentioned. Because a family is poor, they need to protect their social honor more. Because a family is poor, they have more to make up for in terms of shame and so they try to get rid of that source of shame before it even arises and so give their daughter away earlier. They cannot worry about protecting their daughter because they have to focus on making money, thus they give her away earlier so that she can be protected without the parents having to worry. These parents really believe that they are doing the best for their daughter in their circumstances. Poverty leads to a higher prevalence of child marriage because, according to one scholar, “poor families consider that they have fewer resources and incentives to invest as alternative options for girls” (Mathur, Greene, & Malhotra, 2003). This finding is even more strongly supported by the fact that rates of child marriage have declined in

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countries where poverty has decreased (Nour, 2009). Earlier in the theory section of MFT I explained how the foundational morals could be suppressed (and this was used to describe hunter-gatherer societies, as well as Nazi Germany: examples of suppressing for both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ reasons). If this is the case, then it should make sense that without the circumstance of poverty, the people in these societies who describe only partaking in child marriage because they are forced to due to poverty, would not need to gain social status and honor through marrying off their children and could forego the practice totally, suppressing these other values of authority and sanctity that rule the morals of others partaking in the practice. So in reality, we are left with four motivating factors, with one exacerbation that is poverty, and hopefully we now understand the motivations of the practice a bit more and can understand the necessity this practice meets and how one can provide an alternative practice that fills the same need but with less harm. To ridicule this practice and the values behind it would be to not see the value in the practice that they see and while this sort of explanation is not an excuse for the practice, it can get us closer to successful intervention: speaking, or at least understanding, the moral language of those one seeks to influence.

**Male Guardianship System in Saudi Arabia**

Unlike the other two cases we have explored, rooted in tradition and years of practice, the system of male guardianship in Saudi Arabia is not an old one, yet the foundations from which it is motivated are. Thus, this will be an interesting case for moralization as we explore how the practice came to be rooted in morality. The guardianship system arose in the late 1970s when the princess Misha’al bint Fah was executed (July of 1977). Her family had sent her to school in Lebanon where she fell in

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love with the nephew of the Saudi ambassador in Lebanon. When she returned to Saudi Arabia, a charge of adultery was brought against them because they had allegedly conspired to meet alone on several occasions. The princess was convicted and then she and her lover were publicly executed (Bandar Alarash, 2013). This led to a detrimental sequence of events for the women in Saudi Arabia where the rules became stricter in attempts to ‘protect’ women. The freedom to travel was removed, women’s very limited rights to work were restricted even more, newspapers were discouraged from publishing images of women, women were barred from studying abroad, and the interior ministry discouraged women from employment (Bandar Alarash, 2013). However, the justification behind these prohibitions is not just a punishment for Misha’al’s actions, but rather, it is based on an interpretation of the Quran that is not actually cited anywhere, but that believers in Saudi Arabia strongly abide by and promote. The fundamental belief in these practices and continuation of them is deeply rooted in the foundations of Sanctity, and Authority.

The most frequently cited verse from the Quran that is often invoked as the “textual basis for the assumed normativity of male authority and hierarchical gender relations,” (Mir-Hosseini, Z., Al-Sharmani, M., & Rumminger, J. 2015), including the male guardianship system, is verse 4:34. It states:

Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if

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they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand (Quran 4:34; “Tanzil Quran Navigator,” 2013).

Basically, the verse holds that men are the “protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more [strength] than the other, and because they support them from their means” (Beckerle, 2016). This verse in no direct way implies the prescribed requirement of a male guardianship system, but rather it is the subsequent interpretations of the Quran that allow for such a system. Some Islamic legal experts have argued that these interpretations “misinterpret fundamental Quranic precepts and that male scholars have elevated guardianship over Quranic concepts like equality and respect between the sexes” (Beckerle, 2016). This seems similar to our description of the foundations, where groups emphasize certain foundations over others and it seems that the proponents of the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia value greatly the foundations of authority and sanctity, believing that obedience and deference must be shown to figures of authority, and that those who do not partake in this system or who reject it are reprehensible and sub-human. Furthermore, the foundations of Authority and Sanctity are closely linked through religion. This is a unique case in that the religious Sharia law governs the land and there is even a religious police that protects “public morality” (Beckerle, 2016). Thus, a failure to obey authority is not only a rejection of the highly coveted Authority foundation, but also an act of degradation and abhorrence, acting against God and his wishes. Before delving into an explanation of the moral motivations in each foundation, I will explain the practice some more and how it has come to be moralized.

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All women in Saudi Arabia must have a male guardian, a *wali al-amr*. The guardian is typically a father or a husband, but in certain cases (and this is not uncommon), the guardian can be a woman's brother or even her own son. This would occur if, for instance, all a woman's male relatives: her brother, father, husband, have passed away. If her son is her only remaining male relation, he will serve as her guardian. The guardian has the power to make a range of critical decisions on a woman's behalf including, obtaining permission to "travel, apply for a passport, marry, exit prison, undergo a medical procedure, access healthcare, work, renting an apartment, filing legal claims," (Beckerle, 2016) and many more. These restrictions arise from the application of the interpretation of Sharia law as the law of the land in Saudi Arabia, which "elevates the Quran and the Prophet's traditions to the status of a constitution, and has institutionalized the religious establishment and its perceptions of women into governance structures" (Beckerle, 2016). The religious establishment controls a great amount of the society and its laws are integrated throughout different regulatory structures. First, the General Presidency's website has an entire section dedicated to the pillars of Islam and to the fatwas (ruling points of Islamic law) that regulate women ("Portal of the General Presidency of Scholarly Research and Ifta," 2010). Furthermore, the General Presidency for Scholarly Research and *Ifta*, the institution that issues Islamic legal opinions, have limited women's abilities to make decisions in its fatwas, claiming that women "cannot serve in leadership positions or make such decisions because of their deficient reasoning and rationality, in addition to their passion that prevails over their thinking" (Beckerle, 2016). Lastly, the *Hai'a* is the system of religious police who protect public morality and who are formally known as "The Commission for the Promotion of

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Virtue and the Prevention of Vice” (Beckerle, 2016). These approximately 4,000 men must enforce Sharia Law within the Islamic nation by patrolling the streets enforcing “dress codes, strict separation of men and women, prayer by Muslims during prayer times, and other behavior it believes to be commanded by Islam (Beckerle, 2016). Thus, since the government (the source of *authority* in the country) is so clearly founded upon the pillars of Islam (*sanctity*), an obedience, and deference, to figures of authority (religious and governmental) will be the characteristics that lead to success in this system and the characteristic emotions of respect and fear that have been instilled in the society for centuries through religion and culture, have permeated the societal and legal establishments, thus making the guardianship system one that is so deeply rooted in the moral foundations of all aspects of life: cultural, societal, religious, that it seems almost impossible to uproot it. However, intervention methods have been successful and just recently, in 2011, women were no longer required to obtain written approval from their male guardians to work and as of 2015, women citizens could participate (run for election) in municipal elections (“Analysis,” 2015). Thus, there is hope for this restrictive system to be attenuated but before we can discuss intervention, let us examine the moral foundations upon which this system is motivated.

The Authority foundation is one that morally motivates the perpetuation of the guardianship system. Men believe that they should be in charge of women, and women believe they should be obedient to these men as their protectors and male guardians (Mir-Hosseini et al., 2015). Muslim legal tradition entails a discrimination in the equality of men and women that lie in the concepts of *qiwana* and *wilayah* that place women under men’s guardianship. *Qiwana* “generally denotes a husband’s authority over his wife

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[and] *Wilayah* generally denotes the right and duty of male family members to exercise guardianship over female members” (Mir-Hosseini et al., 2015). These two concepts are based in “classical *fiqh*, or, Islamic jurisprudence” (Mir-Hosseini et al., 2015) that dates back to the foundations of Sharia law and the Quran. *Fiqh* is the “knowledge of the rules of God which concern the actions of persons who obey the law of God respecting what is required (*wajib*), sinful (*haraam*), recommended (*mandūb*), disapproved (*makrūh*) or neutral (*mubah*)” (Levy, 1957). Therefore, since they are connected so far back with the authority of God and the religious texts, these two concepts, *qiwanaḥ* and *wilayah*, play a “central role in institutionalizing, justifying, and sustaining gender inequality in Muslim contexts today” (Mir-Hosseini et al., 2015). For example, it is common for women to be called by their title, such as, wife, mother, daughter, and so on. Even on a woman’s passport, it says, daughter of (her father’s name) before it says her name (El-naggar & Bolt, 2016). These two concepts of *qiwanaḥ* and *wilayah* that allow for such a system are not exactly stated in verse 4:34 of the Quran that is used to justify the guardianship system, but the ancient idea behind it, “men are strong, they protect and provide; women are weak, they obey and must be protected” (Mir-Hosseini et al., 2015), is a critical and forceful motivating factor behind the guardianship system. While the invocation of the Quran verse is not exact and much of its meaning is based on the subsequent interpretations as discussed above, the emphasis of the Authority foundation is directly in the Quran and this is, I believe, what allowed for the moralization of the male guardianship system and such restrictions on women.

The cognitive-rational theory of moralization entails that one already has a moral rule, (in this case that of a man being strong and having authority over his wife to protect

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her) and there is some action (or object) that they did not know about before, but that falls under that rule, thus, when they find out about that action, they will begin to see it as a moral action (Rozin, 1999). In the case of the male guardianship system, there were certain practices that were not in existence when the Quran was written or when *Fiqh* was established. For example, due to the male guardianship system, Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world that prohibits women from driving and it is because there is a fatwa banning driving that says, “women driving leads to many evils and negative consequences” (Beckerle, 2016). If we return to the verse 4:34 from the Quran that maintains that men are the “protectors and maintainers” of women, it seems reasonable that driving is an action that falls under this rule, and thus it’s forbiddance becomes morally motivated. This is what I believe happened in Saudi Arabia after the execution of the princess in 1977. Her family had sent her to school in Lebanon where she fell in love with the nephew of the Saudi ambassador in Lebanon and the restrictions that exist today through the male guardianship system, like a restriction to travel without permission, or to marry, closely mirror the kinds of actions the princess was taking that people began to see as unsafe. These guardianship restrictions then, come from a new awareness that women must be protected from such dangers that were not apparent before. The Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice was established in 1980 (also shortly after the execution of the princess) and it arose as a committee to primarily, preserve Islam. Consequently, the preservation of Islam is accompanied by the preservation of the Authority foundation and this is what allows actions that are based in the Authority foundation to be so morally motivated. Yet, while the guardianship system

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is rooted in a foundation that is heavily emphasized throughout the country (Obedience and Authority), there are many who oppose the practice.

Many women in Saudi Arabia feel that the male guardianship system is the “most significant impediment to realizing women’s rights in the country, effectively rendering adult women legal minors who cannot make key decisions for themselves” (Beckerle, 2016). This is not to say that these women reject the foundation of Authority or the practice of obedience, it is just that they do not agree with the restrictive type of authority the government and the majority of Saudi Arabia citizens have interpreted the Quran verse to mean. According to one female lawyer in Saudi Arabia that I was able to interview, “many of today’s open minded Muslims firmly believe that the quote from the Quran in which it mentions that men have authority over women actually means that men should *protect*<sup>11</sup> women” (A. Baghdassarian, personal communication, November 14, 2016). However, there are other women who respect the system and value the foundations of Authority and Sanctity upon which it is based. One woman in a video created by the New York Times entitled “*Ladies First,*” explains that no matter what her opinions are, at the end of the day she is a housewife. She says, “I’m a mother, if my family or my husband disagree, I have no choice but to go along with them. I won’t ever do anything that displeases them. Even if I don’t agree, I would never do it. Ever” (El-naggar & Bolt, 2016). It seems as though this woman does not challenge nor feel restricted by the system, but rather appreciates it within the moral foundation that supports it. While there are those who support the practice, the women who see it as too

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<sup>11</sup> Emphasis mine.

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limiting and who hope for change must do so along the lines of these moral foundations of authority and sanctity, otherwise they will not be heard. This is true especially of the transgressions made with regards to notions of Sanctity.

The moral motivations on behalf of the Sanctity motivation can be explained in a ‘dirty lollipop’ analogy I learned from a peer, Sarah Sanbar, from Saudi Arabia while discussing the guardianship system with her. She explains that, “if you have two lollipops and one has a wrapper and the other doesn’t and they fall in the dirt, the one with the wrapper is protected and can stay clean” (A. Baghdassarian, personal communication, November 26, 2016). In this case, the *wali*, or, the guardian, is the wrapper and the woman is the lollipop. This analogy is meant to demonstrate that a woman without a male guardian elicits feelings of disgust and degradation. The New York Times documentary, *Ladies First* (2016), includes a video of a woman, Loujain, who explains in a video she posted to Youtube, the limits of the male guardianship system and directly opposes it. Responses to the video include emotions of disgust, hatred, and labels of degradation of Loujain. One man says, “If I saw you in the street, I would harass you sexually, morally, and financially. If you stop yourself and your evilness, society would be wonderful” (El-naggar & Bolt, 2016). This response is reminiscent of the disgust we saw in the FGMO examples. Although I might characterize this as more violent, the sense of disgust and repulsion demonstrate the moralization of the male guardianship system because its absence elicits such vehement and visceral reactions of degradation.

Another way in which the practice is rooted in moral motivations of sanctity, and its absence is tied to degradation, is through the Quran. We have already explored this connection a good amount, but I will point to one specific example where this is

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demonstrated nicely. I mentioned earlier the fact that there are many interpretations of the Quran, and the lawyer from Saudi Arabia, and many other sources regarding the rejection of the male guardianship system, emphasize that, “it is important to note that in the Holy Koran, there is nothing that restricts women from working, driving, receiving medical treatment without a male guardian’s permission. This was all created as a result of the interpretation of men that they must “protect” women” (A. Baghdassarian, personal communication, November 14, 2016). One of these interpretations is from Luqman (who some consider to be a prophet) who interprets verse 140 that says, “God has subjected to him what is in heavens and on Earth” to mean that “there is nothing in this world which is not subjected to this man as the fact of his image would show...Everything in the world is under man’s subjugation. He who knows this is the perfect man; and whoever is ignorant of it is the animal man” (31, Luqman, 20, “Tanzil Quran Navigator,” 2013). Thus, this interpretation states that whoever knows that everything is under man’s control (including women, thus supporting the guardianship system), is perfect, yet whoever does not know it, or perhaps whoever chooses to *reject* it, is ‘the animal man.’ This is a clear invocation of dehumanization and most importantly, degradation for anyone who rejects this principle, and with it, the male guardianship system. Basically, if you agree with the male guardianship system, you are following God’s wishes and thus are adhering to the Sanctity foundation, but otherwise, you are sub-human (like in FGMo), animalistic, and degraded. This example demonstrates a strong moral motivation under the foundation of Sanctity for this practice. Kasim and Yusoff (2014), explain that “Muslim faith and moral behavior are two sides of the same coin, that moral behavior presupposes faith and that faith is only genuine if it results in moral behavior” and that “those who stick to the right

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path are by definition committed to a moral way of life.” Thus, these concepts of morality, sanctity, and faith, are so deeply intertwined with one another that this moral foundation of Sanctity/Degradation is held higher than any other. This might be the source of much difficulty for an activist from a secular culture or society who is attempting to affect change, as Sanctity in many secular cultures and societies is not highly prioritized and it is hard to imagine it being so. Thus, I would presume an effective intervention should not come from a secular society who cannot understand the prioritization of Sanctity and Authority, but rather from a group or country that does. There is not just one effective intervention method though, and thus I take the next section of the paper to explore different methods and attempt to explain how MFT can be used to help ensure effective change if that is the desire.

**INTERVENTION with MFT:**

Intervention. This is where much critique of the human rights world of activism has occurred and continues to occur. Criticism such as, the West should not be imposing their values on other cultures, and arguments of cultural relativism vs. universalism are evoked. The main concern is that the “current international standards of human rights, together with the machinery for promoting and implementing them, may not be sufficiently universal because they lack legitimacy in major cultural traditions” (An-Na’im, 1992). However, while many scholars and professionals in the international community hold that concern, they also “warn against the dangers of claiming cultural relativity as a pretext for justifying human rights violations” (An-Na’im, 1992). The case studies presented earlier might seem to use MFT to justify the practices carried out as a manifestation of the different moral foundations societies emphasize throughout the

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world. However, this would be a cynical interpretation, adopting MFT and similar theories of modified nativism and cultural relativism to justify human rights violations across the globe. Rather than justify anything that might be seen as an abuse, MFT aims to merely explain and describe what the foundations are, and in doing so, provides us with a deeper understanding of the roots of these practices and more effective possible routes of intervention that does not “lack legitimacy in major cultural traditions” but rather addresses these ‘problems’ in the context of each cultural tradition, as well as across cultural boundaries. This is the type of constructive approach for which scholars and activists in the international community advocate and which MFT can help achieve. In the following section I will explain how MFT allows us to reframe our moral appeals to enhance the effectiveness of our attempts at moral persuasion in situations we might wish to change. I will explain how it functions in cross-cultural dialogue as well as in internal cultural discourse (An-Na’im, 1992) and provide examples of successful interventions utilizing this form of moral persuasion. Furthermore, I will present three alternative, yet similar, methods for ‘abuse negotiation,’ one being Linda Skitka’s moral courage and inoculation theory (2010), the second being Bauman and Skitka’s (2009) procedural voice hypothesis, and the third being Paul Rozin’s aforementioned moralization theory (1999). Then, I will apply the most fitting theories to the cases in examination, female genital modification, the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia, and child marriage, and attempt to put forth effective ‘negotiation’ efforts based in interdisciplinary theory and understanding of moral motivations.

The first step in reframing moral appeals to mirror the morals of those we are trying to persuade, is understanding what those moral foundations are. We can utilize the

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Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ) to best understand the moral domain of the society/culture one is in. One problem with the MFQ though, and MFT in general, is that we cannot measure the moral foundations directly. We cannot see the first draft of the moral mind and so “all we can do is measure the morality of a person, quantify the degree to which that person’s morality is based on each foundation, and quantify differences among individuals and groups” (Graham et al., 2012). Thus, through personal narratives that people construct to make sense of their values and beliefs, we can see the values “borrowed from ideological narratives and stereotypes commonly held in the culture” (Graham et al., 2012). Thus, we must listen with an ear that is sensitive to these subtleties to understand the moral foundation that played the largest role in the thoughts and actions held by members of a society, for, since “morality plays such an influential role in attitude formation, it is not surprising that moral appeals can be a powerful tool for persuasion” as well (Feinberg & Willer, 2015).

The idea that moral appeals can persuade someone is not a new one—if you think even to your own life, it is likely that you can remember a time when you have tried to get someone to do something by appealing to morality, e.g. convincing your brother he should not be rude to your grandmother because she is a figure of authority and deserves respect, or convincing someone to donate blood using moral appeals of care for those who are suffering (Ferrari & Leippe, 92). However, the power of moral appeals as a tool for persuasion can be unlocked to a greater extent if we understand it through MFT and this is one of the most important points to understand in this interdisciplinary study. We have reviewed how MFT can help us understand the extent to which a person’s morality is based on a certain foundation, and we have explored how ‘immoral’ practices can

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come to be justified and valued as virtuous depending on one's morality, however, we must now understand the capacity for effective intervention with MFT.

Feinberg and Willer have drawn upon MFT research to understand moral persuasion in a cross-cultural context. They conducted much of their research on issues concerning the clashing cultures in the United States, namely, same sex marriage, health care, environmental attitudes, and military spending, and analyzed the moral rhetoric involved in these political issues. They found that moral rhetoric based on and for one's own cause, is "largely ineffective for persuading those who do not already hold one's position because advancing these arguments fail to account for the divergent moral commitments that undergird America's political divisions" (Feinberg & Willer, 2015). Arguments aimed at persuading one with an opposite view cannot be rooted in a moral that person does not emphasize or highly value. However, they found that arguments "reframed to appeal to the moral values of those holding the opposing political position" were more effective (Feinberg & Willer, 2015). In their article about moral roots of environmental attitudes, Feinberg and Willer apply this to an analysis of support for environmental policies. They drew on research concluding that while liberals valued fairness and care more than conservatives, conservatives valued sanctity and loyalty more than liberals (Graham et al. 2011). They fittingly hypothesized then that conservatives would respond more and indicate more support for environmental policies if they were framed in accordance with the foundations that conservatives valued, in this case they chose sanctity. They were right and conservatives did show increased support for such policies when framed in terms of sanctity because "framing messages in terms of the morals people have triggers intuitions that resonate with them" (Graham et al., 2012).

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This same type of framing exercise was repeated for other controversial issues and Feinberg and Willer found the same support for these that they did for environmental concerns, thus making this theory generalizable, such that, arguments that are reframed to appeal to the moral values of those holding opposing views are more effective than imposing one's own views in order to affect change or influence.

This is a crucial element in human rights theories of cross-cultural dialogue which maintains that anyone attempting such dialogue “must be respectful of the integrity of the other culture and must never appear to be imposing external values in support of the human rights standards they seek to legitimize within the framework of the other culture” (An-Na'im, 1992). One man who assumed this point of view was a Brazilian United Nations (UN) diplomat who became the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights one year before he was killed in a terrorist attack in Iraq. Di Mello was a pioneer in the field of human rights for the UN because he “engaged the bad guys” (Hugo Eleutério, 2009) and it was the first time that the UN was in touch with governing structures perpetuating the abuse, and not just victims on the ground. Di Mello had unparalleled success, helping East Timor gain independence, heading humanitarian operations in Kosovo after the end of the Serbian control of the region in 1999, and in representing refugees from Cambodia while also engaging in dialogue with members of the Khmer Rouge (Hugo Eleutério, 2009). In engaging with ‘the bad guys,’ Di Mello would say that he was there to listen. He would say, “teach me frankly how you think the UN can be helpful to you” (Hugo Eleutério, 2009). In engaging with the perpetrators, Sergio came to realize that denouncing such abuses do no good. In public speeches, he began to urge the public to “get off their high horse” and he vowed that he would “never

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use the word ‘unacceptable’ again” (Power, 2009). Samantha Power, US ambassador to the UN, writes in a book she wrote about him, titled, *Chasing the Flame: One Man’s Fight to Save the World*, that Sergio had an awareness of the complexity of the world, but wasn’t frozen by it” (Power, 2008). Sergio understood that in order to precipitate change, he must, work within the framework of the culture and society he was in, rather than impose his own philosophies and views. Prescriptive claims like these are abundant in human rights literature and while they have meaning, I believe that the psychological empirical research adds an invaluable element of support and significance to such theories. Such research helps explain why certain intervention works and how we can make certain intervention efforts more effective. The theory of reframing moral appeals requires MFT and it can only be put into practice with an understanding of the morals each culture supports. Thus, MFT should be an invaluable tool in understanding how to ‘negotiate’ human rights abuses in cross-cultural contexts. However, MFT and the reframing of moral appeals also support the intervention of people with like-minded morals. Such an approach is one of the most common methods of intervention currently employed to tackle “human rights abuses” and it is supported in both the psychology and human rights literature.

An “internal discourse” (An-Na’im, 1992) is what is supported in certain human rights literature and it maintains that “there is room for a changing cultural position from within about the fundamental values of the culture and rationale for these values” (An-Na’im, 1992). However, this is most effectively done through the ingroup as an internal discourse. Within a community, members who have come to view a practice in a way contrary to the majority might be able to raise public awareness in (at least) three ways:

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intellectual and scholarly debate, artistic and literary expression of alternate views on those issues, and political and social action furthering those views (An-Na'im, 1992).

Members of groups can start these initiatives on their own, but what I have seen in most literature is that agents of change will typically act with the support of international aid groups and while these groups are not members of the ingroup, they are supporting and providing tools to someone who is. This is true in the case of Mana Abdurahman Isse in Somalia (Fiske et al., 2015).

Mana Abdurahman Isse is a woman from the Merka district of the Lower Scebelli in Somalia who worked toward, and was successful in, the eradication of infibulation in the Merka district of Somalia. This district is the home of an incredible success story where an alternative celebration and ritual to the most extreme practice of FGM, infibulation, was conceptualized, proposed, and then organized and implemented (Gallo & Busatta, 2010). The new rite was called Sunna Gudnin and it proposed an attenuated version of FGM. Instead of the traditional infibulation, it was an intervention that required only minor excision. The new rite preserved the important cultural aspects of the practice, such as the location where the rite takes place, the religious component of the ritual carried out by the sheik and the procedure carried out by the medical team, and the celebration that follows, and merely changed the actual intervention that takes place that now removed the sewing involved. After just four years, 1300 girls in the Merka district, nearly a third of those who attend school there, had accepted the practice. Then, in 2000 after such success, Mana, along with an Italian NGO in Somalia called Water for Life, put forth a newer and even more attenuated version of the practice that was called Gudnin Usub, and this practice included no excision (cutting) at all, just a mere puncture with a

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sterilized needle that caused the loss of only a few drops of blood (Fiske et al., 2015).

This intervention was reduced to be a mere symbolic act and it was still just as successful, expanding to another 1,080 girls in the village (Fiske et al., 2015). In order for the community to accept the new rite, it had to a) be appealing in that it did not lose any of the cultural or religious meaning behind it, and b) provide reasons for why the old practice was no longer sufficient. Mana did both of these things through four phases: awareness building, medical intervention, celebration, and feedback.

The awareness building phase was carried out in two categories, one was religious and the other more social. For the religious awareness, Mana organized assemblies in the village where the Sheik, the main religious figure in the Muslim village, would speak. Mana says this was an important element of awareness building because, “we have a saying here, ‘when you change something traditional, you attract the wrath of God.’ At the beginning, I could not say, ‘Let’s change the tradition,’ because the mothers would have answered that it would have caused a curse from God, so I had the sheik say it instead” (Fiske et al., 2015). This is very important that Mana makes sure to include the Imam in what she does because proponents of alternative cultural positions on human rights issues should “seek to achieve a broad and effective acceptance of their interpretation of cultural norms and institutions by showing the authenticity and legitimacy of that interpretation within the framework of their own culture” (An-Na’im, 1992). Additionally, it invokes the appeal to authority that is a valued moral foundation of this society through the Sheik, but also through Mana herself who is the daughter of the Sultan, and thus, a “charismatic figure whose performance is particularly authoritative” (Fiske et al., 2015). The social aspect of raising awareness is carried out in

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two ways, one of which is very creative, yet vitally important. The first is an assembly of mothers, grandmothers, children, and teachers, where the children are asked to draw the major risks associated with infibulation. Kids were asked to draw a diagram with a caption below and three of the many images said: “urine cannot come out: it’s the fault of infibulation,” “causes problems while giving birth,” and, “a girl who has undergone infibulation is never happy when she gets married” (Fiske et al., 2015). Mana also raised awareness through a number of other initiatives including sewing and crafts courses and traditional work groups where women who had undergone infibulation could speak informally with others (children and adults) about their experiences with infibulation (Fiske et al., 2015). Mana made it a point to make the meetings public, have formal meetings, and also include meetings with midwives to ensure that everyone knew that “infibulation was very dangerous for a woman’s health and that a good life is possible without forcing daughters to suffer this terrible ordeal” (Gallo & Busatta, 2010). This awareness building phase is important because if the girls do not know the harm and risk associated with the practice, there is less motivation to want to stop it. This is very similar to Rozin’s moralization theory especially in regard to cigarettes. Once the harms of cigarette smoking and second hand smoke became well-known, the narrative of what was ‘right’ began to shift from smoking to not smoking, just as Mana hopes to impose here. However, there is an important element besides mere awareness building and moralization that truly is the key to a successful intervention and change. In an analysis of Mana’s intervention in preventing infibulation, Gallo and Busatta conclude that it is “extremely important that the intervention be performed according to the socio-cultural norms of the population involved” (Gallo & Busatta, 2010). Mana did this. Mana used

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song, dance, and poetry, the preferred medium for the communication of sensitive social messages in Somalia (Gallo & Busatta, 2010), to support her campaign for the alternative rite in a way she knew the public would understand and hear.

The next phase was the medical intervention phase. This was one of the main endeavors for Mana because this was the harmful part of the practice that she wished to stop. She had to make sure that whatever she proposed would not lead to a weakening of any of the cultural elements or moral beliefs that go along with this practice. Thus, even though the procedure she proposed now only caused the loss of a few drops of blood, Mana required that the young girl still stays at home after the procedure and that she is given pills to lessen the pain of the “convalescence” period. These pills are really mere vitamins since the girls do not require such medication, but “such medical behavior reconnects the alternative rite with traditional infibulation, reinforcing a sense in the subject and community that the tradition has been fulfilled” (Fiske et al., 2015). This is an important part of the new rite as well. While this “compromise” (Gallo & Busatta, 2010), or negotiation, had the aim of abolishing infibulation, it preserved the cultural elements of the practice and thus did not reject the moral foundations upon which the practice is based—in accordance with MFT this is critical and I believe this is one reason why Mana had so much success. As of 2005<sup>12</sup>, the alternative rite had been practiced on 3,000 girls in 32 villages of the Lower Shebelli (Gallo & Busatta, 2010). This conservation of the culture and driving moral motivators behind the practice is a key to this success story and a part of that is the celebration phase.

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<sup>12</sup> I have tried to find more data on this practice up to date, including how many people now follow it, but it seems as though new alternative rites have come about and have replaced Mana’s intervention or improved on this specific alternative rite.

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The celebration is an important part of the tradition as it represents the daughter's initiation into the community and is a manifestation of the Loyalty, Sanctity, and Authority foundations. The daughter followed the authority of her grandmother and mother who wished the practice on her, she was loyal to her family and her community members, and she has fulfilled the Purity/Sanctity foundation that otherwise would elicit feelings of disgust if she had not gone through with the procedure. The new rite alters nothing within the celebration phase and allows for this to be conserved as an important cultural element. The feedback phase is the last phase and it is an important one as well because it ensures that the new practice does not disregard any deeply rooted values or morals and that it has not "created marginalization or social discomfort" (Fiske et al., 2015) within their societies. Women are then encouraged to promote the new practice within their social circles. This is an important use of intergroup dialogue because although that NGO, Water for Life, was helping out, all of the dialogue and moral persuasion took place within the group, between members of the group. Mana belongs to the culture concerned, and so do these women who are now going to (hopefully) promote the new practice. There is more credibility and trust when such a message for sensitive change comes from an insider, and the authors of *Virtuous Violence*, go on to say that, "no Western element of any title could hope to have a similar effect" (Fiske et al., 2015). Mana's alternative rite sees the moral motivation of appealing to ideas of authority, sanctity, and loyalty, within the cultural context that give a young woman "the possibility to behave herself appropriately in all of life's situations" (Gallo & Busatta, 2010). While there is still a great amount of work to do to completely eradicate infibulation, Mana's culturally loaded intervention, based on gradual negotiation and compromise, can suggest

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to us “new approaches to the prevention as well as the eradication of infibulation with the help of native operators and cultural mediators” (Gallo & Busatta, 2010).

Another possibility for intervention might be with strong intuitions, moral courage, and Linda Skitka’s inoculation theory. The inoculation theory posits that “when people have strong moral convictions about a given issue, they should be more resistant to majority influence because they have less need to be accepted by the group or to use consensus as a source of information” (Skitka, 2012). This then would be a type of “internal discourse” because it would be someone from the ingroup protesting or standing up against a set of values they *should* adhere to legally and traditionally, but that they wish to defy and reject because they have strong moral convictions otherwise. Skitka puts forth a list of examples for when such moral courage has led to successful change; she says, “without moral courage, we would not see the advancement of women’s literacy in Afghanistan, greater civil rights and economic growth among groups historically discriminated against in the US, and increased freedom from human rights violations in many parts of the world” (Skitka, 2012). This is an important point because this is the type of change we are interested in and if we can identify whether or not there is way to implement the inoculation theory and ‘inoculate’ others so that they too have strong moral convictions and moral courage, then perhaps more positive change can be implemented. However, while moral convictions can act as protection against “obedience to potentially malevolent authorities” (Skitka, 2012), they can also be dangerous as they can lead to a rejection of laws (as we saw with child marriage) and even “provide a motivational foundation for violent protest and acts of terrorism” (Skitka, 2012). Thus, moral convictions which are attitudes that reflect our core beliefs of right/wrong and

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moral/immoral are important to understand in their totality, for if we want a complete “psychological portrait” of what leads to evil in the world, and not just heroism, we must pay attention to “the role that moral courage plays in motivating people to take a stand even when it means risking rejection of authorities and rule of law” (Skitka, 2012). In this case, since we have already examined the type of ‘evil’ it can lead to in explaining how strong moral convictions about the motivating morals for child marriage led to such neglect and rejection of the regulations and bans in place for the harmful practice, we will focus now on how such moral convictions, and with them moral courage, can lead to a successful challenging of those practices, in particular, that of the male guardianship in Saudi Arabia.

In 2000, Saudi Arabia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), but their imposition of the male guardianship system violates article 15 of the Convention (“Text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,” 2009). Saudi Arabia promised twice, once in 2009 and subsequently 2013, at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that they would abolish the male guardianship system, yet today, in 2016, it still exists and is as powerful and as widely held as ever. Even this past summer in 2016 when the UNHRC threatened to remove them from the Council if they did not end the practice, they did not abolish the practice. Thus, it seems that international conventions and threats are not the effective intervention method that will lead to change, however, perhaps Skitka’s moral courage and inoculation theory can lead to change. That’s what led to change with voting and work in the country and maybe it can now too with driving.

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In 2011, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, granted women the right to vote and run for election in the 2015 municipal elections ("Saudi Arabia," 2011). A specialist at the U.S. Institute of Peace commented that this decree on behalf of the king is part of his "gradual opening of Saudi Arabia to various rights for women" (Qamar-ul Huda, 2011). The specialist conjectured that, "in the backdrop of the past seven months of the Arab Spring, I think they may have felt that it's important to make some gradual steps for women's rights inside Saudi Arabia," (Qamar-ul Huda, 2011). The Arab Spring was a series of demonstrations motivated by moral courage. This series of anti-government protests that spread across the Middle East in early 2011 ("What Is the Arab Spring?," 2016) was motivated by a "deep-seated resentment at the aging Arab dictatorships, unemployment, rising prices, and lack of rights" ("What Is the Arab Spring?," 2016) and with the death toll being at about 180,000 people ("180,000 killed, 6 million displaced in Arab Spring," 2013), I feel that it is reasonable to believe that these people felt so resistant to majority influence (so inoculated) that their strong moral convictions made them feel invincible and as if they could fight for this cause no matter the consequence. In referencing the Arab Spring I am not condoning the violence, but rather, I attempt to demonstrate the powerful effects of moral courage and how they have effectively led to change in Saudi Arabia (in this case, as a result of the Arab Spring) and how they might be able to affect more change in Saudi Arabia. In June of 2011, women in Saudi Arabia tried just that – they risked arrest by driving around cities in Saudi Arabia to protest the ban on driving for women. These women were arrested and jailed, but they felt so strongly motivated by their conviction that their actions demarked a demand for change in the region.

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The movement has not ended and even recently there have been women who continue to drive who record it, and blog/post about it and they continue to be arrested and jailed, and some even threatened to be tried in the court of terrorism. This was the case for activist, Loujain Alhathloul who, in 2015, was jailed for defying the driving ban and then ran in the elections (the first in which women were allowed to participate) after her ban was overturned in 2015 (“This Saudi Arabian woman was jailed for driving a year ago, but now she’s running for office,” 2015). She was jailed for 10 weeks and referred to a Saudi Arabian terrorism court, but even so, she has not stopped campaigning to overturn rules forbidding women from driving. Loujain has been active in her resistance to authority and she has encouraged others to be as well—she has lobbied against the government, conducted media interviews, and initiated social media campaigns to put pressure on the government (“This Saudi Arabian woman was jailed for driving a year ago, but now she’s running for office,” 2015). Loujain’s moral conviction allows her to take action that women who feel more of a need to be accepted by the community or who do not feel they can resist majority influence, feel hindered to take. However, that is not to say that they do not want these changes because it was a similar scenario with voting and running in local elections, where many women felt they could not go against the strong moral foundation of Authority, and therefore had to obey, even if the laws were not something they agreed with. This is demonstrated by the fact that when the elections came around, more than 900 women were among the nearly 7,000 candidates (“This Saudi Arabian woman was jailed for driving a year ago, but now she’s running for office,” 2015). While that may seem to be a small percentage (less than 10 percent) of everyone running, it is nonetheless support for the change and a

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demonstration that moral courage and resistance can be an effective intervention.

However, while similar intervention methods for change for driving are in progress, it might take a little longer.

In a documentary about the election in Saudi Arabia, *Ladies First*, Loujain's father is interviewed and says he supports Loujain and her "moral courage" (El-naggar & Bolt, 2016), however, he is in the minority among men in Saudi Arabia and Loujain is even in the minority among women in Saudi Arabia. It seems as though in order to affect effective change through moral courage, one must have a great amount of support behind them. When it came to voting, women activists in Saudi Arabia were heavily behind the movement and many expressed that their "main concerns were for voting representation and economic rights, and they rank driving rights as less of a priority" ("Saudi Arabia," 2011). Additionally, most women, even if it is a priority for them, are "invisible when it comes to politics and the public sphere and political participation" ("Saudi Arabia," 2011), thus, it seems as if many women do not feel 'inoculated' (yet) to fight for driving rights. The push must come from within, because we have seen that external pressure (CEDAW and other legislative threats) is ineffective and what has worked in some cases is strong moral conviction pushing change. The inoculation theory posits that "when people have strong moral convictions about a given issue, they should be more resistant to majority influence because they have less need to be accepted by the group or to use consensus as a source of information" (Skitka, 2012). If the number of women who feel inoculated increases, which is surely bound to happen as more barriers are overcome, then perhaps we can see a similar effect with the ban on driving as we did with voting. Today, "there are very few people who would deny or use a religious argument against

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the right for a woman to vote. It's clearly within the Islamic jurisprudence—almost all Islamic countries with the exception of Saudi Arabia exercise the right to vote for women” (“Saudi Arabia,” 2011). However, that was not the discourse before 2011, so there is hope that moral courage from within can change circumstances and influence other, more restrictive, moral convictions.

One aspect of moral courage that I did not mention is that its aim is typically to inspire moralization. For Loujain, her aim was to inspire the moralization of women driving. Moralization can also help affect change in cases regarding child marriage. One of the reasons that people partake in child marriage is because they believe that the girls in the family are a burden, because they believe the Quran says that these women cannot earn their own living, and if they do earn some money, they cannot contribute it to the financial support of their native family. Since women cannot contribute, neither financially, nor socially and since the men are the ones who must look after their parents throughout their life, then women are seen as a burden and thus, in addition to it being a divine command to marry off a daughter, it also can be seen as a weight lifted off the family and in turn society's shoulders. However, perhaps there is a way that activists who wish to invoke change in this system can make girls have the “same rights and obligations to look after their natal families: if this becomes a strong social value, then girls would not be considered a burden to their poverty-stricken families” (Chowdhury, 2004). If through the cognitive-rational theory an activist could demonstrate that girls have an obligation to look after their natal families, then the action could become moralized and this could potentially eliminate one of the motivating factors of child marriage. One of the moral foundations through which child marriage is motivated is

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Care. Parents care for their children and wish for them to have a good life and they see child marriage as a means to that. However, this same type of care can be demonstrated through girls contributing to their natal families. This type of intervention can be done through outside organizations who can demonstrate that this action fits in with their values.

One organization that is doing that currently is CARE's Tesfa project. The organization worked to improve economic, sexual, and reproductive health outcomes for child brides and to combat the harmful effects of child marriage (Ejanoch, 2014). The activists in the organization focus on speaking with the young, recently-married girls in the Ahmara region of Ethiopia to discuss with them what the "right" image of a young married girl is in the country and how "that might not be right for the community anymore" (Ejanoch, 2014). They aim, through discussion, to reach a point where the young girl realizes that there are other actions that also match with what they value and with what they are motivated to do through the foundation of Care. The organization modeled their interventions on village practices, such as the village savings and loans, so as to not implement their own outsider view, but to ensure the girls understand the message through their own views and values. These activists hope that those girls who partook in the discussion go on to encourage those values with their peers through peer-education. This is another important aspect because again, it is not the outsider trying to mold new values to fit the old, it is the member of the community and this is critical because they are the ones who can better influence the moralization of a new action into already existing and established moral foundations.

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The practice has reached over 5,000 married girls between the ages of 14-19 in the Ahmara region of Ethiopia and there has been a good amount of success there in mitigating the harmful effects of child marriage, like unplanned births, and poverty. The results of this intervention approach are as follows, “project participants stopped 180 child marriages, girls' savings went up by 72 percentage points, girls were more likely to be able to discuss family planning decisions with their husbands, and 96% of participants would recommend the program to a friend” (Ejanoch, 2014). This mixed approach of understanding the moral foundations upon which a practice rests and by which it is motivated, and then using that information to invoke a moralization of new actions that ‘should’ be included in the effort to uphold these foundations, was successful in this case and I feel as though it can be successful in moralizing the notion that women should provide to their natal families. One woman from the project, Endayehu, says that “the life skills training she received through TESFA is helping her negotiate with her family and friends to make them accept her participation in the project and as a champion against early marriage” (Ejanoch, 2014). Such intervention not only affects change, but as shown here, it can energize the members of the community to act and be the agents of change, and that is a critical factor in any intervention effort regarding these practices that are so deeply rooted in morality and so fervently pushed by moral motivation.

**CONCLUSION:**

In our global society, we are all citizens—citizens of not only one group or entity, but multiple. Just like a lever on a sound board can make a sound that is in harmony with

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many other notes, we too as humans have the capability of coming together with others to produce something beautiful. However, with that also comes the possibility that we produce dissonant sounding tones that clash and produce an ugliness that makes one want to cringe. With the ability to adapt and change and be shaped by the forces that move our levers, comes the possibility that at one point we will not be in perfect harmony with another note, and this dissonance can lead to conflict. With the ability to alter the emphasis we place on certain moral foundations, comes the possibility that the decisions we make and actions we take are rejected as good and sound (or rejected as sounding good if we return to our soundboard analogy) by others playing distinct notes, or with different emphases regarding their moral foundations. This does not seem like it should be a problem if each community or culture is to create their own song, however, that is not the world we live in today, and many global citizens see it as their responsibility to make the song of the world sound the most harmonious, melodic, and beautiful it can. So what can those people do when they encounter dissonance producing behaviors? Is there an effective approach they can take to attenuate the frequency of such sounds, or speaking more concretely, to prevent or minimize the harmful actions they feel are being taken? Well that is what this investigation set out to answer. How can those who wish to intervene to ‘negotiate’ what they see as human rights abuses, effectively do so? Is there an inherent limitation in our moral languages that hinders such communication? I provided theory, case studies, and intervention methods to help answer these questions and to conclude we will briefly review what was proposed.

Fiske et al. (2015) explains that, “what is virtue in one culture, is evil from the perspective of some other cultures—but the perpetrator is motivated by the morality of

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his own culture, not the moralities of other cultures he doesn't know or care about, or outsiders' standards that perhaps he may need to take into account pragmatically but that don't motivate him." Thus, this passage provides us with the assumption that morality varies between cultures and the Moral Foundations Theory (Graham et al., 2012) further explains this concept. It maintains that universally, as human beings, we share five grounds of moral foundations on which we make our judgments and take action: Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Authority/Submissiveness, Sanctity/Degradation, and Loyalty/Betrayal. These five foundations are then emphasized differently between cultures, where some might emphasize the Sanctity foundation the most, and others value the Fairness foundation most. When an outside group seeking to intervene attempts to speak in terms of their own moral intuitions and notions of right and wrong, it is like a foreign language to the group they are attempting to influence and they must alter their ways if they wish to be understood. This is the basis of the proposed approach for intervention through MFT.

Successful intervention in three cases of what are currently internationally deemed human rights abuses, female genital modification, child marriage, and the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia, proceeds in this manner. For FGMO, the intervention is carried out by a caring member of the community (Care/Loyalty), an Imam (Sanctity/Authority), and through attenuated practices that do not sacrifice these values. For the male guardianship system, successful intervention is carried out through moral courage that inspires moralization of actions and objects within the pre-existing domains of moral foundations adhered to by that community. In the case of child marriage, successful intervention also occurs through a moralization of first

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understanding upon which values and foundations these communities base their judgments and actions. Activists then work to incorporate new actions into the established database of actions and judgments made from the moral foundations emphasized by the community, demonstrating that these actions are just like the Jell-O in Rozin's (1999) example: they are actions the community did not previously know could fit into their moral foundations, but now that they do, they can become moralized and be incorporated in the allowed discourse and valued judgment system.

In all three cases, none of these interventions would have been possible without first understanding the moral foundations upon which these three groups based their judgments and actions. Once we understand the moral motivations behind a particular group's actions, specifically in the case of human rights abuses, we can understand how to 'negotiate' the sounds they produce through their cultural soundboards, in an effort to create a global song that is more harmonic than dissonant.

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