

BEAUTY *OR* THE BEAST: UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDES ABOUT WOLVES IN
WASHINGTON STATE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS
FOR WOLF MANAGEMENT

by

PATRICK BRIAN WILEY

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Student: Patrick Brian Wiley

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This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Conflict and Dispute Resolution degree in the Conflict and Dispute Resolution Program by:

| | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Erik Girvan | Chairperson |
| Thomas Lininger | Member |

and

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Sara D. Hodges | Interim Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School |
|----------------|--|

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Patrick Brian Wiley

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Washington State's *Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan* has struggled to respond to conflicts between humans and wolves. This has led to an increase in cultural stratification between pro-wolf community members and anti-wolf community members. The *Plan* dedicates a disproportionate amount of time to biological science and does little to account for variance in human behavior. In this paper, I provide a series of personal stories that illustrate how human-animal relationships are developed and preserved through experience and why ingrained conceptualizations are difficult to transcend. I then draw on existing research to explore conceptualizations of wolves in the human imagination throughout history, the dominant wolf narratives that emerge from these conceptualizations, and use the psychological theories of Social Dominance and Right Wing Authoritarianism to understand the differences in behavior between pro-wolf and anti-wolf communities. Anti-wolf community members were higher in images related to SDO and RWA than their pro-wolf counterparts.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Patrick Brian Wiley

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon
Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Science, Conflict and Dispute Resolution, 2017, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Science, Religious Studies, 2014, University of Oregon

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Psychology of Conflict
Wildlife Management

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Employee, Department of Religious Studies, 2016

Lead Instructor and Staff Facilitator, Wolf Camp and the Conservation College,
2009 to present

Forest Collaborative Intern, Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative, 2017

Ombuds Intern, University of Oregon Ombuds Program, 2017

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This is dedicated to the unknown, an enigma that both frightens and excites.

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CHAPTER I

A PROBLEM MEETS AN EXPERIENCE

Why and When, The Time is Now

I never had strong feelings about wolves growing up and, even though I am writing about them, I still do not. They never appealed to me as a pristine alpha predator, they never struck fear into me, they simply never had much significance. I find coyotes more ecologically interesting, I have always been more afraid of cougars and sharks, yet I have never understood what all the wolf fuss is about. For whatever reason, wolves are a bizarre and fascinating lightning rod for both human ire and human admiration. At various times, they have been “the appropriate symbol for greed or savagery, the exactly proper guise for the Devil, or fitting as a patron of warrior clans” (Lopez, 1978, p. 204). *This* is what I like about wolves and what drew me to this research; wolves occupy a unique space in human psyche. Herein you will find a series of stories, stories that drove research, and research that I hope will inspire greater understanding of human-wildlife conflict management.

Often when we consider environmental management, we make assumptions about the world. There is something that exists outside of ourselves that we, as human beings, need to manage. Not only do we *need* to manage it, we have the capacity and authority to manage it. The reality could not be further from this. Regardless of whether human beings meddle in the affairs of Nature – a broad categorization that is not always useful and assumes a separateness between human beings and the ecological world – Nature will continue to operate. It is possible that its operation will be halted, slowed, or altered by our behavior, but that does not mean it is not operating. We seem to know this. We

spend a lot of time, energy, and resources developing environmental management plans. In their most basic state, environmental management plans draw on scientific understanding of “healthy” environments to provide human beings with a standardized operating procedure.

In Washington state, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) developed the *Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan* to help manage the Gray Wolf population that was and is naturally returning to the state. Regardless of whether the WDFW developed this plan, wolves would have returned. It is likely that their return would have been slowed, altered, or even eliminated, but it would have occurred. Even with the development of the *Plan*, their return has been slowed and altered. This is because the WDFW is not *solely* trying to manage Gray Wolves, it is trying to manage human behavioral responses to Gray Wolves. When a Wolf kills a rancher’s livestock and the government provides financial support to the rancher, it is not to change the Wolf’s reaction to livestock, it is to prevent the rancher from slaughtering the Wolf in retaliation. This is not to suggest there are no aspects of the *Plan* focused on managing wolf behavior, but most of these management techniques are deployed to assuage rancher concerns. It is peculiar, then, that we do not spend more time considering human being behavioral management tools when drafting environmental management plans. Not one of the 43 independent scientists that peer reviewed the *Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan* belonged to a social science discipline (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2011). It is not surprising, then, that the management techniques have struggled to dynamically react to the ongoing conflict about wolves in Washington given

that they are built on assumptions about human behavior rather than on science about human behavior. My research is intended to help bridge this gap in understanding.

When conducting research, it is easy to fall into a trap of looking at groups and categories as inanimate rather than as conglomerations of dynamic individuals. For example, my general enjoyment of wildlife would likely give me the label of “environmentalist,” but my feelings about wildlife are much more nuanced than this label might suggest. I am subject to the same types of psychological constraints as the citizens of Washington whom I studied. When my experience is attacked I actively work against an “opposition” group to prove its validity. In doing so, I devalue the science and experiences of others based on my perceived need to validate my group identity (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985; Maoz, Ward, Katz, & Ross, 2002) and, occasionally, actively work against my own interests (Druckman & Bolsen, 2011; Hart & Nisbet, 2012). My research is not meant to be a pair of beaded eyes perched behind an aquiline nose wielding academia’s crooked talon. It is meant to be a tool that anyone can pick up and find useful. In accordance with this vision, I begin by providing a series of stories about myself and my experiences with wildlife. I do this to provide the reader an intimate view into the psyche of *one* individual. It is far too easy to read a study and walk away thinking, “X group is acting irrationally, they’re totally ignoring the science!” despite this being a valid conclusion. This is what the *Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan* is missing; it gives thought to survey data and public comments, it creates a multi-stakeholder advisory group, and implements what it *assumes* communities would appreciate. Yet it does these things without acknowledgement of the psychological tendencies of the constituents it hopes to represent and, as such, does not *actually* meet

their needs or assuage their concerns. I am hardly the first person to notice this trend, scholars have advocated for the inclusion of social science in wolf listing determinations in the Northern Rocky Mountains because of similar circumstances (Bruskotter, Toman,ENZler, & Schmidt, 2010).

Following this series of stories, I begin exploring the history of wolf resistance and the mythical narratives that have developed because of wolf resistance. I provide these narratives to help explain the complex and divisive environment that the *Plan* is emerging from within. Next, I explore what has occurred in Washington since the *Plan*'s adoption and, in doing so, provide the framework for why my research is important and necessary. Finally, I explore two relevant psychological theories and I provide an original analysis of some of the public comments submitted during the *Plan*'s drafting process. I then explain why the results are surprising or not surprising, how the WDFW might have used social psychology to predict social responses to the *Plan*, and make some suggestions for moving forward given the implications of my research.

Human Psyche and the Majesty of Experience

Wolves rocketed onto my radar a decade ago. I was spending another summer at Wolf Camp and the Conservation College and we were on an expedition known only as "Ultimate Tracker." Our mission was simple. We were headed to the Northeastern corner of Washington state to search for the first returning wolf pack and endangered caribou. At the time, I did not know the significance of the mission, I was unaware of Washington's wolf history. As far as I knew, the director of Wolf Camp liked wolves and wanted to look for them. We stopped at a WDFW location in Eastern Washington and asked the person at the desk if they had heard of any wolf rumors. Behind a

suspicious stare we received a political answer masked in a question: No, why were we interested?

After leaving the WDFW, the director began grumbling about mistrust and ranchers. He told us that the WDFW would not share potential wolf locations because they were worried about poaching. Call me naïve, but I still did not understand the significance behind the claim. The obvious answer is that wolves are predators and ranchers do not like them because of their predatory behavior. That answer has never been satisfactory for me. I grew up on a small farm, we lost sheep to predators every so often, and I did not have a desire to slaughter them all. It could not be this simple.

The following year we undertook the same tracking mission. I knew a little bit more about wolves, but still not enough to have an informed opinion. Wolf Camp's director had learned that the WDFW was hosting a public comment forum about wolves in Spokane, WA. He told us we were going. On the drive, he and another student talked ad nauseam about the ecological importance of wolves and how silly ranchers were being about their return. I remember listening and wondering if anything they were saying was accurate, but it did not matter. These were my people. These were my friends. We were a unit, a team, a family and when we arrived at the meeting, I would go into battle for their cause because that is what you do when you are a family. I would proudly pontificate about the ecological value of wolves and I would deride those who disagreed with me despite not knowing if anything I was saying was accurate.

We walked into the forum like a pack of wolves. We followed cowboy hats and belt buckles like we were hot on a blood trail and desperate to quench our hunger. Some ran point, actively pushing into the middle of the conversation. Others flanked, accosting

those who broke off from the main herd. It was a terrible experience that did not last long. I left confused by the hatred and fear. I did not understand how anyone could simply ignore inconvenient scientific data and I lacked the introspection to acknowledge this same tendency in myself. It would be some time before I fully realized the transformational power of a single experience. An experience so unbelievable, so significant, that one cannot simply forget that it happened regardless of what the science might suggest.

I was 19 years old and ready for a societal sabbatical. I wanted desperately to become a professional wildlife tracker; the thrill of the hunt, chasing the beast, something about the wild called to me. Every fantasy I imagined about a life tracking wildlife seemed a *real* possibility if I could get more “dirt time.” The decision became easier to pursue when I admitted to myself that I was not enjoying college and that the building resentment toward my experience was unhealthy. I called my parents, told them I was taking a leave of absence after the academic year concluded and wanted them to let me live on their 15 acre, houseless, property in a tent. Always supportive, though clearly unhappy, they acquiesced.

The days came and went, I occasionally wandered the forests aimlessly as I had intended – I lacked the tutelage necessary to understand what I was seeing – but spent most of my time brooding in a green fold-out chair. Though I had already spent a substantial amount of time in the woods by this point in my life, I had never learned to be comfortable alone and it was inhibiting my ability to focus on tracking. Each time I slid into the dark understory, the hair on the back of my neck stood up and the questions

cascaded in. Some of them were practical. *What happens if I turn my ankle and cannot get back up the hill? Nobody knows I'm out here, is this really a good idea?* Most of them were fairytale. *Am I being watched? What if I get attacked by a cougar? Will I even know or will my throat be crushed immediately?* One evening, a couple of weeks into my stay, this unsubstantiated paranoia reached a crippling crescendo.

The night began as any other. The sun started to go down and I retreated to my tent – the only artificial light I had access to was in a huge, light blue, triple bay garage filled with spider webs, rat poop, and decrepit hay bales. During the day I would use the power outlets in the garage to charge my Lenovo ThinkPad. I loved that laptop. It was square, partially made of metal, and brutalist in design. Sometimes I would wonder if I could kill someone with it. Not in a murderous sense, but if someone attacked me and all I had was the Lenovo ThinkPad as my defense, would it be enough to fight them off? I thought so. This extreme paranoia was one result of the solitude and vulnerability that came packaged with it.

After climbing into my tent and settling into the conglomeration of comforters and sleeping bags that I was calling a bed, I opened the ThinkPad and put on a movie. Yes, I was living in seclusion, far off the grid, and using a spider-plagued garage power outlet to charge a laptop so I could watch movies in my tent when the sun went down. The irony was beautiful. I cannot remember which movie I chose, it might have been the Dark Knight – I was obsessed with Heath Ledger's conceptualization of The Joker – and it certainly would have been an apt introduction to a dark night. Watching movies helped me relax, they drowned out the eerie nighttime sounds dancing through the wilderness. Unfortunately, they were of little help once I had fallen asleep.

I mentioned my paranoia was high. I slept between two weapons. On my right, my handcrafted “rabbit stick” – a weighted, shaped, stick like a club that one throws at a wild rabbit to temporarily stun it; this gives one time to run up and snap the animal’s neck – and on my left a hybridization of a hammer/hatchet. My tent was made by REI, the Quarter Dome T2 Plus, and like most tents was made of flimsy fabric that a beast could easily rip through. I would not be caught off guard, but I was.

I awoke to something circling my tent, I could hear its footsteps. Whatever it was, it was large enough to rouse me from my slumber. The moon was out. I felt the intruder brush up against the side of the tent, the moon silhouetted its long and slinky body. Terror overcame every fabric of my being; I was so tense you could place my body across a canyon and roll a semi-truck over top of me. I felt my heart trying to tear through my chest cavity, it screamed at my ribs to get out of the way. Remembering my weaponry, I tried to move my arms to ready myself for battle. They would not move. Instead, I sat in total paralysis trying desperately not to breathe, hoping that whatever wild animal was toying with me would eventually lose interest. It did. Unfortunately, this was only the beginning of the experience.

I heard it walk away and I was finally able to exhale. There was temporary relief in the realization that I had survived one of my greatest fears: a wild animal confrontation. The feeling was short lived. Moments later, 50 feet from me near a natural pond that I caught Cascade Red-Legged frogs in as a child, there was an immense crash. It sounded like a tree falling. Then a hysterical screaming roar echoed from the same location. Snarling, squealing, *Eaeahhuehhehrurhrh*, large body smashing large body, what sounded like bones crunching under extreme pressure all came hurtling

through the darkness toward me. My adrenaline surged, I grabbed my weapons, unzipped the side of my tent – the same side that had just been brushed against – and popped out into the darkness wearing only my boxers. Rabbit stick in right hand, hatchet hybrid in left, I faced my torso straight toward the sound and let out my own hysterical roar intermixed with expletives.

“Bring it on! I will mess you up! You cannot mess with me!” I remember belting out repeatedly. Followed quickly by, “Leave me the heck alone, you jerks!” In this moment, I realized the full capacity of my evolutionary barbarity. These overt challenges quickly turned to reasonable attempts at negotiation. “I’ll leave you alone if you leave me alone!”

In hindsight, it was all a terrible idea. I was fully exposed, could only see what was dimly illuminated by the moonlight, and completely incoherent. But it worked, it psychologically triggered something locked away deeply within. For years after this incident, I was comfortable alone in the woods.

Charles and I stepped out into the crisp night air, it was around 11 PM. We were staying at the SongCroft permaculture farm in Snohomish Washington during the evening and teaching nearby for Wolf Camp and the Conservation College during the day. Charles and I had been friends for years. We laughed and joked about how our roles had swapped over time. He was originally the fearless one and I the paranoid, but as he got older he became more hesitant. After my tent experience, I had become much more comfortable throwing caution to the wind. It’s funny how we can change so drastically because of one experience.

We were walking to Charles' car, it was parked about a quarter of a mile away at the beginning of SongCroft's gravel driveway, when it all happened. Despite my general comfort in the woods, it was an eerie night and we lacked an artificial light source. Fog was settling into the understory of the forest along both sides of the driveway. I recall thinking that it looked like the opening scene of *Beauty and the Beast*. The one in which the horse-drawn carriage is careening down the roadway and wolves with glowing yellow eyes are maliciously prowling. At least, that is how I remember *Beauty and the Beast* starting.

I cannot remember who the quip came from, but one of us remarked that the driveway, sitting in a dip with forest on both sides, would be the perfect cougar ambush spot. Regardless of who said it, they were right. We began joking and fantasizing about exactly how it would happen; which tree would be best for the initial approach, was there enough shrubbery to break up the 3D body of the cougar – their coloration is specifically designed to do so – would an animal be able to see it coming from that direction, and so on. Our apprehensive laughter broke the otherwise still air – disturbingly still, something we should have noticed earlier.

Ten minutes later we were approaching the end of the driveway, the walk had been slow-going due to the lack of light. A large tree branch cascaded from left to right, it blocked my vision, but Charles could see reasonably enough. We were still laughing and joking about cougars when an explosion of sound erupted in front of us and then immediately fell silent. A massive animal had crashed into the bushes, not more than ten feet away, we jumped. Not the small, subtle jerk of a horror movie, an Olympic medalist

long-jumper jump. We flew. Our bodies twisting and contorting, rewinding through time, breaking through the otherwise empty space of darkness.

“Oh shoot!” We both yelled.

“What the heck was that? I couldn’t see because of this darn branch” I said.

Charles’ immediately responded, “Dude, that was a cougar.”

I mocked him. “You’re just on edge because we were joking about it. It was probably just a deer, maybe a bear. There’s no way a cougar is just going to be chilling next to the side of the road.” I guess I had forgotten that I was the one who had asked him and who had, admittedly, not been able to see anything.

“It was black, long, and slinky. It looked just like a big cat. Its torso twisted in the middle as it launched over the shrubbery.”

We bickered for a few more minutes before approaching his car, a red Audi – it looked great but was a total piece of trash, it did not even have functioning A/C. I continued to denounce his claim, eventually he apprehensively agreed. It could not possibly have been a cougar, it just did not make sense. In hindsight, it makes perfect sense. It was right along a wildlife corridor, we had heard something pacing back and forth when we were standing there earlier in the evening on our cell phones, and it was a foggy night. At the time it seemed too serendipitous to possibly be true, but these were ideal conditions and would allow a cougar to move quickly and stealthily from point A to B.

Charles turned the car on, turned the lights on, turned on his music – he was really into hard rock at the time and some vile, guttural ‘singing’ came roaring out of his sound system – and started rummaging through his belongings for his headlamp. I grabbed my

stuff out of the passenger side, the side closest to where the animal had entered the woods, and waited. Foolishly, I still was not on edge.

“I have to pee.”

To get Charles to relax, I decided to pee right where the crash and subsequent silence had been. Holding my belongings in my right hand, I unzipped with the left. I was laughing and joking about how awful it would be if the thing leapt over the shrubbery and ripped my throat out. This did not seem like a real possibility, I was even saying it while looking back at Charles over my left shoulder, neck fully exposed. He could not find his light.

“Just leave it, we have walked in the dark hundreds of times, we will be fine.”

Knowing what comes next, I still wonder what would have happened if he had listened to me.

A couple of seconds later he found the light. “Found it!” he said cheerily. His hands were full of his belongings so he had me safeguard the light. It was terrible. The batteries were old and failing, the light was extraordinarily dim and only adequately illuminated up to five feet. Anything beyond that became a shadowy apparition that crept me out more than not having the light at all. As we wandered back down the road, Charles kept speeding up and leaving me behind.

“Dude, chill out. You’re sprinting past me.” His pace was freaking me out and I could feel myself picking up on his neurotic energy, I was becoming more on edge. He dropped his sweatshirt and bent down to pick it up.

“No, I’m not!” He quickly retorted.

“Charles, look where you are. You’re like five feet in front of me.”

“Sorry, dude, I’m not trying to.”

After a few more steps, the paranoia was becoming insurmountable and I decided to turn around with the light to do a quick scan, just to be sure we weren’t being followed. On the right side of the road, I thought I saw eyes.

“Dude, do you see... nah, never mind. Are those eyes?” I asked.

“Those are eyes.” Eager to rationalize how he was feeling, I’m not sure Charles even looked.

“Nah, can’t be. I think they’re just Marilene’s road reflectors, I saw them on the way in.”

Once again, we began bickering.

“Alright, alright.” I said. “We’re coming up on the bend in the road. If we go around it and they aren’t there, then they are the road reflectors. If they’re still there, then we’re being followed. Agreed?” He agreed and we continued. We were now walking in silence, you could hear the tension vibrating between us. Both of us were hoping my continued denial won out as truth.

After what felt like ages, we reached the bend in the road, walked another 10 feet and I turned around. Charles moved an additional five feet behind me and to my right. We were about 30 feet from Marilene’s house. There was nothing there, I was ready to gloat.

“Hah! See, dude. I knew we couldn’t possibly be being followed, there’s just no way that a cou – Ooooh no!” As I was gleefully boasting, two blood red eyes, low to the ground, emerged from around the bend. The body was black, long, and slinky. It stopped. Stared dead into my eyes. Its eyes were full of pure, spiteful, hatred – I will

never forget those eyes, they still visit me – and, just like the familiar house cat, it made a circularly curious head motion. Charles did exactly what he should not have done, he bolted, slammed into some metal roofing leaning against the side of the house which crashed to the ground, stumbled, and then froze. I was still in paralyzed disbelief. I tried helplessly to remember what I was supposed to do. I had been teaching people how to act in these circumstances for years, but now that I found myself in the real situation I could not think clearly. I just stood there; clothes in my right hand, headlamp in my left hand raised over my head, and allowed myself to become mesmerized by those eyes. The creature began scampering to the right, my left, it was trying to cut me off from Charles and the house. It wanted to trap me, separate me from my herd. The movement roused me from my paralyzed stupor and I quickly backpedaled to the house, we made it the door and leapt inside. *We were safe.*

For the next hour, Charles and I tried in vain to talk ourselves out of the experience, it was *unbelievable*. The following day, we investigated where all the road reflectors were, looked for sign, we did everything we could to illegitimize the experience. We were forced to accept the reality when one of Marilene's dogs trotted out of the house, stuck its nose to the ground, and followed the animal's exact path all the way to the original explosion of noise. I could not go outside at night, even in residential neighborhoods, for two years after this experience. To this day, now many years removed, I still am completely on edge in the woods at night, especially when alone, and see those blood red eyes around every bend in the trail. All the progress I made in my tent those years prior completely undone, as if that person never existed, by one vividly terrifying experience. An experience that instilled in me a vulnerability so profound that,

despite what the statistics I love so much argue and despite knowing it is irrational, I am terrified of cougars and consider them dangerous.

It would be an understatement to write that the cougar paranoia became pervasive, it was nothing less than transcendent. Charles and I were eager to validate our experience and became more determined each time our director, Chris, dismissed it as an aberration. From his perspective, our experience was not indicative of reality and was instead fueled by paranoid delusion. Because the reality supported by scientific data and reasoning is that cougar attacks are extremely rare because cougar behavior is predictable. This battle between fear and reason reached its apex on Facebook.

Chris posted an article about a cougar killing conducted by the Whites, a family he despised because they poached an established pack of wolves early in Washington's wolf recovery process. In this case, the 13-year-old daughter of Mr. White, a rancher from Twisp, shot a cougar that was allegedly stalking her younger brother (Moran, 2014). Chris thought it was all a bunch of garbage. That the daughter was being used because she was the only one with a cougar hunting tag, that the dad had killed it and that it had not been stalking her brother. His argument was riddled with fallacies, something I gleefully pointed out, based mostly upon his preexisting hatred of the White family. I suggested that we give them the benefit of the doubt and mentioned that we must assume the story is true and that the White family is innocent until otherwise proven guilty. This notion spawned a Facebook war. Charles and Patrick vs. Chris.

For several days Charles and I posted scientific facts that supported the White family's innocence. Chris retaliated with scientific facts of his own that demonstrated

how unlikely their story was. His primary argument was that cougar attacks are extremely rare (they are) and ours was that, though rare, the specifics in this case are in accord with most other cougar attacks/attempted attacks. Namely, most attacks occur when a cougar is starving and are perpetrated against children. The cougar in this case was a 4-year-old male weighing only 50 pounds, half the weight of a healthy cougar, stalking a small 9-year-old boy (Moran, 2014). I still think Charles and I won this argument, but this claim misses the point. Neither Chris nor Charles and I were wrong. We all had the necessary data to support our narrative and ignored the valid data that did not. Our narrative, something we went to great lengths to preserve, was more important than objective reality. If we truly hoped to change the mind of our “opponent,” Chris, we would have needed to speak his language, not demean his values.

Eventually the transcendence of cougar paranoia subsided some. I began to wander the woods more freely, and could move around in the darkness with less anxiety. The fear did not leave, I can still feel it as write this, but the paralysis did. When asked about cougars by people I did not know well, my answers became more diplomatic, more based on seemingly objective scientific data. This was partially because I knew more about the historically troubling struggle to survive human fear that a lot of apex predators experienced and felt culpable for their continued recovery. But there was also a lack of personal connection to some of my questioners. It was much easier to spout out scientific “facts” than acknowledge the visceral stories, in this case my own, that facts often ignore. This tendency was brought to my attention when my mother asked me about cougar risk.

We were driving through a spectacular forest about one mile from the property I had lived on during my tracking phase. The place was gorgeous. It was a beautiful and sunny day, rays of light dancing around sword ferns nearly prehistoric in size. I half imagined I would look up and see a dryad bounding across the hillside. My mother told me that she used to walk this road when we lived out here, something I did not recall from my childhood. One day, a neighbor drove up in their huge truck, gun rack fully equipped and proudly displayed across the back window.

“You shouldn’t be walking out here alone without a gun. It isn’t safe,” they told her. It happened more than once and eventually my mom gave up on the walks because it was not worth the trouble. I noted a touch of sadness in her voice. Then she asked me what I thought. I was not ready for the question and stumbled through my response, but I told her what I have found to be true.

The statistics suggest minimal risk, though cougar encounters continue to climb as urban sprawl eliminates habitat. Despite being rare, every person I know who has spent significant time in the woods has had an encounter of some sort, so it would be foolish to merely discredit their stories. However, none of them have been attacked. Ultimately, this means it is adequate to simply know how to respond in a situation, regularly practice that response, and walk with awareness.

I share these stories to provide a template for understanding my research. As an outsider, it can be difficult to understand why wolves are such a contentious topic. It certainly was difficult for me. The science overwhelmingly supports the notion that wolves are beneficial aspects of the ecosystems they take part in. However, the people

most likely to encounter them, namely rural ranchers, overwhelmingly dislike or hate them. It is easy to assume that this hatred is built upon myths that science adequately refutes, there is evidence of this in my own analysis. But it is equally important to acknowledge the psychological impact, and subsequent behavioral response, of your own experiences and the validation you find in the stories of those you most respect.

Currently, despite its best efforts, the *Washington Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan* places too much emphasis on biological science and does not adequately consider the psychological tendencies of the constituencies it most needs to reach and is met with resistance because of this oversight.

CHAPTER II

ATTITUDES, ANARCHY, AND WANING PUBLIC TRUST

Junkyard Dogs & Mike the Prototype¹

Mike is sitting in the dimly lit living room of his cabin. Outdoor guides litter the antique furniture. His shotgun hangs above a rustic fireplace, next to the head of a massive elk. I hear him sigh and see him pull his lit cigarette toward his scruffy face. He inhales deeply and draws the smoke into his lungs, the butt of his cigarette burns angrily. As he exhales, the smoke billows from his nostrils like an old steam engine. “Tree-hugging Seattle-ites,” he says with a pained expression on his face. “This is all the fault of those god damned tree-huggers.”

Mike is a 35-year-old rancher from Eastern Washington. His parents passed the ranch onto him when they retired. He makes his living from raising cattle, sometimes sheep, but mostly cattle. He told me that for much of his life things have been good. Sure, he lost a head here and there, but for the most part he has been able to protect his herd. Not lately, though. Wolves. *Devilspawn*, as he put it, have returned to the state of Washington. And to make matters worse, the government is hell-bent on protecting them (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2011).

He just finished telling me an abridged version of what I can only imagine is a somewhat contested history of wolves in the state of Washington. He argued that wolves

¹ This is a fictional narrative used to provide an intimate look at a prototypical rancher. It is based on my own interactions with Washington ranchers and the available literature about ranchers in Washington and Idaho.

were killed off via state sponsorship in the 1900s for community well-being (US Fish and Wildlife, 2015).

“There’s a reason these damned things were killed off!” He would intermittently spout. While I could verify that communities did place bounties on wolves, it was unclear if there was any motivation for greater community well-being – an ambiguous claim to begin with – beyond the revenue the hides generated via trade.

Mike has become the posterchild of the anti-wolf movement. For likeminded ranchers, Mike is a martyr; someone who resisted the hand of bureaucracy with little regard for the personal consequences he might face. He has a huge cult-following in neighboring Idaho. For everyone else, Mike is a poacher. A scumbag with little regard for the sanctity of animal life who got off with a light sentence. Mike had to pay less than 40,000 dollars for the killing of an entire wolf pack (Geranios, 2012).

When I asked Mike why he did it, why he hunted down a seemingly innocuous pack, he scoffed. He told me there is not such a thing as an innocuous wolf pack. Sure, this pack had not begun to clash with ranchers, but it was only a matter of time. Why wait? With an air of cold rationality, Mike had looked me dead in the eye and told me this was just a proactive business decision. He told me that people should be thanking him, every wolf deserves to suffer; to meet death in extreme agony is the *only* end the beasts deserve. As far as Mike’s concerned, any wolf, or conservationist for that matter, deserves to be shot in the stomach and left to bleed out cold and alone (Ketcham, 2014).

At this point, our discussion had begun to get slightly off track. Mike was mostly throwing out ad hoc life experience and arguing his case pleadingly; as if, if he could just win *me* over, get *me* to understand, somehow this would not have been for nothing.

Throughout our discussion it felt like Mike was a man desperate for a voice. A man whose act of poaching was not motivated solely by personal gain or irrationality, but born of a concern with not being taken seriously. In a lot of ways, Mike seemed disenfranchised. A product of a dying fringe culture being absorbed by, and expected to conform to the ideas of, the greater whole.

As I was gathering my things to leave, Mike turned to me and said, “The great irony is we’re not the only ones being jerked around by the feds. The Native Americans in the area are pissed off too and though they’re reacting to something I support – the removal of the Profanity Peak Pack – I love that they’re suing the government. Show those bastards they can’t push us around” (Schwing, 2016; Chabba, 2016). The joy in his voice was palpable. He’s right, though, Washington’s Cowlitz Tribe is suing the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife over the removal of the Profanity Peak Pack. It does not seem the tribe will make much headway as the argument has already been made that tribal courts have no subject matter jurisdiction (Schwing, 2016; Chabba, 2016).

When I approached Mike, I was not concerned with whether he was right, wrong, justified, or unjustified in what he had done. I was concerned with the *why*. Washington had released the *Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan*; a plan that includes compensation funds for ranchers able to confirm losses to wolves, provides non-lethal measures for removal, and permits lethal measures in specific cases (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2011). Why, then, with seemingly so much rancher consideration given are ranchers entertaining poaching as a legitimate form of conflict

resolution? I asked Mike this very question and I am not sure I am satisfied with his response.

Mike told me the *Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan* was 300 pages ripe for use as toilet paper. It was simply another tool for conservationists to tout as responsible governance while ignoring the needs of those most affected by wolf predation. Nobody sitting in Seattle deals with this, yet those in Seattle get to dictate the decision-making process because they have a larger population (Ketcham, 2014). Therein lies the problem, *we have no voice. We want to be heard.*

As I turned to leave, Mike left me with one last piece of advice. *“Remember, the wilderness might be beautiful, but it’s filled with beasts.”*

A Quagmire of Thought: Understanding Wolf Resistance

Wolves have had a difficult history throughout most of the United States and their history in Washington is no different. By most accepted accounts, gray wolves were common throughout Washington prior to the 1800s (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2011). During the 1800s, driven by the establishment of the Hudson’s Bay Company, wolves began to be regularly hunted for their pelts (WDFW, 2011; Fischer, 1995). Hunting alone was not enough to substantially diminish gray wolf populations. It was not until the 1850s, when Euro-American settlement became more common in Washington, that wolf populations began to drop dramatically (WDFW, 2011; Fischer, 1995). Communities began holding “Wolf Meeting(s)” and establishing wolf bounties, and the Hudson’s Bay Company began regularly using strychnine for poisoning (WDFW, 2011; Fischer, 1995). By the early 1900s, driven by further establishment of ranching

and farming, wolves had been nearly eliminated from Washington, only remaining in the most remote parts of the state (WDFW, 2011; Fischer, 1995).

Despite a substantially diminished population, wolves continued to be hunted throughout the 1900s with disturbing levels of zealotry. In Montana alone, 80,730 wolves were bountied between 1883 and 1918 (Lopez, 1978). Forests with known wolf populations were referred to as “infested” and ranchers openly questioned why wolves had not been “eradicated” (Robinson, 2005). The phrase “good wolf” became associated with dead wolf (Robinson, 2005) and, due to government sponsorship, wolf hatred and persecution became increasingly normalized. It should be noted that wolves were not alone in their persecution. Until it was banned in 1972, strychnine was regularly used to kill predators and pests of all sizes (Niemeyer, 2010). Animal Damage Control, a federally funded organization, killed 18,000-20,000 coyotes *annually* in Montana (Niemeyer, 2010) and laced tons of grain with 1080 – a deadly combination of strychnine and zinc phosphate – to kill “various rodents...ground squirrels, prairie dogs, meadow mice, pocket gophers, and porcupines” (Niemeyer, 2010, p. 102). Still, wolves were given a special place in the predator-hate-filled hearts of many during this period. William T Hornaday, the man responsible for producing the first book dedicated to saving animals from extinction, regularly referred to wolves as “evil-doers” with “insatiable appetite[s]” and “master[s] of cunning and the acme of cruelty” (as cited in Robinson, 2005, p. 96). These sentiments are not uncommon and conform to the “intellectual conventions of the period and indeed of the English language itself” (as cited in Robinson, 2005, p. 96). Barry Lopez echoes this sentiment in *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America*, arguing that “the persecution of wolves was fundamentally different

[than other predator exterminations] because the history of killing wolves shows far less restraint and far more perversity” (as cited in Coleman, 2004, p. 3). Lopez builds on this argument by attributing this persecution to “theriophobia,” or an irrational fear of “the beast” (Coleman, 2004, p. 3). Fischer traces this hatred to “two critical events – the near eradication of the bison [the same bison William T Hornaday was avidly working to protect] and the boom of the livestock industry” (1995, p. 14). These two events led westerners to invent a “mythic[al] wolf: an animal capable of decimating big game faster than a speeding bullet; a beast that could lay waste to entire herds of livestock in a single bound; a creature of monstrous cruelty and incredible cunning” (Fischer, 1995, p. 10). The remnants of this mythical beast are still alive and well in the psyches of many Washington residents today.

The Big Bad Wolf: Myth or Fact?

Many scholars have written about wolves and the place they occupy in human imagination, but none with more elegance and depth than Barry Lopez. His work *Of Wolves and Men* traces the ever-evolving mythos of the wolf back into the Middle Ages, a period particularly ripe with wolf imagery. He combs through thousands of works, such as Dante’s *Divina Commedia* and Pliny’s *Historia Naturalis*, and shares their views of wolves. For Dante, wolves were associated with greed and fraud and “seducers and hypocrites, magicians, thieves, and liars” were all guilty of the “sins of the wolf” (as cited in Lopez, 1978, p. 205). Though skeptical himself, Pliny’s views are equally fascinating, he shares an account of werewolfery in Greece (Lopez, 1978) that further demonstrates the significance of wolves in the human imagination.

After laying the foundation of wolf imagery with Dante and Pliny, Lopez forges into Christian depictions of wolves. He explores “the hour of the wolf” – the period of “halfnight” at dawn or dusk – and finds wolves associated with both light and darkness. In this sense, wolves were symbols of “enlightenment, intelligence, and civilization” as well as “ignorance and bestiality, [and] a passage back into the world of dark forces” (Lopez, 1978, p. 209). Lopez is not alone in his analysis of wolves in Christian writings, other scholarship notes similarly problematic historical narratives.

Christ is often referred to as a shepherd and his followers as sheep or lambs. Wolves, particularly in Europe, are a common enemy of sheep and this has led to the use of lupine images in place of Satan (Robisch, 2009). Adam Douglas argues that during the Middle Ages the wolf versus sheep dichotomy was used to overtly represent the metaphor of Antichrist versus Christ within pastoral cultures (as cited in Robisch, 2009). Lopez expresses a similar sentiment in his writings, “Allegations of witchcraft and sorcery – running around the countryside in a wolf skin killing children, or sending a pack of wolves to decimate the flocks of a good Christian – were charges rather easily sustained” (1978, p. 238). It is easy to see how the two became synonymous, both the devil and wolves were viewed as cunning tricksters. This idea is likely the reason Christianity adopted the Norse myth of the Fenris wolf as a parallel for the devil; Fenris was both cunning and capable of massive acts of destruction (Robisch, 2009).

Lopez’s reading of the Christian view of Fenris is similar. Fenris’ father, Loki, was recast by Christians as the “Evil One.” Thematically, it makes sense that Fenris would be equally reviled by members of the community. It is even more fitting that he is represented by a massive wolf whose offspring are to devour the sun at the end of the

world (Lopez, 1978). This literal return to darkness was the inspiration for the popular German folk rhyme translated as: “at eleven come the wolves, at twelve the tombs of the dead open” (as cited in Lopez, 1978, p. 210). But even if one is not won over by the significance of the wolf in overtly Christian imagery, there are countless other problematic examples of wolf imagery throughout Western history.

Shakespeare used wolves as symbols for war and lust and common fables such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and *The Seven Little Goats* all pit a villainous wolf against a morally pure huntsman (Lopez, 1978). Other scholars have noted the tendency to define wolves as “wild” and humans as “civilized.” According to Greene, Wolves and the wilderness they live within are wild and other, they exist outside the bounds of civility (2008). This belief is built in part on historical observation and experience. As wilderness gave way to farmland, diminishing wolf habitat, wolves disappeared (Greene, 2008). For early Europeans, war and famine would ravage farmland and farmland would quickly revert to its wild state. As habitat became reestablished, wolves would return (Greene, 2008). Wolves, then, became associated with famine, war, and human tragedy. This gave birth to the idea that “if the wolf was profiting, humans must be suffering” (Greene, 2008, p. 62). Remnants of this thinking still exist today.

One of the most oft-cited reasons that ranchers resist wolf reintroduction is because of the fear of a diminished quality of life – this idea is built on the assumption that if wolves are doing well, humans are doing poorly and vice versa. For example, in Alberta, Canada fear of the malevolence of wolves led to the cancellation of activities, such as dancing, after dark (Jones, 2010). This eventually led the community to band

together and slaughter seventeen wolves; an act which the *Calgary Herald* “duly applauded” and considered to be a “revolt of homesteaders against the domination of timber wolves” (as cited in Jones, 2010, p. 340). More overt connections can be made to American psyche. Americans, too, have used the branding of “civilized” and “wild” to define their relationship with the ecological world (Sherman, n.d.). This is supported by the sentiment that, “Americans believe that they can visit the wild, but can never live in it” (Sherman, n.d., p. 9). Aspects of this psychological phenomenon can be seen historically in American wildlife policy.

Scholars have studied the impact conservation policies driven by national parks have had on wolves and their representation in American culture. National parks were “predicated on creating landscapes of Romantic leisure, with pastoral scenery, rustic lodges, and vast herds of appealing herbivores for the visiting public to see” (Jones, 2010, p. 340). Prominent conservationists, such as Aldo Leopold, thought that “predator control was an essential route to game abundance” (Emel, 1995). Their authority on conservation matters led to the US Congressional authorization of “experiments and demonstrations in destroying wolves” conducted by the US Biological Survey (Emel, 1995, p. 717). With this authorization, despite already having a substantially diminished population due to the Hudson Bay Company and early European settlement, wolf killing became “institutionalized and bureaucratized” (Emel, 1995). Emel argues that this institutionalization led to conceptualizations of masculinity that were directly tied to animal domination. The prospect of killing a wolf or of “looking your savage prey in the eye was... exhilarating” (1995, p. 723). She carries this thinking a step further and ties her findings to Lopez’s work writing, “they were convinced that they were serving God

by whipping nature, animals, and dark-skinned people into submission” (1995, p. 728). Evidence for this viewpoint can be found in the writings of high-ranking government officials of the period. The governor of Rhode Island, Roger Williams, referred to wolves as “‘fierce, bloodsucking persecutor[s]’ of everything that was highborn in humans” (1995, p. 728). Theodore Roosevelt – oft-cited as the “masculinist ideal” – tied wolves to “waste and desolation” (1995, p. 728). It is easy to read these reports and dismiss them as relics of the past, but more recent research suggests that many of these ideologies might still be operating today.

Jessica Bell, a PhD student in Sociology at Michigan State University, researched online discussions about wolves (as cited in Yuskavitch, 2015). Her research focused on comments made in *Beef Magazine* and *Cattle Today* between 1999 and 2013 (Yuskavitch, 2015). She chose these magazines because they were “oriented to ranchers’ interests” (Yuskavitch, 2015, p. 102). In addition to the ranching magazines, she analyzed two different hunting publications: *American Hunter* and *Outdoor Life Magazine* (Yuskavitch, 2015). After analyzing all the comments, Bell found the predominant anti-wolf narrative was based upon the traditional Christian notion of dominion over nature. According to Bell, commenters felt that human beings were the only legitimate apex predator and that wolves were not capable of balancing nature as conservationists often claim (Yuskavitch, 2015). Furthermore, commenters argued that governments are establishing “rules and regulations that hamper the ability...of property owners to defend their livelihoods and interests and that wolves and their advocates are intruders who threaten social and economic stability” (Yuskavitch, 2015, p. 104). In other words, not only are the management practices adopted by governments ineffective,

they actively challenge rancher interests. L. David Mech's research draws similar conclusions, he argues that the anti-wolf population is ecologically blind and bases their hatred on "myths, tales, and legends" (as cited in Coleman, 2004, p. 3).

In 1973, Congress passed the Endangered Species Act which signaled a shift in environmental management. Government trappers and hunters were no longer allowed to indiscriminately kill with deadly poisons and actively shoot large predators such as grizzlies. Instead, large predators would be captured and moved to new locations where they would have a less adverse impact (Niemeyer, 2010). While the act successfully protected a variety of species, it did little to encourage a change in the psyche of Animal Damage Control. The organization successfully lobbied Congress "for a full-time federal aerial hunting program in the west" (Ibid, p. 101). As a result, large numbers of unprotected predators continued to be killed by federally sponsored programs. Unprotected predators and other species deemed nuisances continue to be killed today. The Humane Society of the United States offers a pointed critique of the USDA Wildlife Services program on their website. The organization argues that Wildlife Services uses mostly public funding from tax dollars to benefit a small number of special interests (2017). Furthermore, the program lacks transparency and accountability and these lead to "fiscal irresponsibility" and "environmental harm" (2017). Yet even though these programs and program critiques exist, attitudes about wolves more broadly have certainly shifted since the 1970s.

Once thought an impossibility even in the minds of conservationists, wolves have been successfully reintroduced in Yellowstone National Park (Fischer, 1995). Even those with a flair for the extraordinary certainly did not think reintroduction would go so

smoothly (Smith & Ferguson, 2005). This situation is even more noteworthy because the reintroduction was conducted by the same organizations that had exterminated wolves sixty years prior (Fischer, 1995). This is not to suggest the process was easy, it took over a decade to reach agreement and receive Congressional approval. There are also troubling details to those who may be interested in greater cross-cultural collaboration. For example, the team lead responsible for the preparation of the environmental impact statement was selected because “brick by brick, he’d built a Montana wolf recovery program so sturdy that even the biggest, baddest wolf opponents couldn’t blow it down” (Smith & Ferguson, 2005, p. 143). That said, given the historical persecution of the wolf in American wildlife management policies, this might have been what was needed to begin a balanced discussion about wolf reintroduction. Ultimately, the reintroduction was hugely successful so most of these concerns can be dismissed. There were only a “few high-profile illegal killings” and the “Yellowstone packs became lupine celebrities, attracting attention from 20,000 visitors in the period 1995-1999” (Jones, 2010, p. 346). This type of success has been used to argue that “collaborative, multi-agency approach[es]” pay huge dividends (Jones, 2010, p. 346).

Undoubtedly, attitudes about wolves have shifted throughout human history and these shifts have broad implications. However, some scholars, such as Coleman, argue that little about wolf narratives have *actually* shifted. Triumphs, such as Yellowstone, should not necessarily be heralded as significant changes in American psyche about wolves because wolves are still defined by a good versus evil dichotomy; the actors have simply swapped positioning within the narrative. Wolves, once an evil force, are now considered an ecological hero in the imaginations of normative society. This is the

critique Coleman offers when directly analyzing the work of Lopez and Mech. For Coleman, while new authorship attempts to “challenge the way readers think about Wolves” it has done so by preserving “the rigid dichotomy of good and evil that always characterized people’s opinions of the animals” (Coleman, 2004, p. 4). In other words, the narrative has not changed, the players in the narrative have simply swapped positioning; conservationists denounce anti-wolf groups as evil and perverse and this view has become socially normative because it has the largest number of supporters. Ultimately, this does little to transform the conflict – there is still a good and an evil – and only serves to increase cultural stratification. The emerging dynamics surrounding Washington’s Gray Wolf recovery process provides strong support for this idea.

What does it mean, then, that wolves have been conceptualized in so many divergent ways? Are the stories ranchers share about the malevolence of wolves all motivated by ancient myths, Judeo-Christian imagery, and fear of a proverbial Satan? Are conservationists *truly* concerned with best science practices and ecological restoration or do wolves simply represent the Romantic ideal of “wilderness?” I do not know, but it is clear that wolves and conceptualizations of wolves are deeply tied to the social identities of those in direct, or indirect, contact with wolves. The success of Yellowstone’s reintroduction, then, is not simply ecological restoration, but its ability to capture the minds of its constituents. Wolves and their success as a species will be defined by their relationship with humans. As Renee Askins of The Wolf Fund stated so eloquently, “‘Laws don’t protect wolves; people protect wolves. Greater protection of wolves is not necessarily achieved through more restrictive laws.’ The goodwill generated by addressing the concerns of local people would save far more wolves than

any number of carefully worded laws” (Fischer, 1995, p. 155). This suggests that having a firm grasp on the historical cultural narratives of the involved constituents provides the greatest likelihood of engaging in meaningful dialogue. Words have power and help shape the way cultures process information (Sherman, n.d.). Ranchers have likely been exposed to the narrative that wolves are evil for much of their lives and have had experiences, at least tangentially, that confirm this viewpoint. Conservationists have likely been exposed to the narrative that wolves are an ecological necessity and similarly cherry-pick data to support this notion. Acknowledging and understanding the experientially-based divergence of cultural narratives allows for analysis of rancher and conservationist behaviors through psychological frameworks and may provide governments with more effective wildlife management strategies.

CHAPTER III
THE WASHINGTON GRAY WOLF CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT
PLAN

A Well-Thought Promise

As attitudes about wolves shifted across the United States, so too did policies about how best to manage their changing populations. Wolves were extirpated from Washington by the 1930s, so why bring them back some 80 years later? This was a question regularly asked during Washington’s planning process. The answer is complicated. Wolves were not being brought back into the state through an artificial reintroduction process, they were naturally returning. By developing the plan, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife was responding to a variety of state circumstances. First, wolves were protected by state-listed endangered species status. This listing status required the development of some type of recovery plan (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2017). Second, environmental experts expected the gray wolf population to continue increasing via natural dispersion from bordering states and the WDFW anticipated an increase in human-wolf conflict because of this dispersion (2017). Third, in addition to being listed as endangered in Washington, gray wolves were protected under federal listing. If wolves were removed from federal listing, their management would be turned over to the state (2017). Without an adequate management plan already implemented, gray wolf management would be challenging especially considering the divergent viewpoints about wolves within the state.

Crafting the Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan

Development of the *Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan* began in 2007 and completed in 2011. Drawing on the unforeseen success in Yellowstone, the plan was drafted with “the assistance of a 17-member [multi-stakeholder] advisory citizen Wolf Working Group over nearly 5 years” (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2011, pp. 12-13). It was then subject to public review, with over 23 public meetings and 65,000 community comments submitted. Following these instances of public input, it underwent a scientific peer review conducted by reviewers with “backgrounds that include carnivore ecology, wildlife habitat, and conservation biology” (Vogt, 2010, p. 1). In December of 2011, the plan was unanimously adopted after undergoing some minor alterations during the Commission meeting (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2011).

The *Plan* was designed around three primary elements: wolf recovery, livestock protection, and wildlife protection (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, n.d.). These elements were intended to provide ecological stability, assuage the economic concerns of ranchers, and protect at-risk ungulate populations (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, n.d.). According to the WDFW website, the plan achieves these measures by:

- 1) “Establish[ing] a delisting objective of 15 breeding pairs of wolves that are present in the state for at least three years, with at least four in Eastern Washington, four in the northern Cascades, four in the southern Cascades/Northwest coastal area, and three others anywhere in the state. The plan also provides for WDFW to consider initiating the delisting process if 18 breeding pairs are documented during a single year, and the distribution objectives are met.
- 2) The plan provides a variety of nonlethal and lethal management measures - from technical assistance for landowners to lethal removal - to control wolves that prey on livestock. The plan also establishes conditions for compensating ranchers who lose livestock to wolf predation.

- 3) The plan allows WDFW to use lethal and non-lethal measures to manage wolf predation on at-risk ungulate populations if wolf numbers reach or exceed the recovery objective within a region where predation occurs” (2017).

These measures, and the 300 pages of policy backing them, are the reason the *Plan* is considered one of the most comprehensive wildlife management tools ever adopted. It dwarfs the level of detail in neighboring Idaho’s wolf management plan and clearly establishes a robust operational platform for Washington’s Department of Fish and Wildlife. Yet even with so much promise, the WDFW recognized that human behavior would continue to be a challenge.

What Do You Mean I Can’t Shoot Them?

The first established wolf pack in Washington since their extermination in the 1930s was documented in 2008. By the end of 2008, it was gone. All members of the pack had been poached, maimed and shipped to Canada (Geranios, 2012). Conservationists were outraged, ranchers celebrated, and the WDFW began to sweat. The table was set for an arduous battle. This was all before the *Plan*, though, and the expectation of many in Washington was that wolf management would be simplified once the *Plan* was adopted. The authors of the *Plan* seemed to think otherwise; the *Plan*’s executive summary reads: “Human-related mortality, particularly illegal killing and legal control actions to resolve conflicts, is the largest source of mortality for the species in the northwestern United States and illegal killing has already been documented in Washington” (WDFW, 2011). While the three foundational elements of the *Plan* presented earlier might suggest smoother sailing, this sentiment notes the difficulty human attitudes present for management.

Unfortunately for the WDFW and wolf conservationists, this sentiment remains true. In 2012, eight of the nine wolf mortalities were caused by humans (WDFW, 2013);

in 2013, four of the five wolf mortalities were caused by humans (WDFW, 2014); in 2014, five of the ten wolf mortalities were known to be caused by humans (WDFW, 2015). The mortalities in 2014 were noteworthy because, despite human-related mortality being relatively low compared to the years prior, four of the five human-related wolf mortalities (~8% of the total population) were from poaching (WDFW, 2014). Additionally, while the number of wolves killed appears small, the killings are significant because, in two separate locations, the breeding females were among those targeted (Conservation Northwest, 2014; Defenders of Wildlife, n.d.). When breeding females are killed, established wolf packs risk extermination. If an entire pack disappears, Washington's recovery goals are significantly impacted. This means that 2014 had the highest number of wolves poached since the *Plan's* implementation and that those acts of poaching impeded the state's recovery goals. Ultimately, this prompted the WDFW to hire Francine Madden to conduct an independent conflict assessment.

Madden Thinks You Fumbled This Opportunity²

Francine Madden agreed to assess Washington's conflict over wolves in 2014 and submitted her findings to the WDFW in 2015. Acting as a "third party neutral," she interviewed 90 people all of whom represented a major stakeholder or decisionmaker. Stakeholders were chosen from each of the major groups associated with the conflict and then given an opportunity to recommend others. All interviews were conducted over a two-week time period for a total of 350 hours (Madden, 2015). Her findings include analysis of three layers of conflict consistent with a "conflict transformation lens"

² This is only a summary of some of the points I found relevant to my research. Her assessment is much more comprehensive than my presentation might suggest. The entire document can be found on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's website.

(Madden, 2015, p. 5). These layers are: disputes (current issues), underlying conflict (historical disputes), and identity conflict (values, way of life threats). Her findings were troubling, but not all that surprising.

According to Madden, her interviewees noted that “intensity and polarization of the conflict is largely among those actively involved in or impacted by wolf recovery” (2015, p. 10). An unsurprising statement, but significant in that those same interviewees noted that the intensity and polarization are increasing stress levels and are responsible for degrading relationships between groups (2015). Some even reported a fracturing within their immediate families. All groups perceived the conflict as a threat to their way of life, identities, and economic security (2015). Each group accused other groups of “exaggerate[ing] their reality to fit their agenda or goals” and that when there is misinformation, “the side that benefits doesn’t attempt to correct the resulting misimpressions” (2015, p. 11). Perhaps the most significant finding for the long-term success of the *Plan* and the health of Washington’s citizens is that “the deep-rooted social conflict between diverse people and groups is being **passed on to the next generation. For instance, youths have posted death threats to other youths in the context of the wolf conflict through social media**” (bold for emphasis, 2015, p. 12). Ultimately, Madden found that group members are connected to their groups, are concerned that the status quo will lead to an increase in illegal killing, feel unfairly dehumanized by members not in their groups, and that lack of trust – especially trust of the WDFW – is the biggest problem moving forward (2015). While these findings are being acted on by the WDFW, they certainly have not resolved all the problems in Washington.

If You Shoot Them, We Will Kill You

In 2015, after Francine Madden's assessment was submitted, six of the seven wolf mortalities were caused by humans (WDFW, 2016). In 2016, the conflict exploded with human-related mortalities accounting for twelve of fourteen wolf deaths. The remaining two unrelated mortalities are still under investigation (WDFW, 2017). Numbers alone cannot explain the significance of 2016; anger was everywhere, death threats flew through the sky like swarms of angry locusts not yet ready to die and they have not. Death threats are mounting, legal bodies have become involved, and cultural stratification is as prevalent as ever, but why?

This most recent series of publicly divisive debauchery began when the WDFW, in accordance with the specifications outlined in the *Plan*, authorized lethal removal of the Profanity Peak wolfpack. The pack was responsible for chronic cattle predation in the region having been cited for the killing or injuring of six cattle and suspected of killing or injuring five others (Mapes, 2016). Some conservationists took issue with the removal because it went unannounced for six days, contained ambiguous language such as "partial removal," and felt secretive (Jenkins, 2016). One state Senator, Brian Dansel, said, "It doesn't engender a lot of trust, does it?" (as cited in Jenkins, 2016). Others felt the response was disproportionate to the harm caused. Eleven wolves (over 12% of the total wolf population), some of which were pups, would be killed because of six cows (Guarino, 2016). Conspiracy theories began to creep into public view stoked by a research at Washington State University (Mapes, 2016). The rancher released his cows five miles from a now known den site. Wolf territories are large, some felt this was an obvious a ploy to have the wolves killed "legally," but these accusations have not been

sustained (Conservation Northwest, 2016). One reason they were so popular is because this rancher's cattle were involved with the lethal removal of the Wedge pack in 2012 (Mapes, 2016). It was clearly all a simple misunderstanding and since the WDFW was following the protocols established during its inclusive drafting process, all parties could move on. It would not be so easy.

After the WDFW began removal, the death threats started pouring in. Both the employees of the WDFW tasked with removal of the Profanity Peak pack and the rancher whose cattle are responsible for the removal have been targeted by rabid conservationists (Mapes, 2016; Le, 2017). This has prompted the state to introduce a bill that would provide exemptions and remove harmful information from the public domain (Le, 2017). The bill was deemed necessary after state representatives listened to the testimony of wolf policy lead Donny Martorello – he had to “put his family in a hotel last year over such concerns” (as cited in Le, 2017). It seems reasonable enough that state officials want to be protected and, unfortunately, the ramifications are much broader. Remember, Francine Madden found *trust* to be the main ingredient missing in Washington. After early reports of the Profanity Peak removal surfaced, one of the most oft-cited perturbances was the real or perceived lack of transparency. Now, because of that initial lack of transparency, the process will become less transparent. This will make trust-building much more difficult. Troubles for the WDFW do not end here, either, Washington's Cowlitz Tribe is suing the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife over the removal of the Profanity Peak pack (Schwing, 2016; Chabba, 2016).

Trust Wanes and Wolves Die

The situation in Washington is troubling. Since the *Plan*'s adoption in 2011, 35 of the 45 wolf mortalities in Washington state have been the result of human interaction. Some of these mortalities were legal harvest by Native Americans, some mortalities were from agency control, and some mortalities were from illegal harvest (poaching). Regardless of human-related mortality source, of the total possible wolves (n=150 – 115 known wolves, 45 mortalities), 23 percent (n=35) were the result of human interference. On its own, 23 percent is not an insignificant number, but it becomes more problematic when considering the cultural stratification evidenced above. Given the high level of stratification, it is unsurprising that wolf acceptance is trending in a direction opposite the one the WDFW had hoped. On their website, Conservation Northwest asserts that “More than 75% of Washington residents queried in a 2008 wildlife poll supported recovery of Washington’s wolves” (Conservation Northwest, n.d.). Francine Madden’s follow-up survey found that support had dropped to 64% by 2014 (Madden, 2015). Yellowstone’s success was in large part attributed to the ability to address the concerns of locals. Washington’s *Plan* seems equally comprehensive and thoughtful, a multi-stakeholder group guided its development. How were these concerns not evident earlier? They were.

The Wolf Working Group³

In his memoir *Wolfer*, released in 2010, Carter Niemeyer – largely responsible for wolf reintroduction in Idaho and Yellowstone – writes, “Hearings are a sign that the government has already made a decision. Taking public testimony is a way to ease folks into an idea and let them blow off steam about it. The decision was that wolves would be

³ I will only be summarizing the points most relevant for my research. The overall organizational structure and process – such as agenda items, action item memos, and more – can be found on the WDFW website.

back soon and everybody had better get used to it” (p. 183). Niemeyer’s comments refer to the situation in Yellowstone in the early 1990s, but seem applicable to Washington. It is true that the WDFW developed the *Plan* in consultation with the Wolf Working Group and public feedback. However, it is also true that the group was provided a stipulation that “the option for managing for no wolves in Washington was not a viable alternative” (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2011, p. 12). This means that the Wolf Working Group would help guide the process, but wolves were returning and there was no way around it.

With such an emphatic statement issued from the WDFW, group representation became extremely important. Given the lack of trust in Washington today, the significance of an early multi-stakeholder group cannot be underestimated. One would think that if the group was appropriately representative of the stakeholders impacted by wolves, then trust would have been established from the beginning of the process. The Wolf Working Group was originally comprised of eighteen citizen-members that were tasked with developing recommendations for the WDFW (WDFW, 2007). According to WDFW archives, members were nominated by the public and then selected by WDFW Director John Koenings to “represent a broad range of interests, including wildlife conservation, agriculture, and hunting” (WDFW, 2006). My research uncovered the names and titles of those involved and there were six members clearly representing the interests of ranchers or sportsman (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2011). Neither how John Koenings chose those individuals nor how representative of the rural population more broadly they were, are clear. However, The Wolf Working Group’s membership does provide the appearance of fairness.

Given the diverse membership of the Wolf Working Group, it seems likely that agreement would be difficult. So, how exactly would the group finalize decisions? All decision-making would be decided via consensus. Consensus was defined as “all Working Group members can live with the recommendation or decisions” (WDFW, 2007). If consensus was not present, group members would “articulate areas of agreement and disagreement” (WDFW, 2007). If a topic was particularly vitriolic, the Wolf Working Group members would issue majority and minority reports to the WDFW and include the names of those representing the minority viewpoint (WDFW, 2007). This is significant because in the final draft of the environmental impact statement for the *Plan*, finalized just prior to *Plan* ratification, six members of the Wolf Working Group submitted a minority report. Five of those six members were the ones identified earlier as clearly representing the interests of ranchers and sportsman societies. The minority report focused on the number of breeding pairs specified in the *Plan* and argued that the numbers were “too high and [would] result in direct conflict with the Livestock and Sportsman Communities” (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2011, p. 294). It is clear more work was needed if Washington was going to overcome the historical divisiveness that has defined the human-wolf relationship. If the group, comprised of only eighteen members, tasked with providing a balanced *Plan* representative of the public’s dynamic interests was unable to find agreement over four years, how can the broader public be expected to find agreement and build trust? This problem becomes more obscene when one considers the conspicuous absence of Native American involvement in the Working Group and the recent lawsuit by the Cowlitz Tribe.

It is unclear whether the lack of Native American participation in the Wolf Working Group is because of self-exclusion, lack of invitation from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, or some other legal limitation. I suspect this is not due to lack of invitation and instead because of the way in which tribal treaties and sovereignty interact with federal authority. This supposition is built in part on the participation of eight tribal representatives in the scientific peer review process (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2011).

Regardless of the reasoning, the lack of Native American inclusion is concerning. The US government does not have a strong record of respect for treaties that it has negotiated with tribes. For example, the Klamath Tribes negotiated and signed a treaty with the US government in 1864 that guaranteed fishing rights and historic fishing grounds (Blumm & Erickson, 2012). Unfortunately, it was not until 1983 – nearly 120 years later – that the Bureau of Reclamation and Oregon’s Water Resources Department began to ensure these water rights were protected (Blumm & Erickson, 2012). This sudden shift in recognition was not due to a change of heart in either of the departments. It was because the Ninth Circuit ruled that Native American water rights had priority over the water rights of irrigators because they had been in the region longer. Prior to this ruling, the law had been written in a way to intentionally exclude Native American water rights in the basin (Doremus & Tarlock, 2008). Though a rare legal success for Native Americans, the ruling was problematic because it placed Native American prosperity in direct conflict and in competition with white ranching (irrigator) counterparts. As a result, conflict over water in the Klamath Basin continues to this day and both groups, Native Americans and irrigators, have suffered greatly because of it (Doremus & Tarlock,

2008). After over 20 years of negotiation, the parties introduced a jointly supported Senate Bill (SB 2379), but it failed to pass because of federal political squabbling that had little to do with the particulars of the Klamath Basin region; lawmakers were concerned that it would set precedent for federal dam removal (Jarrell, 2014).

Given the implications of historical treaty disputes such as the one in the Klamath Basin, the recent lawsuit by the Cowlitz tribe and subsequent dismissal of concerns by the Attorney General of Washington are not all that surprising. Attorney General Neil Wise wrote the following in response to the lawsuit:

“Our office appreciates your support for wolf recovery in Washington and understands your concerns regarding any lethal removal of wolves in the state. However, WDFW’s actions are in compliance with all applicable federal and state law and policy. We are not aware of any legal rights held by members of the Cowlitz Tribe relevant to state wolf management activities on the former north half of the Colville reservation. Finally, there are no tribal courts that have any subject matter jurisdiction over these management activities” (Wise, 2016).

Neil Wise’s response illustrates a historical double standard that Native Americans have had trouble maneuvering through in environmental negotiations. Native Americans have consistently been asked to participate in negotiations as sovereign nations only to find their treaty rights violated, annulled, or dismissed when they became inconvenient for the US government (Nagel, 1995). Yet, when those rights have potentially been violated, there is little they can do legally to protect them because of their status as a sovereign nation. In Washington, tribes have been asked to produce their own Wolf Management Policies for their tribal lands (Weaver, 2012). However, when those policies come into conflict with Washington’s broader state policy it is unclear how conflicts will be resolved. In the case of the Cowlitz lawsuit, it appears that policy conflicts will suffer from the status quo. They will be treated the same way they have been treated

historically: Native American policies will not be given the same type of consideration that normative political policies are given. This could be hugely problematic for Washington because, much like in the Klamath Basin, it will likely pit Native Americans against ranchers. Given that ranchers already feel disenfranchised, and Native Americans have been and continue to be disenfranchised, I suspect an increase in hostility between the two groups. Additionally, I suspect an increasingly fractured viewpoint of wolves in Washington. Signs of this fracturing are already visible. As aforementioned, in her independent conflict assessment of the *Plan*, Francine Madden found that public trust in the Department of Fish and Wildlife was *universally* lower than it had been prior to the *Plan's* implementation (2015).

Finding Meaning in a Mess: A Brief Synopsis

Before moving on to my original psychological analysis, I think it is necessary to briefly summarize my writing up to this point. Thus far:

- 1) I provided personal accounts that demonstrate how experiences are shaped and changed over time. I did this by exploring myths and the ways in which they validated a series of negative experiences. In doing so, I explored how those myths allowed for the discounting of scientific understanding and how, ultimately, this could be understood as a motivation of identity rather than as a desire for objective understanding.
- 2) I explored conceptualizations of wolves throughout European-American history. I did this to provide the detail necessary for understanding why wolves continue to be such a contentious topic throughout much of the United States. Additionally, I think it is important to understand how these mythos become

established in our minds on a broad social level even if we are not consciously aware of our participation in their establishment. Ultimately, two predominant anti-wolf narratives emerge from this analysis. One, wolves threaten traditional moral order. Two, wolves threaten economic status and livelihood.

- 3) I used these two explanations to establish the framework for understanding the specific conflict in Washington. I believe they highlight why the strategies employed were selected and why those strategies might be struggling to adapt to the conflict given some oversights. Francine Madden's work cites trust as the primary missing ingredient and bases perceptions of mistrust on the identities of the groups involved in the conflict.

Ultimately, what do these three areas of exploration mean? While Madden considers conflict ever-evolving and cautions against static interpretations of conflict, I believe that many of the outcomes witnessed today could have been predicted and controlled for at the beginning of the process with greater consideration of social dynamics. It is unrealistic to believe that wolf conflict could have been altogether avoided, but given that attitudes about wolves are trending in a negative direction, it is reasonable to explore management alternatives. The WDFW stated that human attitudes and behaviors were the greatest threats for wolf recovery in Washington. The organization assumed that public input and a multi-stakeholder advisory group, as well as the policy decisions made based on their feedback, would help alleviate some of those concerns. For all I know, they have done that. The question is: in what ways could they have been more successful? If instead of placing significant emphasis on the validity of biological science, they instead focused on how best to convey and frame the benefits of

wolf recovery to those most likely to resist it, would they have been more successful? I do not know, I am not certain we can know. However, in the next sections, I explore two psychological theories that I selected because of their emphasis on hierarchy and morality; consider relevant research articles and their implications for conflict management; and, finally, apply the frameworks through coded interpretation of the initial wolf recovery scoping meetings and the public comments submitted about the *Plan's* environmental impact statement. In doing so, I consider in what ways, if at all, the *Plan's* policies might be counterproductive for the WDFW goals and provide some thoughts on what might happen in the future if these psychological frameworks are applicable.

CHAPTER IV

THE PAWN DOES AS THE PSYCHE WILLS

Dominance and Downfall: SDO

Social Dominance Theory is a psychological theory that explores hierarchical social structures and group-based dominance (Pratto & Stewart, 2011). The theory suggests that groups perpetuate the hierarchical social structure through ‘hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing myths’ which reflect and reproduce the values of their culture (Pratto & Stewart, 2011). Groups that seek to undermine the social hierarchy attempt to do so using ‘hierarchy-attenuating myths’; myths that promote social justice, human rights, and egalitarian relationships (Pratto & Stewart, 2011). Support, or disdain, for this hierarchical structure can be understood through an individual’s ‘Social Dominance Orientation’ [SDO] score. Individuals with a high SDO score will tend to see the world as a competitive hierarchy and desire it to remain as one (Pratto & Stewart, 2011). This hierarchical worldview will likely cause negative attitudes toward groups that are perceived as competing for dominance and/or superiority (Duckitt, 2006). For the most part, this theory has been used to explain group-based hierarchy amongst humans; however, recent studies have expanded the theoretical framework to explore the implications of SDO in human-animal relations (Dhont, Hodson, Costello, & MacInnis, 2014). Ultimately, these studies found a correlation between a high SDO score and a desire to dominate animal species (Dhont et al., 2014). Given the implications of the scholarship already explored, one possible explanation for wolf resistance is members belonging to wolf-resistant communities are higher in SDO than their wolf-accepting

counterparts. This possibility is visible in the noticeable presence of SDO-influencing factors operating. For example, those historically resistant to wolves have demonstrated: the tendency to view the world as a zero-sum game in which humans and wolves cannot *both* do well; and the tendency to embrace myths that place human beings at the top of a preordained hierarchical structure. Both tendencies contributed to the historical persecution of wolves and suggest that a high SDO score might be at play.

The relationship between SDO and the treatment of animals has implications that extend far beyond conflicts between ranchers and wolves; it might explain soured relations between ranchers and wolf conservationists. The *Interspecies Model of Prejudice* “demonstrates that seeing humans as different from and superior to animals plays a key role in animalistically dehumanizing human outgroups and negatively evaluating those outgroups” (Dhont et al., 2014, p. 1). This model may explain why the groups in Washington are becoming increasingly culturally stratified. If one elevates the status of animals by making them more overtly similar to humans, attitudes and inclusiveness toward human outgroups are improved (Costello & Hodson, 2009). All of this has been used to support the following: SDO as a predictor of belief in human superiority to animals; SDO as a predictor of support for animal exploitation; and children of high SDO parents tending to support the notion of human supremacy over nature (Dhont et al., 2014).

One of the unique features of *Social Dominance Theory* is that it considers multiple levels of analysis. It explores individual differences (one’s innate propensity to support hierarchy) and how those individual differences are impacted by institutional factors (Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004). Additionally, *Social Dominance*

Theory considers cultural differences. That is to say, a high SDO score in one society relative to a high SDO score in another society might be quite low comparatively (Sidanius et al., 2004). It is possible, then, that the relative individual SDO scores of ranchers could be low generally, but become stimulated (increased) when engaging the topic of wolves. If wolves represent a direct attack on the normative hierarchy, a sentiment reinforced by a zero-sum game mentality and various mythos, then wolf persecution would follow. Assuming a high SDO score is operating, the question becomes: in what ways do ranchers perceive wolves as threatening to human positioning in social hierarchy *and* in what ways does the *Plan* attempt to manage these conditions?

Morals or Madness: Right Wing Authoritarianism

Psychological theories regarding the tendency of human beings to support authoritarian regimes reached a fever pitch after 1950 when *The Authoritarian Personality* was published (Feldman, 2003). The study, based on Freudian ideas, was initially an exploration of anti-Semitic behavior, but expanded into a broader psychological study of ethnocentricity (Feldman, 2003). Despite the report's initial popularity, early studies were plagued by methodological inconsistencies and support for them waned (Feldman, 2003). However, during the 1980s, Altemeyer explored authoritarianism as a social attitude, instead of as a personality trait, and developed the RWA scale (Feldman, 2003). According to the scale, those with a high RWA score should hold negative attitudes toward groups that are perceived as threatening to the social order, cohesion, and stability (Duckitt, 2006).

Much like *Social Dominance Theory*, studies about *Right Wing Authoritarianism* tend to focus on the implications for human-human relations. However, recent survey

studies support the idea that right-wing ideologies have a tendency to predict support for animal exploitation and meat consumption (Dhont & Hodson, 2014). Furthermore, the studies found that those with strong right-wing ideologies “do not simply consume more animals because they enjoy the taste of meat, but because doing so supports dominance ideologies and resistance to cultural change” (Dhont & Hodson, 2014, p.1). In said studies, vegetarians were coded as a potential social threat to the normative ‘carnism’ in Western countries. Though still an overall dietary minority, as vegetarianism has grown in popularity and become associated with the moral concerns about animal exploitation, it is possible that it [vegetarianism] has begun to be perceived as an attack on social order. Studies indicate this to be the case; both RWA and SDO were positive predictors of the perception of vegetarianism as a threat and indicators of support for the view that human supremacy is a legitimate social norm (Dhont & Hodson, 2014).

Studies like these carry potential implications for the wolf-resistant. If wolf-resistant individuals view wolves as an attack on the moral and social establishment, then they will likely support their persecution. Given the narrative uncovered by Bell’s work, that ranchers are primarily driven by dominion over nature and that wolves were/are commonly associated with moral perversion, any challenge to these ideologies may be perceived as a threat. The reintegration of wolves is a challenge to the status quo (the status quo being their absence) that theoretically interrupts, in unfavorable ways, the daily lives of rural communities. Not only does it place a perceived economic constraint on rural families, it challenges the freedoms those families feel they are owed. For example, if a rancher kills a wolf – something they believe they ought to be able to do – and are fined thousands of dollars for the killing, then their ideology is under attack. Not only is

their ideology under attack, their ideology is being actively penalized. This type of penal logic could strengthen resentment of wolves, a resentment that already exists because of pre-existing cultural ideology. Some rancher rhetoric supports this idea, it vilifies conservation as a restriction of gun rights and as a direct attack on constitutional liberties (Ketcham, 2014). It is possible, then, that penalizing wolf-resistant populations for wolf persecution not only does not dissuade them from doing so, but encourages the behavior out of spite because it is viewed as a legitimate defense of cultural and social ideology.

Expectations, the Ever-Present Seeds of Resentment

Drawing on the analysis of historical wolf narratives, scholarship such as Bell's, and the potential implications of psychological research in Social Dominance Theory and Right Wing Authoritarianism, I formulated the following hypotheses:

- 1) Anti-wolf communities express anti-wolf sentiments indicative of a desire to preserve their status within the normative social hierarchy more frequently than pro-wolf communities.
- 2) Anti-wolf communities express anti-wolf sentiments indicative of a desire to preserve the traditional moral and social orders more frequently than pro-wolf communities.
- 3) Policies that attempt to address the concerns of anti-wolf communities are ineffective at preventing conflict if they do not explicitly consider the implications of these two factors.
- 4) Conflicts between anti-wolf and pro-wolf communities can be understood as tensions between those who wish to preserve traditional society and the hierarchies associated with it, and those who do not wish to preserve them.

CHAPTER V

DRAFT EIS PUBLIC TESTIMONY: A CASE STUDY

The Sample and the Motives

In order to test my hypotheses, I evaluated the public testimony submitted during the *Plan's* draft EIS process using motive categories. The method used is consistent with other studies of motive imagery (Smith, 2008). Recordings of the draft EIS public testimony are available through the WDFW's website archives. They took place in 2009 at twelve different Washington locations and capture a broad spectrum of interests and identities. Each speaker was unique and, depending on location, was allotted three or four minutes of testimony. Comments from this draft period were given special status in the development of the *Plan* and were supposed to be considered in the final draft. This means that policy makers listened to this type of feedback and wrote the *Plan* to best address these concerns.

The motive categories that I developed and coded for were Social Hierarchy and Social Purity. The Social Hierarchy motive is consistent with the implications of Bell's findings, Lopez's narratives, and Social Dominance Theory. It was coded to represent a concern with one's place within the social hierarchy. The second motive category, Social Purity, was coded to represent one's concern with preserving the traditional social and moral orders. Statements in this category were developed in the same fashion as those in the Social Hierarchy category. The statement categories that I used were:

Social Hierarchy

- 1) Wolves Threaten Rural Economics

- 2) Wolves Threaten Cattle and Game Populations and Disrupt Balance
- 3) Ranchers and Hunters Need Compensation
- 4) Wolves Should be Classified as a Game Species
- 5) General Funding
- 6) Wolves Threaten Human Safety

Social Purity

- 1) Wolves Threaten Rancher Way of Life
- 2) Wolves are Immoral Killing Machines
- 3) Wolves Infringe on Hunting Rights
- 4) Wolves Threaten Rural Freedom and Increase Bureaucracy
- 5) Wolves are the Anti-Christ and Their Return Will be the Downfall of Society
- 6) All Wolves Deserve to Die
- 7) Wolves Provide No Societal Benefit

Each statement relates to the broader category to which it belongs, but is distinct from the other comments in the category. For example, the statement category “wolves threaten rural economics” captures the real or perceived threat wolves pose to the economic status of rural communities. If wolves threaten a community’s financial capacity, then they threaten a community’s position in social hierarchy because money is an important indicator of social status. An example from the public testimony that fit this category is: “I’d like to know when a wolf became more important than people making a living.” This differs from comments in the category “wolves threaten game and cattle populations and disrupt balance.” Comments in this category focused on the relationship

between a rancher and their cattle or a hunter and their prey. Wolves threaten the perceived relationship and dominance of the rancher/hunter relative to cattle or game. For ranchers, the inability to tend to their flock (signifying ownership) threatened their dominance. Similarly, hunters who prefer to view hunting as an aspect of being an apex predator and balancer of nature felt their predatory status was under threat. An example from the public testimony that fit into this category is: “[Speaking about livestock] I have a moral and ethical responsibility to make sure those animals are not only fed and housed properly, but also prevent them from injury.”

The category “hunters and ranchers need compensation” focuses on a unique aspect of economics. While similar to the “rural economics” category, this category focused on comments made at an individual level. There were no indications of broader economic damage or trends, but focused on the individual threat to ranchers or hunters. For example, if a hunter relies on hunting to feed their family and suddenly they are not allowed to hunt with the same level of gusto, then they might feel that the needs of wolves are being prioritized over their own needs. The feeling that one’s well-being is directly damaged by another (wolves) fits nicely with Social Dominance Theory. One example of a comment from the public testimony that fit into this category was: “we're in a recession, people need food, and somehow you want to give it to the wolves.” Another example from the public testimony is: “compensation is a must. It should be the highest possible.”

“Wolves should be classified as a game species” captures the idea that wolves should not be given special status. Special status indicates that they are better, or different, than human beings and, again, represents an attack on human social status.

This category also captures the notion that human beings are the only legitimate apex predator. If wolves were categorized as a game species, they would be eligible to be hunted by humans. In this scenario, human beings would be able to clearly see their dominant status.

The “general funding” category differs from the previous economic categories because it focuses on a cost-benefit relationship rather than on direct economic harm. For example, images in this category focused on what would be lost or an individual’s stake in the funding. A hunter might not want their tag money to be spent on wolves and, instead, want their money to be spent on preserving game populations. This does not signify the type of economic harm of the other comment category, but does capture the identity piece often at play. Comments such as, “why is their issue more important than my issue?” indicate a concern with relative positional hierarchy. If one is at the top, one’s issue is the most important. If one is not at the top, then one’s issue is not important. Two examples from the public testimony that fit into this category are: “No way to fund it” and “this doesn't seem fiscally sound.”

Finally, comments in the category “wolves threaten human safety” were those related to the perceived threat wolves pose for human health and well-being. Comments in this category are obviously related to positional hierarchy because if one is attacked by a wolf and unable to protect oneself because of the legal status of wolves, then one is clearly less important than a wolf. In this hypothetical scenario, the wolf’s life is given greater authority than the human’s life which signals that the wolf has greater hierarchical significance than the human being. An example from the public testimony that fit into

this category is: “I’ve climbed every mountain in the Methow, if there was wolves in there we woulda been eaten.”

Many of the Social Purity categories are related to the Social Hierarchy categories, but are distinct because they focus on traditional moral or social status quo. For example, the category “wolves threaten rancher way of life” focuses on the intergenerational passing of the rancher torch. Rather than simply commenting that cattle are threatened by wolves, though this sentiment might be present, comments in this category focused on the overall rancher lifestyle. They might focus on a concern that their children will not have the opportunity to be beef growers in the same way that they were beef growers and that the traditional lifestyle is coming to an end. An example of a comment that fit into this category from the public testimony is: “They’re running across the land, killing, and taking people’s land that they don’t want to be taken.”

“Wolves as immoral killing machines” focuses on the moral aspect of Social Purity. Comments in this category draw a distinction between wolf and human harvest. Humans are good people who are feeding their families and helping to restore ecological balance. Wolves are glory killers and want their prey to suffer. They know no limits and are not bound by normal predator-prey balance. Comments in this category focused on the good/evil dichotomy found in much of the wolf literature. An example from the public testimony that fit into this category is: “They know no fear and kill just to kill, frenzy kill.”

Much like threats to rancher way of life, comments in the “wolves infringe on hunting rights” category focused on threats to traditional hunting rights. If a family has been hunting the same elk herd for hundreds of years and suddenly they are unable to

because wolves have moved the herd or damaged the herd, then their tradition is sabotaged. In this sense, wolves are seen as threatening their traditions and altering traditional order. One example from the public testimony that fit into this category is: “I’ve heard rumors that this is a step toward gun control. That these animals will take care of...that we don’t have to hunt, we don’t need guns.”

Comments in the category “wolves threaten rural freedom and increase bureaucracy” are distinct from threats to traditional ways of life because they focus on a change in bureaucratic relationship rather than intergenerational lifestyle. For example, ranchers might feel that the government should not be dictating the types of safety standards and procedures that they take with their cattle herds. In this sense, wolves might threaten traditional freedom or traditional ranching, but ranchers are still ranchers. The beef raising profession still exists, it just looks a little bit different whereas comments in the way of life category signal *actual* end. Examples of comments that fit into this category from the public testimony alluded to difficulties verifying kills due to process time, disproportionate impact on ranchers, lack of autonomy in decision-making, and decreased property values.

“Wolves are the anti-Christ and their return will be the downfall of society” is a straightforward Social Purity category. Comments in this category indicate that wolves threaten morals (anti-Christ) and traditional society (downfall). Similarly, “all wolves deserve to die” is a loaded traditional moral category that aligns with the traditional status quo (wolves completely exterminated for social benefit). Both categories are related to comments that “wolves provide no social benefit” but were left distinct because they provide greater nuance. The latter category is a broader catch-all. An example of the

category “all wolves deserve to die” from the public testimony is: “Since they took the wolf off the endangered species list [in Montana], everywhere you go the battle cry is 'if you see a wolf, kill it.’”

I coded for these motive categories using the ‘unique comment’ as my unit of measurement. When defining a unique comment, I aligned them with sentences, but since the files are auditory and speech patterns are not consistent with written English, if someone changed topic mid-sentence, this was coded as a new unique comment because it represented a new idea and contained new imagery. As I listened to the speakers, I noted the total number of unique comments, total time spoken, and marked whether a comment fell into one of the Social Hierarchy or Social Purity motive subcategories. For each unique comment, only one image was calculated.

I divided the speakers into the following three categories: pro-wolf, anti-wolf, and unidentifiable. The division between pro-wolf and anti-wolf was defined as whether speakers supported 15 or more breeding pairs. Those who supported 15 or more breeding pairs were considered pro-wolf and those who did not were considered anti-wolf. Individuals that did not belong to either category provided no indication of support or lack of support.

Findings

In total, I listened to testimony from 166 unique speakers, 75 were pro-wolf, 86 were anti-wolf, and 5 were unidentifiable. The testimony lasted a total of 25,861 seconds. 10,733 seconds belonged to pro-wolf speakers, 14,382 seconds belonged to anti-wolf speakers, and 746 seconds belonged to unidentifiable speakers. During this testimony, 3479 unique comments were identified. Pro-wolf speakers accounted for

1595 unique comments, anti-wolf speakers accounted for 1791 comments, and the unidentifiable accounted for 93 unique comments. Of the total unique comments (n=3479), 491 belonged to the **Social Hierarchy** motive category and 191 belonged to the **Social Purity** category. In total, 19.6% (SH 14.1%, SP 5.5%) of public testimony fell into one of these two categories.

Of the total number of comments by anti-wolf members (n=1791), 24.6% (n=444) represented the Social Hierarchy Motive and 10.3% (n=185) represented the Social Purity motive. This means that 34.9% of comments made by anti-wolf groups fell into one of these two motive categories. In contrast, of the total number of comments made by pro-wolf members (n=1595), only 1.7% of comments (n=27) represented the Social Hierarchy motive and 0.1% (n=2) represented the Social Purity motive. In total, only 1.8% of comments from the pro-wolf community could be identified as motives for Social Hierarchy or Social Purity. Speakers that were not identifiable as pro-wolf or anti-wolf made comments that demonstrated a Social Hierarchy motive 21.5% (n=20) of the time and a Social Purity Motive 4.3% (n=4) of the time. In total, 25.8% of the total comments (n=93) from unidentifiable speakers demonstrated motives for Social Hierarchy or Social Purity. **Figure 1.1** on the next page shows this breakdown.

Beyond these broad representational differences in motive categories, there are significant differences between the individual statement categories as well. For example, of the 1.7% of comments indicating Social Hierarchy motives amongst pro-wolf peoples, 67% (n=18) were focused on compensation for ranchers and 18.5% (n=5) focused on general funding. This means that 85.5% (n=23) of the Social Hierarchy motive comments from pro-wolf commenters were focused purely on financial considerations.

Anti-wolf member Social Hierarchy motive comments primarily focused on threats to game and cattle populations. 56.5% (n=251) of their comments fell into this category compared to 22.1% (n=98) in the compensation and general funding categories. Only 11.1% (n=3) of the total number (n=27) of pro-wolf commenters were concerned with impacts to cattle and game populations. For anti-wolf members, even if you factor in the statement category of Wolves Threaten Rural Economics, economic concerns are less prevalent than threats to game and cattle populations. In this case, 34.5% (n=153) economic versus 56.5% game and cattle. The complete breakdown for the Social Hierarchy motive category can be seen in **Figure 1.2**.

Figure 1.1 Total Social Hierarchy and Social Purity

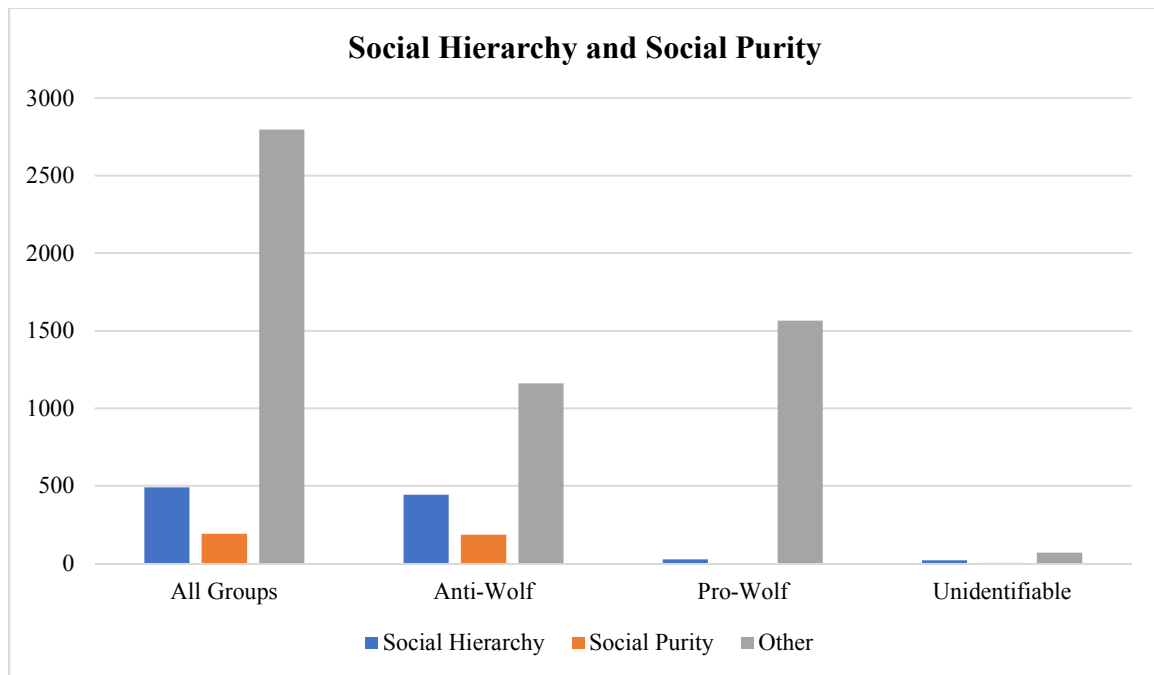


Figure 1.2 Social Hierarchy Motive

| | Number of Speakers | Number of Comments | Rural Economics | Cattle and Game | Compensation | Game Species | General Funding | Human Safety |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| All Commenters | 166 | 3479 | 56 | 264 | 75 | 2 | 56 | 38 |
| Anti-Wolf Commenters | 86 | 1791 | 55 | 251 | 54 | 2 | 44 | 38 |
| Pro-wolf Commenters | 75 | 1595 | 1 | 3 | 18 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Unidentifiable Commenters | 5 | 93 | 0 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Cumulative Categorical Total as a Percent of Total Comments | N/A | N/A | 1.6% | 7.6% | 2.2% | ~0% | 1.6% | 1.1% |

While less significant in number, the Social Purity motive findings are equally telling. Only two unique comments suggested a Social Purity motive for pro-wolf populations, both of those belonged to the Wolves are Immoral Killers category. This category was the most significant for anti-wolf members as well. Of the total number of Social Purity motive comments (n=185) made by anti-wolf members, 31.4% (n=58) belonged to this category. Threats to Rancher Way of Life and Hunting Rights were the two other major motive concerns for Social Purity. 24.3% (n=45) of comments belonged

to the former and 21.6% (n=40) to the latter. The remaining comments fell into a variety of the categories, the complete breakdown can be seen **Figure 1.3**.

Figure 1.3 Social Purity Motive

| | Number of Speakers | Number of Comments | Rancher Life | Killing Machines | Hunting Rights | Rural Freedom | Anti-Christ | Deserve to Die | No Benefit |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| All Commenters | 166 | 3479 | 45 | 60 | 41 | 27 | 0 | 7 | 11 |
| Anti-wolf Commenters | 86 | 1791 | 45 | 58 | 40 | 24 | 0 | 7 | 11 |
| Pro-wolf Commenters | 75 | 1595 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Unidentifiable Commenters | 5 | 93 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cumulative Categorical Total as a Percent of Total Comments | N/A | N/A | 1.3% | 1.7% | 1.2% | 0.7% | 0% | .02% | .03% |

I used a chi-square test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between pro-wolf and anti-wolf commenters in use of Social Hierarchy or Social Purity motives. The *p*-value for Social Hierarchy was less than .001 which indicates there is a statistical difference in use of Social Hierarchy motive imagery between pro-wolf and anti-wolf commenters. The *p*-value for Social Purity was also less than .001 and, again, demonstrates a statistical difference in use of Social Purity motive imagery between the two major groups.

So, What Does It Mean?

So, what exactly does this all mean for Washington and, more broadly, social science in wildlife management? My first two hypotheses were supported. Both Social Hierarchy and Social Purity Motives were significantly higher amongst anti-wolf community members than amongst pro-wolf community members. Unlike some of the literature reviewed earlier, this does not necessarily indicate that anti-wolf populations are higher in SDO or RWA, though it may, because it is possible that pro-wolf members had an undisclosed financial incentive tied to wolf return that would strengthen their relative position in the social hierarchy. I find this unlikely because most pro-wolf comments were about the ecological benefits wolves would provide and a call to restore the landscape to its original wild state. There were a few comments about the financial benefits of ecotourism, but those were far less prevalent and no one identified as someone who would specifically benefit from ecotourism.

My third hypothesis is consistent with other SDO and RWA studies and implies that to the extent that these conditions are present – which my data demonstrates – they bear consideration. If they are not given consideration, conflicts will occur. For example, for both populations there existed an economic concern about compensation and general funding. The *Plan* has an extensive section about compensation for cases of predation. Whether this type of compensation is acceptable is a separate question. There's evidence that suggests it might not be. For example, Carol Bogezi, a researcher from the University of Washington, writes, “With compensation, someone comes in and you have to write [everything] down, and it's like you're begging for this money” (as cited in O'Neill, 2017). If one is being handed money, it signals a lower position in

social hierarchy. It is possible, then, that this type of compensation is actually counterproductive for moderating wolf conflict. Bogezi suggests that if incentive programs are instead tied to market factors, which she indicates ranchers like to work with, such as a special certification status for meat that is “wolf friendly,” then their position in social hierarchy is not only elevated by an increase in wealth, but uniquely tied to the fate of wolves (O’Neill, 2017). Compensation taking the latter form satisfies a variety of potential conflict flashpoints. Conservationists get their wolves back, ranchers have their status in the social hierarchy reinforced, and potential conflict is diffused. Compensation programs that manifest in ways that reinforce the idea that wolves are threatening to one’s position in the social hierarchy will result in wolf persecution and cultural stratification between those who persecute and those who support. Ultimately, if one must rely on government handouts; if one is not allowed to protect individual property and instead must rely on the protection of another; if one must prove the validity of one’s experience to its overseer because of inherent distrust, then one’s status in social hierarchy is diminished and one will lash out at the perceived threat. All these aspects are inherent in Washington’s compensation program. This does not necessarily mean that those impacted will actively kill wolves, but it does mean that they will not support wolves. One of Washington’s goals is to increase support and acceptance of wolves. Those least likely to support wolves initially are the same people whose position in the social hierarchy is theoretically most threatened by them. Effective policy ought to consider these aspects.

When it was published in 2011, the authors of the *Plan* stated that they did not know what the impacts on hunter harvest were going to be. Today, I have no idea what

the impacts have been and lack the knowledge of population dynamics to know. That said, given that over 50% of the comments pertaining to Social Hierarchy motives were concerned with threats to game and balance, I can make predictions. In so far as the *Plan*, and the broader policies influenced by it such as total number of hunting licenses issued, have real or perceived negative impacts on the relationship between hunters and game animals, wolves and their allies will be persecuted. If licenses are limited; if hunting seasons are shorter; if game numbers diminish; if license fees increase to support the cost of managing wolves; if yearly take across the board is lower; if gun liberties are restricted, then wolves and their allies will be blamed and support for wolves will diminish. The WDFW should consider ways in which to strengthen the anti-wolf community's relationship with game and, where possible, directly tie that strength to the return of wolves. For example, if hunting seasons were opened longer to expressly account for the potential movement of ungulates due to the presence of wolves, rather than restricted due to concerns of total population numbers, sportsman may be less likely to resist wolves. Ultimately, I do not have the knowledge about game management and population dynamics to provide feasible recommendations for how best to do this. However, I do have the knowledge to suggest that the WDFW should attempt to do this and that if it is executed appropriately, sportsman concerned with their position within the social hierarchy will be more likely to accept wolves than if not executed appropriately.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from the Social Purity motive data. Insofar as the WDFW designs policy that threatens one's traditional social expectations, they should expect resistance to wolves. If one designs policy expectations that require ranchers to jump through a number of hoops that fundamentally challenge intergenerational aspects

of their way of life, then one should expect resistance. If one takes away traditional hunting “rights” in favor of another species, one should expect resistance. Again, the hope is that people will accept wolves, but why would they unless wolves explicitly reinforce Social Purity standards. Questions such as, “how can wolves reinforce the traditional rancher way of life?” are the types of questions that need to be asked when crafting policy. If someone wants to defend their livestock with a rifle as they always have, and someone else gives them an electric fence and says it is more responsible, the individual who asked for the rifle is not going to be satisfied. They are unlikely to accept whatever is responsible for this new burden. If the WDFW wants ranchers to accept wolves, then the WDFW needs to consider ways in which to validate rancher and hunter ways of life and rights and reduce the salience of real or perceived threats. I do not know enough about ranchers or hunters to provide concrete examples as how to best do this, but until this is achieved, conflict should be expected.

A lot of the Social Hierarchy and Social Purity motive statements are partially built on misinformation or interpretations of information in ways that potentially threaten one’s status. The WDFW repeatedly stresses the importance of an educated public for gray wolf conservation. In order to accomplish this, the WDFW writes that it will provide access to factual information and work with the public on sightings and depredation events (WDFW, 2011). I do not think this is going to work because I think that without consideration of Social Hierarchy and Social Purity concerns, factual information is irrelevant for changing minds. When someone has a significant experience that is powerful enough to change their psyche, or belongs to a group with a collective psyche, shoving scientific data down their throat to demonstrate that that

experience was a statistical rarity does not work. People dig in, fight back, become more polarized, and I think this is evident in Madden's work.

In some ways, the first three hypotheses support hypothesis four. Francine Madden found that groups are becoming more stratified, support for wolves is waning, and conflict is becoming more severe. One way to understand this fracturing is through Social Hierarchy and Social Purity motives. One group is focused on threats to their position in hierarchy from wolves and the other group is trying to balance or diminish the hierarchy by placing greater emphasis on special status for wolves. Additionally, one group thinks wolves are ruthless killers that threaten traditional ways of life and the other group thinks they are harmless and pose no threat. Those are obvious divisions. Initially, wolves were being poached by those who feel threatened. These concerns prompted greater lethal removal by the WDFW. This lethal removal then threatened conservationist concerns about ecological balance (anti-hierarchy) and caused conservationists to issue death threats. I believe that if the WDFW considered these factors, some of the division would decrease and, thus, so would conflict. Ultimately, the success and acceptance of wolves is not going to be primarily driven by their environmental capacity, it is going to be driven by human acceptance and experience. Until human tendencies and human identities are given proper consideration in Washington, and environmental planning more broadly, I do not expect conflicts over how best to manage a species like wolves to diminish.

I Lack the Statute, but Here are Some Limitations

The Draft EIS testimonies were not without issue. For example, most motive coding studies use the sentence as the primary unit of measurement. After removing

identifying information, and randomizing the order and format, documents are given to a trained scorer who knows nothing about the hypotheses (Smith, 2008). After scoring the documents, motive images are considered per thousand words (Smith, 2008). I was not able to conduct my study in this fashion because my “documents” were auditory files with no accompanying transcripts. It is extremely challenging, though not impossible, to discern where the beginning and ending of a sentence are when factoring in someone’s unique speech pattern. Furthermore, converting images into a score per thousand words is nearly impossible with audio files. I would have had to count and record each individual word in real time. Ultimately, I still tried to use the sentence as a unit of measurement with some minor caveats. If someone changed topic mid-sentence this was considered a new sentence, in the sense that it represented a new idea, and would be coded as such. This makes the scientific reproducibility of this unit of measurement challenging as there is an inherent layer of individual judgment involved. Theoretically, over a large enough sample size, an individual scorer’s interpretation of a unique comment will become standardized and the resulting image ratios will be similar. I considered using a unit of measurement in seconds and I tried 10, 15, and 30 seconds. This would have been easily reproducible, but it did not work because thoughts and comments were interrupted in unnatural locations. If I heard a word that might be indicative of a motive image, but without the context of the prior 15 second clip to which it belonged, would I count it? Would it count on the prior clip? It did not work. Using the unique comment as a unit of measurement allowed me to convert the images into images per 60 seconds, instead of thousand words, which effectively achieved the same

goal as measuring images per 10, 15, 30, seconds but with greater nuance because the final data can be fractured.

Another limitation of the unique comment is that people have different speech patterns and speech speeds. If someone speaks for three minutes, but averages 120 words per minute, they will have more opportunities to present unique comments and images than someone who speaks for the same length of time, but only averages 80 words per minute. This has the potential to skew the data set. However, the sentence has similar problems. Some people write more concisely than others and present their ideas more clearly which results in a potentially greater number of images per thousand words. As with the sentence and conversion to images per thousand words, over a large enough sample size the images per minute should become standardized.

By the far biggest limitation for my study is that it was not conducted blindly. I did not have the resources to hire a trained research assistant who could blindly code the audio files so I did it myself. There was the potential for my bias to get in the way of objective observation because I knew what I was hypothesizing and, therefore, may have “listened” my hypothesis into comments that were not indicative of Social Hierarchy and Social Purity motives. I took precautions to avoid this, but there is a likelihood some of my bias trickled in. One of the ways that I limited this from happening was by developing the unique statement categories that “counted” as Social Hierarchy or Social Purity. It is possible there were other statement types that could have been indicative of these two broader motive categories, but unless they were specifically identified as a statement type, they were not considered as evidence. This prevented me from listening and thinking, “that sounds kind of like social hierarchy” or “that sounds kind of like

social purity” and coding a unique statement as such. These statement categories were based upon existing literature and the specifics of Washington by reviewing their relevance to the Public Scoping Meeting comments. Once those categories were developed, I then listened and coded 10% of the audio recordings and made further adjustments to the statement categories. This was done to ensure that the motive categories were relevant and specific enough to provide useful data. Additionally, I collected specific comment examples of the statement categories to be as transparent as possible in my representation of the data.

As aforementioned, I made some changes to statement categories after listening to 10% of the audio recordings. This was due to an additional limitation. For each unique statement, I would only code for one motive image. In general, this was not problematic because when people were speaking, a new topic indicated a new comment. If someone was presenting on wolves as threatening to game populations and then after a brief pause, though not necessarily a distinct end to the sentence, jumped into wolves as threatening to human populations, then this was coded as a new comment. This method only became problematic when someone was deliberately reading written testimony. As a listener, I could clearly hear the beginning and ending of a sentence and, therefore, unique comment and sometimes these sentences were strung together by a series of commas. Theoretically, each of the additional points behind commas were related to the initial point, but does that mean those points are unique and should be coded as such or are they simply support for a single image? I treated them as unique statements unless they were stating the same thing. For example, if someone said, “Elk are dying, hunters are losing opportunities to harvest elk, and this negatively impacts the rural economy,” then each of

those was considered a unique statement because it had unique statement indicators. However, if someone said, “Elk are dying, deer are dying, and pheasants are dying,” then all of those were coded as a single statement because they only had one unique comment indicator (threatening to game). Again, this is limited by judgment, but over the entirety of the sample size should be consistent.

Most of the categorical changes that I made were insignificant, but one was not. Originally, I had wolves as threatening to game and ecological balance and wolves as threatening to cattle as separate categories. I combined them because in the initial 10% of audio recordings, it was difficult to discern whether these were unique comments and ideas. They were often presented together as examples of the hierarchical relationships between rancher and cattle or hunter and game. Wolves were viewed as threatening to the *relationship* as a caretaker, protector, and authority figure for the two populations. The ecology of that relationship seemed unimportant which is why I removed it. Changes in game populations were not seen as ecologically significant for the broader environment so much as threatening to the ability to be in charge. Similarly, threats to cattle were not necessarily represented as economic concerns – which was one of the reasons that I had the categories separated initially – so much as one’s ability to protect and care for cattle. After listening to all the audio recordings, I should have kept these categories separate because, based on the stated goals in the plan and visibility of cattle concerns and compensation programs, I anticipated a lot of the comments in this category being related to cattle. However, in my experience, the majority of comments in this category were about game and not about cattle. Unfortunately, because I fused the categories, I do not have specific numbers beyond my individual testimony. All is not

lost, though, my findings are still significant and this change provides an opportunity for future study.

Finally, in order to not further complicate my data sets, I did not code for hierarchy-attenuating myths (anti-Social Hierarchy), but I wish that I had because I think the results would provide an even clearer picture of what is happening in Washington today. By far the most common anti-hierarchical view from pro-wolf supporters was that wolves are an ecological necessity. This viewpoint is in direct conflict with anti-wolf concerns about game and cattle populations and overall balance. Unfortunately, beyond some of the examples that I recorded in my notes, this is still largely built on my assertion that it was present as I did not record hard data.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Given the immense number of biological factors necessary for success, wildlife management is never an easy task. It is made more difficult when the cultural identities of different groups are tied to a given species' success or demise. The reestablishment of the Gray Wolf in Washington state provides an excellent case study about the complexities of this type of management. Despite being considered one of the best wildlife management policies in the country because of its comprehensiveness, Washington's *Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan* has struggled to moderate conflict over wolves in Washington. One of the most basic questions scholars can ask is: *why?* We will probably never have a satisfactory answer, but we do have some clues as to why wolves are such a hotly debated species.

For starters, wolves are not human beings and so it is unlikely we will ever be able to give them the same type of consideration that we give our own species. Like humans, they are a predator and, though a statistical rarity, can be dangerous. Given the way that human psychology functions, when someone has a negative experience with a predator it is extremely difficult to overcome the impact by simply presenting a statistic demonstrating how rare it is. It does not matter how rare it is, it still happened. In this sense, the statistic simply validates that the experience was not unique and the logical conclusion, given the perceived negative impact of the experience, is a desire to prevent others from having the experience. I used examples from my own life to demonstrate how conceptualizations of these experiences change, or do not change, over time.

When one considers how these experiences are shaped at a broader social level, distinct narratives begin to emerge and become rallying points for social identities. Wolves, for whatever reason, have seemingly always been an identity flashpoint and scholars have devoted significant time to uncovering the features of wolf imagery throughout human history. By far the two most prominent narratives in available scholarship are: wolves as threats to human livelihood and wolves as morally perverse beasts that ought to be eradicated. The next question a scholar might ask is, “in what ways does Washington’s *Plan* account for the historical wolf narratives?” This question is equally challenging to answer. Public feedback was sought on numerous occasions and much of the policy within the *Plan* directly responds to the surface level feedback provided. However, there is no clear indication that the policy aspects aimed at assuaging the public concerns within the *Plan* are based on our understanding of social science. This is significant because the biological aspects of the *Plan* are heavily scrutinized. Why was social science about human behavior not used? Especially when one considers that the *Plan* itself recognizes the human barrier to success? I do not know, I am not sure the people who wrote the *Plan* know. In responding to my own question, I conducted a psychological study.

The two historical narratives – threats to human livelihood and morally perverse beasts – fit well with the social psychological theories of Social Dominance and Right Wing Authoritarianism. Using these two theories, I developed two motive categories – Social Hierarchy and Social Purity – and tested for a statistically significant difference between pro-wolf commenters and anti-wolf commenters during the draft EIS process. Both categories were statistically significant and this difference might explain aspects of

the conflict. The two sides view the world and the wolf's significance within the world in fundamentally different ways. If the *Plan* does not consider these differences and bases policies on behavioral assumptions rather than on behavioral sciences, then we would expect conflict. Given that there is conflict *and* that positive attitudes about wolves are diminishing, the WDFW ought to consider how to manage these psychological differences.

That said, social science is not going to be a cure-all for wildlife management, but it does need to be considered. While extremely important, biology is only one aspect of wildlife management. By all accounts, experts cite human beings as the number one barrier to wolf success. Given this admittance, policymakers need to be writing wolf policy that aims to moderate human behavior based on science about human behavior, not on whimsical assumptions that sound correct. Until policymakers do this, conflict between humans and wolves will continue.

One area deserving of future consideration is the European model for large carnivore management as it might provide insight for North American management practices. Europe has faced similar management problems in its history, but by most accounts has found an effective way to restore large predators despite having a far more limited landscape (Chapron et al., 2014). It is easy to view Europe as similar to the United States because of its shared history and conceptualizations of large carnivores, and feel hopeful about policy implications for large carnivore management in the US. It is not my intent to dash the hopes some might have about the European model for the United States because I do believe it can provide the US with lessons, but Europe operates within a much different framework.

For starters, Europe can write and implement policies on a broader scale than the United States because of the governmental flexibility allowed by the Council of Europe and European Union (Chapron et al., 2014). This allows for coordinated management practices on a scale not achievable in the United States. Take, for example, the interaction of US Federal Policy and Native American policy. In Washington it is problematic, let alone across the entire United States. Couple that interaction with the interaction of private and public land types, further complicated by the various types of public land classification. Land under the authority of the Forest Service operates differently than land under the authority of the BLM. On their own these two organizations struggle to coordinate their land management practices. Add in the layers of largely arbitrary, in terms of animal behavior, lines on maps that define separation of landscapes and habitats and the result is a cocktail of conditions that make largescale management difficult, if not impossible. Largely due to the interaction of these types of conditions, US wildlife management has fallen into a management style predicated on separation (Chapron et al., 2014). Under this model, X piece of land is used for Y and A piece of land is used for B. When the two uses bump into one another, conflict ensues. This is one interpretation of what is occurring in Washington between wolves and ranchers.

Europe has been able to avoid the separation model of management partially due to the aforementioned governmental structure and partially due to necessity. Europe has a small landscape compared to the US and a higher human population density. This means that if Europe had adopted a separation model there simply would not have been any space for predators. Ultimately, European policy focused instead on a model of

coexistence (Chapron et al., 2014). Under this model, policies were written in a way that encouraged cohabitation and coexistence with large carnivores. Despite the model's appeal, it is difficult to ascertain whether its success was due to effective policy or due to landscape conditions. Changes in European socioeconomics and land-use habits resulted in positive changes for large carnivore habitats (Chapron et al., 2014). The shift away from agriculture and abandonment of rural recreation caused interactions between humans and wildlife to decrease (Chapron et al., 2014). This means that despite the promotion of a coexistence model, European citizens did not, and do not, experience the same types of wildlife interaction frequency that a Washington rancher might. Since the frequency of interaction is lower, the likelihood of having a negative interaction is lower. There is evidence that suggests this conclusion is warranted.

In agricultural communities or areas where large carnivores were historically eliminated, poaching and anti-large carnivore sentiments are much higher and much more problematic than in the rest of Europe (Chapron et al., 2014). This situation – one in which most of the population accepts large carnivores, but the population in most frequent contact does not – is not unlike the one in Washington and why the European model deserves further consideration. If Social Hierarchy and Social Purity motives differ between the two populations – those who accept and those who do not – then it provides greater support for the inclusion of social sciences in wildlife management.

Understanding of Native American populations and motivations are also worthy of future consideration. Much of my research focused on Euro-American motivations, largely because that is the context in Washington. However, successful wolf management in Washington requires the inclusion of Native populations. Given the

recent lawsuit, I suspect that the Cowlitz Tribe is lower in imagery indicative of Social Hierarchy and Social Purity than anti-wolf populations. Again, like pro-wolf populations, I suspect that the division and stratification between Native populations, the WDFW, and rural communities can be understood using social science.

Ultimately, social science has a lot to offer wildlife management. It does not require dramatic changes in government structure or human-wildlife interaction model. It does not require shifts in socioeconomic conditions or dramatic changes in human recreation. It is simply one way to write better wildlife management policy and is valuable because it considers wildlife management's largest hurdle: human behavior. We ought to use it.

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