

**Hounding the urban fox: a Critical Discourse Analysis
of a moral panic with an animal folk devil**

Volume 1 of 2

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Abstract

In June 2010 an urban fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) attacked twin baby girls in their bedroom in Hackney, East London. The story made national newspaper headlines for weeks to follow and elicited commentary from concerned city-dwellers, pest controllers, foxhunters, politicians, scientists and animal protectionists. Many considered urban foxes a growing menace, branding them overabundant, out of place and more aggressive than their rural counterparts. Hunters pointed to the ban on hunting with dogs as a possible cause of a supposed explosion in the urban fox population and as a manifestation of urban ignorance regarding wildlife management. Others defended the foxes' place in the city and warned against knee-jerk reactions to one-off incidents. However, the response from many public and political figures to media reports of fox attacks was to call for urgent action on what is ostensibly a problem of animal behaviour. This thesis examines the urban fox attack phenomenon as a form of moral panic. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of a large sample of tabloid and broadsheet national newspaper articles, as well as a selection of television documentaries, pest control industry publications and lobby group materials spanning five years (2009–2014), is used to track the emergence and development of this moral panic and to examine how it is tied to anxieties surrounding not only human/animal relations in urban space, but also human social conflict more widely. In so doing, the thesis contributes a new perspective to the study of moral panics by reflecting on the implications for moral panic theory of 'bringing animals in'.

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

Sunday, 6 June 2010. An urban fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) apparently found its way into the upstairs bedroom of nine-month-old twins Isabella and Lola Koupparis in their expensive three-storey home in east London, having entered through an open window. The fox bit both girls on the arm and one on the face, causing lacerations. Their cries alerted their parents, who came running in to find the fox still in the room. The fox was chased out of the home and the girls were rushed to hospital, where they remained for over a week. The ‘fox attack’ story broke across all major national newspapers in the days that followed and within a short time “the topic expanded beyond an isolated incident in north [sic] London to dominate office conversation and newspaper headlines” (*The Daily Telegraph* 12/06/2010a).

Over the ensuing weeks and months, commentators variously explained and evaluated this and further incidents and urban foxes were branded overabundant, out of place and more aggressive than their rural cousins. Calls were made for urgent action on what was ostensibly a problem of animal behaviour, prompting heated discussion and giving rise to several television documentaries, as well as a parliamentary debate. The Sunday Times (08/01/2012b) summarised the status of the urban fox as follows:

[N]o other animal divides opinion so sharply. At one end of the emotional spectrum it is a lovable rogue, admired for its beauty and cleverness. At the other, it is a sly, disease-ridden sadist.

This thesis examines the urban fox attack phenomenon as a form of moral panic, best defined by Cohen (1972:9), one of the founders of this theoretical tradition:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interest; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folk-lore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself.

The moral panic concept is usually applied to episodes of public outcry or hysteria surrounding acts of deviance and crime, where the media play a crucial role in amplifying the risk posed by whatever condition or group is the putative threat. In other words, central to the idea of moral panic is an exaggeration, in terms of nature, scale and scope, of the threat posed and the notion that the resulting reaction is therefore disproportionate to the 'real' or 'actual' threat. These features are at the heart of recurring epistemological criticisms of the moral panic concept, which consider claims as to the proportionality or irrationality of the social response to be polemical or incompatible with the social constructivist project (Waddington 1986, Best 2011). To assess the proportionality of social response, Thompson (1998:140) for instance argues, "[involves] subjecting 'representations' to the judgement of the 'real', rather than concentrating on the operations of representational systems in their own right". This, Thompson and others allege, is a problematic debunking proposition driven by an underlying ideological bias and a desire to redeem the folk devil.

In response to these criticisms, this thesis contributes a new perspective to the analysis and evaluation of moral panics by

operationalising novel insights in moral panic theory, particularly the work of Marcello Maneri (2013). In line with Critcher's (2003) call to go 'beyond' moral panic studies by incorporating developments in social theory, the thesis also draws on risk theory and discourse studies and reflects on the changing British media landscape to revise traditional theoretical models. It thus represents an iterative discussion between moral panic theory and this particular case study.

Cassidy and Mills (2012) and Cole and Stewart (2016) have also examined media representations of urban foxes since the incident involving the twins in 2010. Cassidy and Mills' focus, however, is exclusively on this incident and its immediate aftermath and their term 'fox attacks' is likely to have excluded articles that talked about urban foxes outside of this immediate context. Cole and Stewart focus on the longer-term discursive recasting of urban foxes and identify demonising and victimising cultural scripts as well as a series of themes, including transgression, physical threat, uncleanliness and ambiguity. They argue that the characteristics of wiliness, cunning and so on, which were once constructed to make foxes the kinds of animals worthy of being hunted (see chapter 2), are now used to mobilise the 'threat' of foxes to humans in cities. Cole and Stewart (2016:136) identify "a diminishing of some more visible roles that afford foxes some measure of protection and concern (as loveable characters, totems of nature or pseudo pets), and an intensification of those roles in which their lives are, or can 'legitimately' be, threatened (as 'vermin' or 'killers')". Whereas Cole and Stewart dismiss the suggestion that this qualifies as a moral panic on the grounds that it is not merely a temporary "episode that emerges as a disproportionate threat and then disappears" (p.136), Cassidy and Mills apply moral panic theory but eventually also dismiss the concept as inapplicable to fox attacks because, they emphasise, moral panics are expected to reform deviant behaviour. I will argue that both of these criticisms are unfounded and, importantly, that the moral panic concept is sufficiently fluid and in any case requires modification to 'bring animals in'.

However, it has to be emphasised that I have not made it the subject of my inquiry to falsify the assumption that the urban fox case qualifies as a moral panic. The moral panic concept is itself a social construct, defined in a number of ways. It is not necessarily meaningful to ask whether this is or is not a moral panic. Rather, moral panic theory is chosen as a critical tool to denaturalise fox 'deviance' and answer the following overarching research questions:

- How are urban foxes represented in the news media?
- How does the urban fox moral panic develop over time?
- Whose voices and perspectives are included or excluded, and how?
- What effect does this have on human/vulpine relations?
- Are there strategic similarities between the discursive construction of urban foxes in the media and the foxhunting debate?

The thesis uses a form of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), modelled predominantly on the work of Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995), to analyse media representations of urban foxes over a five-year period immediately before and after the fox attack on the Koupparis twins. Broadcast television and documentary sources, as well as pressure group materials, pest control industry manuals, websites and social media platforms are also examined. CDA proposes that texts are instantiations of discourse, which is in turn implicated in relations of power. CDA has been widely applied to identify dominant frames and expose ideologies embedded in text and to foreground how language is used to manufacture consent and false consciousness. The key difference here is that the form of power animals are subjected to is completely coercive but also depends on majority human consent, and as such a strong link can be drawn between the discursive construction of human/animal relations and the materiality of animal life. CDA provides "an account

of the role of language, language use, discourse and communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality” (van Dijk 1993:282). In other words, CDA asks about the ideational meaning of language, how text is positioned and positioning, whose interests are represented or denied and what the material consequences are.

Fairclough’s model for CDA proposes that three dimensions of discourse (text, the processes used to generate text, and the socio-historical conditions in which text is embedded) be examined using three kinds of analysis: text analysis, processing analysis and social analysis. This CDA of media representations of urban foxes therefore attends not only to the language used in the text, but also to the conventions and processes of media production and reception which themselves are socially and economically constrained (Fairclough 1995). This generates a more holistic appreciation of the context of the social construction of animals and risk.

A central argument of this thesis is that more significant than the potential physical threat posed to humans is the way in which urban foxes threaten to undermine the myth of the city as a space that is inimical to nature and a perfect manifestation of human control, and the role that foxes in general play in contemporary social conflict surrounding the practice of foxhunting. Nature has over the past two centuries been spatialised into the countryside and thereby constructed as the antithesis of the urban. Cities were once seen as refuges from the dangers posed by mammalian carnivores, but they are now increasingly playing host to them. The fields of urban ecology and ethology are growing and calling for a reconceptualisation of cities as ecosystems, as habitats in which many wild animal species not only survive but thrive. Foxes are liminal, transgressive animals that challenge the boundaries of human and animal domesticity. By crossing physical and symbolic boundaries between the urban and rural, the garden and the home, the pest and the pet, they threaten to dissolve those boundaries and

prior designations altogether. I argue that the urban fox moral panic is a contemporary manifestation of normative boundary maintenance.

The British countryside is also a heavily managed and ordered landscape, where domestication, commodification and wildlife 'management' combine to create a recognisable and unthreatening space. Country 'sports', such as foxhunting, are ritualistic performances that have historically held an order-restoring function. I argue that to properly understand the media frenzy surrounding urban foxes, it is essential to examine human/vulpine relations in historical perspective. We are now at a particular moment in the long-running debate on foxhunting, which remains the focal point for human/vulpine conflict in the UK. Chapter 2 therefore outlines how the foxhunting debate has set the scene for the contemporary urban fox moral panic, and argues that the latter plays a strategic role in the campaign to repeal the ban on hunting with hounds. The chapter traces the development of the foxhunting pastime in Britain from its origins to the present day. The focus here is on the evolution of popular legitimations for foxhunting and their contestation, as well as the implications of the hunting debate for the meanings that have been attributed to the hunted fox, which features variously as victim and villain. The chapter thus demonstrates how the lives of foxes have historically been shaped by shifting formations of human power and regimes of representation and illustrates how "it was almost impossible to reflect on animals without being distracted by the conflicting perceptions imposed by social class" (Thomas 1983:184). Chapter 2 also considers the ways in which rural and urban space is imagined both by proponents and detractors of foxhunting. The chapter introduces one of the key arguments of the thesis: that foxes not only breach the spatial orderings of modernity by crossing human boundaries in a number of environments, but also act as protagonists in the resurgent debates on foxhunting and the politics surrounding countryside pastimes in general.

Chapter 3 outlines and contextualises the theoretical framework of moral panic with reference to different models or ideal types, their relation to theories of risk and moral regulation, common challenges to the moral panic concept and the implications both for moral panic theory and for animal agency itself of bringing other animals in as 'folk devils'. Chapter 4 expands on the theoretical literature introduced in chapter 3 with a discussion of the importance of language and the media for moral panics, followed by an examination of the impact that cultural representation has on human/animal relations. In the second half of the chapter I make the case for Critical Discourse Analysis and argue that additional tools from the fields of corpus linguistics and framing analysis should be incorporated in the study. Chapters 5 to 7 trace the development of the urban fox moral panic through a series of stages, using the tools for the analysis of media text outlined in chapter 4. Chapter 8 turns to the dimension of discourse practice, analysing the media landscape surrounding the urban fox moral panic, and chapter 9 focuses on the social practice dimension of discourse, contextualising the moral panic within wider debates surrounding animal agency in urban and rural space. In this penultimate chapter I highlight the importance of spatial context for the attribution of animal agency and the moralisation of fox behaviour, and hence the ethical and physical visibility of animal bodies.

Urban foxes are the 'folk devils' of this moral panic, but they can also be considered the victims of a phenomenon that is largely a manifestation of underlying human anxieties and social conflicts. This thesis therefore goes beyond an analysis of the immediate circumstances of human/fox conflict to uncover the symbolic basis for recent negative representations of urban foxes. The symbolic use of foxes and contemporary discourses of risk surrounding them serve to draw attention to, restore and maintain a particular narrative of moral and spatial order between human and other-than-human animals as well as affirm existing social hierarchies and values in urban and rural communities. Because growing anxieties about foxes have

given rise to calls for boundary maintenance, this thesis is not only concerned for what the context of the persecution of urban foxes says about humans but also how the discursive management of foxes connects with the material consequences for the species itself.

This thesis is an exposition of the development of a particular moral panic, outlining why this issue was selected for public and political attention, who were consulted as claims-makers and experts, what kinds of discourses were drawn on and frames generated, and what remedial measures were advocated. It also reflects on the consequences for moral panic theory (a key strand of mainstream sociological thought) of 'bringing animals in', by asking to what extent animals can be 'folk devils'. It bridges the disciplines of Human–Animal Studies (HAS), Anthrozoology and Critical Animal Studies (CAS) with mainstream Sociology, Geography and Anthropology. By operationalising insights from this variety of disciplines, it uncovers who has preferential access to public discourse, what the origins are of contemporary fox representations and what strategic roles they play in human social conflict. It deepens the study of fox ecology by providing an important human dimension and ultimately contributes an understanding of the factors standing in the way of better human/vulpine coexistence.

CHAPTER 2. The Hunted Fox: A Social History

2.1 Introduction

2.2 The first transformation: from beasts of prey to beast of the chase

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2.5 From villain to victim and back again: a summary of foxhunting legitimations

2.5.1 Fox-as-pest and hunting-as-pest-control

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2.6 Appropriating a moral panic: the campaign for repeal

2.7 Conclusion: hounding the urban fox

2.1 Introduction

Human/fox relations in rural areas have a much longer and more complicated history than human relations with foxes primarily resident in urban areas. The discursive construction of urban foxes cannot therefore be considered independently from cultural representations of their rural cousins, which stem in large part from a particular historically significant form of human/animal encounter in rural space: the recently-outlawed practice of foxhunting with hounds. Thomas (1986:19) remarks that “[f]ew issues have been as regularly debated in Parliament and the subject of so much pressure group activity”. The Hunting Act 2004, though over a decade old, is a very recent development in the long history of this pastime and it has remained the subject of much controversy. Foxhunting itself, according to Marvin (2002:139) “is an event which both depends on representations of animals and has actively constructed such representations through its practice”. He adds that “[f]he fox is the central

character in a social and political drama concerned with forms of legitimate and illegitimate killing by humans in rural space and the appropriate or inappropriate relations humans have with wild animals” (2000:209).

This chapter traces the configuration and reconfiguration of the cultural significance of rural foxes and examines the history of and conflict surrounding foxhunting, to build a picture of its place in English culture and explain how the controversy has become entwined with the themes of community, authenticity, nationality, freedom, democracy, class and morality. Those in favour of foxhunting have, throughout its history and especially over the past two decades, had to offer defences and legitimations for their ‘sport’, many of which have had very little, if anything, to do with foxes. Vesey-Fitzgerald (1977) notes that in much of the enormous hunting literature only passing reference is ever made to foxes themselves. A comparison of past and present-day discourse can shed light on the changing salience of particular forms of legitimation and on the connections between the urban fox moral panic and the foxhunting controversy. Understanding the significance of foxhunting to the urban fox moral panic requires an interrogation of the foxhunting debate, conducted against the backdrop of shifting nature/society relations, as well as shifting social relations in and between the countryside and urban areas.

2.2 The first transformation: from beast of prey to beast of the chase

Modern foxhunting was practised from the second half of the seventeenth century (Ridley 1990, Carr 1986, Scruton 1998). Previously, the royal pursuit of deer played an important role in changes to the social and physical landscape of the British countryside. Under William the Conqueror, the civil laws governing villages had been replaced by the charters and laws of the forest¹, prohibiting any form of hunting except under licence (MacGregor 2012). Hunting privileges were being increasingly passed from monarchy to nobility but the deer population suffered widespread slaughter at the hands of poachers rebelling

¹ *Forestae regis* (royal forests) were large tracts of land that included farms and smallholdings, and even entire villages. By the late twelfth century, around a third of England was designated royal forest and William had “laid waste more than 60 parishes, forced the peasants to move on to other places, and replaced the men with beasts of the forest that he might hunt to his heart’s content” (Vitalis, cited in MacGregor 2012:102).

against the monarchy. The deer population declined even further due to habitat loss, as woods were felled for timber or fuel for the iron and lead industries. Barons took over control of the royal estates but continued to exclude all but the prosperous yeoman, and the landless commoner had no lawful access to venison (MacGregor 2012). Throughout the Middle Ages, hunting remained an aristocratic diversion.

The story of how foxes became favoured hunting quarry highlights how different they have always been from the 'beasts of the chase'². By the late medieval period, a foxhunting season was being observed, running from Christmas until the Feast of the Annunciation, which signalled not only the growing formality of the foxhunt but also contributed to its popularity, as it was customary to hunt only inedible animals during Lent. The flesh of foxes was never consumed (MacGregor 2012). Although hunting the 'noble stag' remained popular, excessive hunting contributed to a drastic decline in the deer population during the fifteenth century (Womack 2003). During the Civil War (1642-1651) Parliament struck a blow to royal privilege and control of the land by ordering the slaughter of royal deer, whose killing had for centuries been reserved for the nobility (Wallen 2006). Just as the hunting privilege had been a symbol of the power of the aristocracy, the poaching of deer was a powerful symbol of the changing political landscape in England and grew in popularity with soldiers and civilians (MacGregor 2012). Many deer parks were broken up and sold off to be turned over to agriculture. At the time of the Restoration (1660), deer had become so scarce that landowners were forced to breed hounds for the pursuit of an alternative quarry.

However, in counties such as Northamptonshire, these social changes cannot account for the increasing popularity of foxhunting as the naturally wooded landscape continued to support a strong deer population (De Belin 2013). Rather than turning to the fox out of necessity, changes in horse breeding had led to a growing emphasis on the thrill of the chase, as opposed to the earlier focus on the skill of the hounds. The hunting transition is perhaps best

² Deer, boar and hares were killed in part to provide food. Wolves, eventually exterminated in England under Henry VII, were considered dangerous predators whose eradication was deemed a noble cause (Newall 1983).

explained by a combination of declining deer populations in some areas, developments in hound and horse breeding and a growing emphasis on speed (Thomas 1986). The Enclosure Acts passed between 1750 and 1860, which resulted in the fencing off of common land and the breaking up of large open fields to account for the increasing demand for farm land, dealt the final blow for the widespread hunting and stalking of deer (Bevan 2011, Windeatt 1982). Eliason (2004) agrees that foxes only truly became perceived worthy of the chase and emerged as the most popular quarry from the eighteenth century onwards because of their relative ubiquity compared to other animals, as well as the quality of the chase they offered. Prior to that, anyone was permitted to kill foxes for a bounty (Fudge 2004).

The pest status of the fox provided a utilitarian justification for hunting (Wallen 2006). However, “[d]epictions of fox-hunting before 1753 coincide with the characterizations of Reynard as an outlaw, and the view of foxes more broadly as nuisances that of necessity had to be purged but that provide little merit to the hunter who killed them” (Wallen 2006:94). Nevertheless, medieval beast fables, which also depicted Reynard as wily and cunning, provided much of the cultural material with which to reinterpret foxes as at once verminous creatures and beasts worthy of the chase (Fudge 2004). Popular cultural narratives of the eighteenth century depict foxes as sly creatures and treacherous assassins, whose extermination represented an act of retribution (see Dryden’s 1700 adaptation of Chaucer’s *The Nun’s Priest’s Tale*). Howe (1981:295) summarises the promotion of foxes from pests to beasts of the chase as follows: “the fox appear[ed] not as a star of a ritual drama specifically written to his personal qualities, but rather as a second-rate substitute, an understudy drafted into the central role after the lead came down with a lingering terminal illness”. Foxes continued to be shot, poisoned, trapped and snared by farmers but the landed gentry now set about themselves to reserve foxes for hunting and condemn all other killing of foxes as ‘vulpicide’ (Marvin 2007b).

It took some time for foxes to become accepted as the appropriate quarry for the nobility but they never achieved the same noble status as stags (Cartmill 1993). However, for foxes to have retained all of their earlier associations would have been incompatible with the noble status of the hunt, and gradually some of

the qualities traditionally attributed to stags, such as courage and cunning, became transferred to foxes. Although “depictions of fox-hunting reflected the changes in the English landscape and in class structure, [...] it was only very late in the history of the sport that they had showed any change in how the fox was thought of” (Wallen 2006:95). Marvin (2000:192) agrees that the fox “was still regarded as a thief and a villain, but the distasteful and disagreeable associations of vermin were tempered by the view of the fox as an ‘artful rogue’”. Much as participation in the hunt had become a way of conferring status onto humans, the status of foxes was considered to have been raised by deeming them worthy of the chase.

2.2.1 Class, social status and the sublimation of violence

The early origins of foxhunting have been attributed by Elias (1986) to a civilising or ‘sportising’ process which took place during the Middle Ages. Where the objective of hunting was no longer to obtain food, members of the hunt became increasingly distanced from the act of killing, greater emphasis was placed on the chase, and even the language of hunting changed. Like ‘manners’, elaborate hunting etiquette served not only as a means of reinforcing – symbolically – the hegemony of the ruling class but also tempered the apparent violence of hunting itself (Elias and Dunning 1986). Sports that involved animals in mortal combat with one another became an increasingly popular outlet for the satisfaction of supposed violent desires. Pit sports, such as bearbaiting, cockfighting, bullbaiting and dogfighting were favoured by members of all social classes. In common with foxhunting, the killing here is not performed by humans but by other animals under the control of humans. Although Itzkowitz (1977) counters that foxhunting is more, not less, violent than previous forms of hunting with hounds, the general trend in the history of sport hunting was towards the sublimation of direct human violence and a ritualistic over-elaboration of means compared with ends.

By the start of the nineteenth century, foxes, persecuted in great numbers, became increasingly rare all across the country and their decline posed a threat to the sport (Wallen 2006). In order to sustain what had by now become an industry, many hunts found themselves in the curious position of having to

artificially maintain the local fox population or think of other ways to ensure a large enough supply of their quarry. Some built artificial earths or planted coverts to encourage foxes to breed. Others hand-reared fox cubs or imported foxes from other parts of the country and even from other European countries (MacGregor 2012, Griffin 2007). This practice caused outrage in some hunt communities, not because it decimated the pest control defence of foxhunting, but because the “degeneracy” of “mongrel-bred vermin” was thought to be “[ruining] the blood of the stout British Fox” (cited in Windeatt 1982:18). The hunters’ newfound enthusiasm for the conservation of the fox population also brought them into conflict with farmers and gamekeepers (MacGregor 2012). Conflicts arose over rights of access to land over which the hunts pursued their quarry and it was only when farmers and landowners were given the right to sue the hunt in the event of any damage that farming and hunting could once again coexist reasonably peacefully. Conflicts between farmers and hunts, which are still a daily occurrence in many parts of the country (Hounds Off 2016), demonstrate the precariousness of the relationship between the hunting and farming communities and undermine the depiction of the hunt as central to the harmony and social cohesion of the countryside.

Cartmill (1993:29) emphasises that “hunting in the modern world is not to be understood as a practical means of latching onto some cheap protein. It is intelligible only as a symbolic behaviour, like a game or religious ceremony, and the emotions that the hunt arouses can be understood only in symbolic terms.” Marvin (2000:194) argues that “the actual killing of the fox is not the focus of the pleasure of hunting, nor is it culturally elaborated”. During the hunt, there are opportunities for the hunted fox to become a mere pest again, such as in the practice of ‘digging-out’ a fox that has ‘gone to ground’. He notes that “there is no ‘performance’ and, unlike the hunting of the fox, death is administered by humans using a weapon as is the case in many forms of pest control” (Marvin 2000:195). Pests, Marvin argues, are not generally given a chance to escape, nor is their pursuit usually wrapped in elaborate pageantry and ceremony. Nor, crucially, is pest control usually indulged in by the upper echelons of society or celebrated and written about as an important element of British cultural heritage.

The excess and over-elaboration of means compared with ends render it inappropriate to interpret proper foxhunting, where the focus of celebration is the complex assemblage of the huntsman, horse and hounds, as a pest control activity. If a fox is killed properly by hounds, the body is 'honoured' in a similar manner to the *blooding*³ ritual previously associated with deerhunting (MacGregor 2012).

2.2.2 From aristocracy to democracy?

As we have seen, from its early origins foxhunting has been tied up with class relations. During the feudal era, land, and by extension the animals that resided there, were under the control and ownership of the nobility, who exercised their exclusive hunting rights and exacted severe punishment on those whose hunting transgressions were not befitting of their social status. Nurse (2013:119) contends that "[h]unting was, thus, a means of asserting dominance, social superiority and even masculinity and allowed a distinct aspect of cultural identity to emerge; one of control".

Hunted game in general was available legally only to the nobility and the gentry well into the nineteenth century (Hay 1975, May 2013, Perkins 2003). However, these restrictions applied only to game hunting, not foxhunting. As a result, foxhunting was sometimes celebrated as an activity that brought people from different class backgrounds together. However, the fact that farmers could kill foxes did not mean they were automatically accepted as legitimate members of the hunting fraternity, nor did they usually have the financial means and disposable leisure time to participate in the first place. Farmers remained excluded from the social side of foxhunting, such as hunt clubs and balls, and many farmers' hunts and aristocratic hunts existed entirely separately from one another (May 2013).

The upper-middle classes and *nouveaux riches* began to buy their way in from the 1750s onwards, a trend that was resented but considered necessary to financially sustain the activity (Holt 1989). Wallen (2006:106-108) summarises

³ *Blooding* is an initiation ritual, which involves smearing the blood of a hunted quarry on the face of a newly initiated member of the hunt.

that “[t]he real meaning of the hunt now lay in the knowledge of how to dress, how to ride and jump, and how to use the correct terminology with the proper pronunciation. [...] [T]he emphasis on violence had now begun to give way to the emphasis on the indicators of social accomplishment.” Participation in hunting was an act of social differentiation, a performance of one’s membership of the elite. It is a peculiar feature of foxhunting that its aristocratic associations existed for a long time alongside an emphasis on the democratic nature of it. The desire of the lower classes to participate contributed to this paradox as much as the snobbery and aspiration of the middle classes and the urban bourgeoisie. In a society where access to hunting privileges has always been predicated on social class, hunting is a practice of conspicuous leisure (Veblen 1899/1994), an assertion of one’s position within the social hierarchy, “looked to by many merely in search of social advancement” (Itzkowitz 1977:29). Hunting was a means not only of demonstrating and making visible social class divisions, but also reinforced those divisions.

2.3 The origins of the anti-bloodsports movement

Thomas (1983) suggests that the period 1500–1800 saw the emergence of a ‘modern sensibility’ about the natural world. The notion that other animals had been created for human use became increasingly displaced by a view of nature as something worthy of appreciation and preservation in its own right. Ritvo’s (1987) historical analysis of human/animal relationships substantiates this. Nevertheless, the clergy were still keen to emphasise the church’s view of human/animal separation, and the fear of the ‘beast within’ perpetuated the view that nature was a force to be tamed and subdued. Midgley (1973:118) explains that “[i]f the Beast Within was capable of every iniquity, people reasoned, then Beasts Without probably were so too. This notion made man anxious to exaggerate his difference from all other species, and to ground all activities he valued in capacities unshared by the animals, whether the evidence warranted it or not.”

During the sixteenth century, criticisms of hunting largely featured arguments about social justice. Thomas (1986:21) explains that “[s]evere legal constraints on the peasant and labourer caused much resentment and left a negative folk

memory in the urban descendants of the rural poor. However, until these people had access to education, the vote and the levers of power, resentment could not be transformed into political energy.” Scepticism about human dominion also began to be expressed in art and literature, such as More’s *Utopia* (1516/1967) and Montaigne’s essays, both of whom used hunting to illustrate the ‘bestly’ and deplorable side of human nature. Hunting was thought to distract from more gainful activities and this criticism found favour with the Puritan ideal (MacGregor 2012). Others were more direct comments on human/animal relations and the supposed superiority of the human species. However, the inchoate revaluing of animals was temporarily stalled by the Enlightenment movement, specifically the dawn of the mechanistic philosophies of Descartes and other European intellectuals.

2.3.1 Class relations and the animal-loving sportsman

The early decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the beginnings of the first organised movements in Britain focused on bringing about the humane treatment of animals through political agitation, with legislation put in place to prevent the inhumane treatment of cattle and prohibit the keeping of premises for the purposes of baiting or cockfighting. Baiting sports, which were popular among all social classes for many centuries and whose prohibition was previously resisted on the ground of infringing on personal liberties, had now been effectively stamped out, at least in English cities. What are often claimed as the first victories of the humane movement, however, can also plausibly be explained as merely the logical consequence of economic factors, class relations and a growing desire to maintain public order (Thomas 1983). This argument is well-illustrated by the history of Britain’s pre-eminent animal welfare charity, the RSPCA, which was formed in 1824 and founded mostly by wealthy people, many of whom were vehemently opposed to dogfighting, bullbaiting and other ostensibly lower-class pastimes, but were avid hunters themselves (Thomas 1986). The RSPCA itself did not condemn foxhunting until 1976. This “strange, peculiarly English breed: the animal-loving sportsman” (Carr 1986:199) was not at all uncommon in the humane movement. Country sports were valued traditions, considered an important part of British cultural heritage. To label them ‘cruel’ would imply that the activities of the upper classes

were driven by the same 'base instincts' seen to drive working-class participation in baiting sports. The prohibition of baiting sports was not based purely on the altruistic desire to prevent the ostensibly unnecessary suffering of animals for sport but also on a "distaste for the habits of the lower order; [...] middle class opinion was as outraged by the disorder which the animal sports created as by the cruelty they involved" (Thomas 1983:186).

Most of the country sports of the elite (hunting, fishing and shooting), which promoted conservative values and social relations, evaded stigmatisation and survived unscathed. Thomas (1983:187) argues that the earliest animal welfare legislation was brought in primarily "to give legitimacy to an emerging British ruling class by incorporating 'benevolence' in its ideology, while at the same time carefully limiting the scope of that benevolence so that it could not threaten class hegemony".

This is not to say that foxhunting escaped criticism on grounds of cruelty entirely. In 1838, William Howitt wrote in *The Rural Life of England* that hunters were now commonly levelled with the charge of cruelty (cited in Perkins 2003:64). The Old Testament still confirmed that humans had dominion over all other animal life but piety required refraining from inflicting gratuitous suffering. Kean (1998), however, notes that the animal welfare organisations founded during the nineteenth century which did criticise hunting were more concerned with the treatment of hounds and horses than the suffering of foxes, which were still widely regarded as vermin.

2.4 Picking up the pace: twentieth and twenty-first century political campaigning

Hunting only truly became a target of organised political discussion in the 1890s, with the founding of the Humanitarian League, which unlike the RSPCA was opposed to foxhunting (Windeatt 1982). It was not long before the hunting fraternity responded by forming its own organisation, the Sporting League, to mobilise support for hunting. The Masters of Foxhounds Association was also founded to regulate foxhunting itself (Thomas 1986). The Humanitarian League issued a series of prominent petitions against deer-hunting and the hunting of

pregnant hares which received wide and varied support, including signatures from leading suffragettes (Kean 1998). Sadly this seemed only to perpetuate the view, in the eyes of the hunters, that the anti-bloodsports movement was composed of hysterical feminists, ignorant urbanites and effeminate 'intellectuals' (Ridley 1990). The 1911 Protection of Animals Act that soon followed covered only cruelty to captive and domestic animals. Wildlife still had no legislative protection.

During the First World War (1914–1918) food shortages, shifting priorities and many men and horses being set to the front lines resulted in a general decline in hunting activity (Wallen 2006). Kean (1998) notes that opposition to hunting now focused to a large extent on the perceived extravagance of indulging in country sports while the rest of the country was at war.

The Humanitarian League disbanded in 1919/1920 but five years later the League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports was founded by a pair of vegetarians who were united in their disappointment at the RSPCA's lack of a critical position on bloodsports. However, the League did not condemn the 'control' of the fox population by other means such as shooting. Their opposition to hunting rested on the belief that hunting was not only cruel but also posed a threat to the moral quality of the nation. Again, the hunting fraternity responded with the formation of the British Field Sports Society (BFSS) to defend hunting against claims by the League. Its leadership was unapologetically aristocratic, which did not help to counter concerns that the conflict around hunting was largely a class issue (May 2013).

Despite the proliferation of anti-bloodsports organisations in the UK and the banning of foxhunting in Germany and several other European countries during the 1930s, foxhunting remained a popular pastime in the UK. The League now adopted new tactics and increase public visibility through banner demonstrations and public meetings.

Hunting became a fiercely political issue after World War II. The farming community had been mustered to take over the care of hounds and thus prevent the extinction of many packs during the war. The growing dependency

on the farming community solidified the alliance between the hunting fraternity and the National Farmers Union (NFU). However, by 1948 the League had managed to collect almost 1 million petition signatures against hunting and the campaign began to pick up its pace. The following year, two private members' bills to ban or restrict hunting were presented in parliament and "foxhunters were concerned for the first time that their sport was to be legislated out of existence" (Carr 1986:n.p.). However, both failed to make it onto the statute books and the second bill was withdrawn by the Labour government who were keen to keep members of the NFU on their side (Kean 1998). Labour nevertheless established a committee, the Henderson Inquiry, to further investigate all forms of hunting. The BFSS responded swiftly by creating petitions and mobilising members for demonstrations, reiterating that "hunting [...] was the recreation not of the idle rich, but of the farming community" (Ridley 1990:173).

Another important development in the 1930s and 1940s was the changing relationship between people and the countryside. The war had further cemented the link between notions of English national identity and the English countryside, access to which remained limited. Early twentieth century ramblers in particular were seen as the successors of the poachers, for whom taking from the land was as much a statement about social justice as exclusion from the land was a statement of class privilege (Mayfield 2010). The original membership of the Ramblers' Association, which organised several famous mass trespasses in the countryside, had close ties to the labour movement, and their assault on manifestations of the 'gated' countryside continued to carry class-based associations for the rest of the twentieth century. The ramblers also continued the poachers' tradition of direct intervention into the exertion of privilege.

Subversion and sabotage were to take on greater relevance also in the campaign against hunting. Frustrated by legislative inertia, in 1958 members of the renamed League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) began to sabotage foxhunting activities in the field, by laying aniseed trails to mask the scent of the fox and otherwise interfering with the hunt (Stokes 1996). 1963 marked the founding of the Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA), a network of activists whose

strategy was to carry on interfering with hunting through non-violent direct action. They learnt to blow hunting horns, use voice calls and developed 'Chemical X' which dulled and therefore threw the hounds off the fox's scent. At the same time, the hunting fraternity increased its efforts to discredit 'antis', not only by countering their arguments but also by questioning their character and integrity. Woods (2011:111) states that "the protests were perceived as primarily by urban-based participants whose transgression, politics and lifestyle threatened established rural interests". The police generally continued to respond to conflict between hunters and saboteurs by abiding the wishes of rural landowners and members of the hunt to remove or otherwise immobilise the saboteurs. Stokes (1996) adds that "[i]t is unsurprising that rural police officers should have in general a closer relationship to the hunting community with whom contact is ongoing outside of their leisure pursuits. [...] '[S]ociety' did not simply 'deem' hunt saboteurs to be extremists, this view has been shaped by the shared norms and values of the pro-hunting community and the key apparatuses of social regulation." Woods (2011) looks back on the 1960s and 70s as an important period in the emergence of new forms of protest with a repertoire of tactics that directly challenged the function of rural space.

2.4.1 Party politics, social class and legislative change from the 1970s onwards

Meanwhile in the legislative arena, otterhunting was finally abolished in England and Wales in 1978, the same year the Labour Party issued a policy statement (*Living Without Cruelty: Labour's Charter for Animal Protection*) that called for an end to all bloodsports. Labour's 1979 Election Manifesto also included a commitment to abolish staghunting and hare coursing (Labour Party 1979). By now, the RSPCA had joined the fight, adding a degree of mainstream respectability to the cause. Some councils also made the unilateral decision to ban hunting from their land (Kean 1998).

Unfortunately for the anti-bloodsports movement, the Conservatives returned to power in 1979. By the 1980s, Thomas (1986) argues, hunting had become a party-political issue, which would account for why so little was to change on the legislative front during the Conservative years from 1979 to 1997. May (2013) cites an analysis of educational and career paths followed by the Masters of

Foxhounds in the 1970s, which demonstrated that 65% had attended public school and 45% belonged to the Conservative Party, compared with roughly 3% of the overall British electorate who were Conservative members at the time. Thomas (1986:24–25) further draws attention to a set of polls which suggest that in the 1980s there was a correlation between anti-hunting views in general and social class. He points to a significant social class difference between those who supported and those who opposed foxhunting, with classes A and B (upper and middle classes) less opposed to it than classes D and E (unskilled working classes and the poor). There was also a distinct rural/urban and Conservative/Labour divide, with the latter in each instance being more opposed to foxhunting than the former. Newall claimed in 1983 (p.86) that “the correlation of pastime and class remains largely unchanged, because hunting was, and still is, an expensive sport (...) [and] is very time-consuming – another prerogative of the upper classes”. However, whereas in the nineteenth century royal participation in the hunt was celebrated, it was by now increasingly frowned upon (May 2013).

Windeatt (1982) chronicles the early years of the HSA and the hunting fraternity’s response to it, drawing attention to the changing political and social context and challenges to the prevailing rural imagination. He (1982:11) draws the following conclusion:

Stopping bloodsports will be more than a blow against a barbarous relic. It belongs within a larger campaign to reclaim the countryside for our use and pleasure. It is part of a movement opposed to landowners who refuse ramblers access, industrialists who pollute the rivers and streams, factory farmers who turn out second rate food from so-called ‘food’ animals.

Thomas (1986) similarly notes the effect certain changes in the social, political and physical landscape of the countryside had on the hunting movement. Because of their important role during World War II, farmers had gained in power and political influence. Periods of Conservative government in the second half of the twentieth century saw a proportionately large number of farmers and landowners holding cabinet ministerial positions. However, not all changes worked in favour of the hunting community:

The changing face of England over the last 150 years has wrought havoc with the environment, both physical and political, in which hunting occurs. Britain is essentially an urban and industrial society and one in which urban values prevail. This has led to a decline in the level of deference of workers towards their superiors; to a blurring of class distinctions; to a reduction in the significance of the role of the landed gentry. These developments undoubtedly threaten hunting, even though adjustments have been made by the hunting community to blunt the effects of these changes – mainly by making hunting less exclusive. (Thomas 1986:27)

Whereas the ongoing association between hunting and class privilege had become a campaign message for anti-hunt activists in an effort to dismiss what were seen as irrelevant 'excuses' for animal cruelty, such as the pest control justification, activists were keen to resist allegations that they were motivated by class war.⁴ Stokes (1996) suggests that hunt saboteurs are actually part of a counter-cultural middle class, whose values cannot be explained away as a mere manifestation of their position within a class-based society. However, the organisations that were formed in the 1990s to defend hunting from growing political pressure grew out of existing alliances of landowners and wealthy business people. The Countryside Movement (CM), for instance, was founded in 1995 by Sir David Steel and backed by Lord Peel and the Duke of Westminster. The CM amalgamated with the BFSS and the Countryside Business Group (CBG) to form the Countryside Alliance (CA), which remains an influential lobby group for hunting to this day.

2.4.2 Events leading up to the ban

In 1992 the House of Commons considered a private members bill brought by Labour MP Kevin McNamara (Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill) but it was

⁴ The opponents of hunting are not so easily characterised as a particular class. A 1993 HSA survey (cited in Stokes 1996) revealed that, contrary to the claims of the hunting community who suggested that hunt saboteurs were predominantly anarchists, unemployed people or students (or a combination of the above), the vast majority were in some form of employment (only 15% unemployment) and had no political affiliation, while some identified with either Labour, the Greens or Liberal Democrats and 20% even identified as Conservative. Thomas's survey ten years earlier (cited in Stokes 1996) had uncovered similar demographics and revealed a large proportion of students and those with higher education qualifications. Thomas (1983) also claimed that hunt saboteurs on the whole had a reduced tendency towards authoritarianism and were less religious than Masters of Foxhounds.

rejected on its second reading. In a subsequent interview McNamara criticised the Conservative Party for turning an issue that was essentially about cruelty to wild animals into a party-political issue (Murphy 1992). Two further bills were defeated in the Commons (1993) and the Lords (1995). Finally, in 1996, the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act was passed, extending protection to wild animals that had previously only been afforded to domesticated animals, such that it became illegal to commit acts of cruelty with the intention to inflict unnecessary suffering (Kean 1998). However, the hunting of foxes and deer was not included in the Act.

A new coalition of animal protection organisations, formed of the League Against Cruel Sports, the RSPCA and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), now decided to join forces to fight for an end to hunting in the Campaign for the Protection of Hunted Animals (CPHA). The newly formed Countryside Movement (CM) subsequently mounted a counter-campaign to reframe the hunting issue and caricature their opposition as an intolerant and ignorant urban majority that had little understanding of the everyday reality of human/animal interactions in the countryside. This served to reinforce the notion of a rural/urban binary in a geographical as well as moral sense. In 1997 the Labour Party, having won the election, promised “a free vote in Parliament on whether hunting with hounds should be banned” (Labour Party 1997). Meanwhile, the Conservative Party Manifesto (1997) sought to frame hunting as “a matter for individuals” and resist the other great ‘threat’ to the countryside: the proposal for a general right to roam (Mayfield 2010). The ideological kinship between ramblers and anti-hunt campaigners on the one hand and landowners and hunters on the other had in 1994 been crystallised in the form of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, which created the offence of aggravated trespass to punish anyone trespassing on private land with the intention to disrupt lawful activity. Where the hunts remained reliant on exclusionary forms of community to ride across private land, hunt saboteurs were bound by national legislation to restrict their protest to public land. The conservationist defence against access had already been sufficiently eroded by the trend towards the intensification of agriculture, and the myth of the landowner or farmer as responsible steward of the countryside was beginning to wear thin. It is no coincidence that conflicts surrounding hunting and access to

the countryside both came to a head at the end of the twentieth century. Where previously extortionate house prices and the tightening planning system had facilitated the exclusion of 'undesirables' and the preservation of picture-book England, there was increasingly little to stem the tide of outsiders, whose access to the countryside threatened to destabilise ethnically and economically homogeneous communities. Chakraborti and Garland (2006) interviewed several hundred English countryside residents about their version of the rural idyll, which revealed that many considered the presence of ethnic minorities a sign of degradation and an encroachment of the city on the countryside, the last bastion of true Englishness. Foxhunting for them was part of an ancient code of belonging that now manifests itself in the wearing of green Wellington boots and Barbour jackets.

A new private members bill to outlaw hunting with hounds was brought by Labour MP Michael Foster in November 1997. It passed its second reading in the House of Commons, inciting a major Countryside Alliance protest on 1st March 1998. However, pro-hunt MPs tabled a significant number of amendments to the bill, resulting in its withdrawal on 3rd July after it had run out of time during its report stage. A year later, Tony Blair, then Prime Minister, renewed his assurances that hunting with dogs "will be banned" (IFAW 2016) and the Committee of Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs in England and Wales, now known as the Burns Inquiry, was commissioned.

The Scottish Parliament brought in the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act in August 2002. Meanwhile, in an attempt to put an end to the issue in England Wales, a new bill was to allow MPs to choose between an outright ban, better regulation of hunting or no change in the law. The Burns Inquiry reported in June 2000, having concluded that hunting with hounds "seriously compromises the welfare" of hunted animals such as foxes, deer, hare and mink (HC Deb 2000). The Inquiry also stated that it had found no evidence to support the assertion by pro-hunt lobby groups that a ban would have significant consequences for the rural economy. The Countryside Alliance immediately mobilised its supporters and in October 2000 announced a demonstration for the following spring. The government were not deterred and announced the first Hunting Bill in December 2000.

What happened next could not have been predicted and put a temporary halt not only to the campaign to protect hunting with hounds but also to hunting itself. In February 2001, a major outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease hit the UK. While hunting was suspended for biosecurity reasons, MPs considered the Hunting Bill in the Commons, voting overwhelmingly in favour of an outright ban. However, the Lords again voted against and the bill ran out of parliamentary time. The House of Lords had not only strongly rejected a total ban but also voted against the compromise option of stricter regulation. Nevertheless, upon its victory in the next election, Labour reiterated its commitment to a free vote on the issue. MPs and campaigners were becoming increasingly frustrated by ongoing delays and in October 2001 over 200 MPs signed a Commons motion reminding the government of its promise, prompting the Prime Minister to announce that a vote would be held in early 2002. MPs were given a choice between three options again but the government now indicated that it intended to proceed with the compromise (Middle Way) option in order to push it through the Lords. The vast majority of MPs still voted in favour of a total ban. When the issue was voted on in the House of Lords, peers again rejected the full ban option, this time by a marginally smaller majority, but now strongly voted in favour of the Middle Way option (licensing), a significant change from the vote only a few years earlier (BBC News 17/02/2005).

The government, now in a difficult position, having made assurances both to members of the Labour Party and the House of Commons, came under a lot of pressure from Labour backbenchers to see through the will of the Commons, which had voted so overwhelmingly in favour of a total ban. The government eventually announced it would use the Parliament Act to force the legislation through in the face of stubborn opposition from the House of Lords. The Lords reacted with fury to what they perceived to be an outright betrayal. As far as they were concerned, they had shown goodwill by voting in favour of the Middle Way, only to be told by the government that it would be steamrolling through a total ban as voted for by the Commons.

2.4.3 The Hunting Act

The Hunting Act, when it was finally passed in 2004, became a watershed moment in the history of animal law. The Act prohibits all forms of hunting with hounds, including the hunting of foxes, mink, hares and deer. However, there are a number of significant exemptions under the Act and hunts are still permitted to meet as they did before the Act, in their traditional dress and with all their usual paraphernalia, to exercise hounds and follow a fox-based scent trail laid by humans, so long as hounds are prevented from pursuing a live fox. Just as poachers previously had to operate by stealth, it is foxhunts themselves that must now either operate in a clandestine way or abide by the law. However, illegal hunting is widespread and in the face of paltry enforcement by the police, it is often left up to charities such as the RSPCA and the LACS to investigate and bring private prosecutions (Nurse 2012). According to the LACS (2010:3), 62% of hunts for which the organisation holds records continue to engage in suspicious activity consistent with traditional hunting practices. Nurse (2013:120) suggests that those involved in illegal hunting “begin to see themselves as being outside of the scope of mainstream policing, subject to a rural policing regime which views their activities somewhat differently and to see themselves as inherently less criminal than their city counterparts even in areas such as animal harm”.

2.5 From villain to victim and back again: a summary of foxhunting legitimations

As we have seen, foxhunting has come under moral pressure and physical and rhetorical attack for centuries. Although philosophers have examined the cases for or against hunting for their moral integrity, the amalgam of arguments used to defend or oppose hunting can also be analysed for its conceptual consistency and rhetorical use (see Kheel 1996). Changes in the terms of the debate and the discourses utilised by opposing sides have gone along with shifting social priorities and social relations of production. Thomas (1986:29) summarises this as follows:

It is a feature of the hunting issue that change and adaptation occurs at all levels. The squirearchy changed the rules when the old order was under threat; the hunting community, having excluded 'ordinary' farmers in the 19th century, is now dominated by them; the BFSS first controlled and now conserves foxes; the RSPCA was started by foxhunters but now anathemizes them; the LACS, once 'radical', is now criticized by the ALF for its moderation.

Kheel (1996) adds that during the early twentieth century sport hunting was considered morally superior to hunting 'for the pot', whereas we have since seen a clear reversal of this view. Over the last century, the focal point for the debate has continued to be the disputed truth and function of hunting. Where opponents have attacked the hunt on grounds of social justice, proponents have countered with claims about the democratising spirit and supposed classlessness of the hunt. Where arguments centred on allegations of animal cruelty, hunt supporters have either sought to dismiss these allegations or questioned the integrity and motivations of their opponents as well as their knowledge of 'country matters'. Here the conflict broadened out to include wider debates about legitimate human/wildlife interactions in the countryside and the encroachment of ostensibly urban values. Where proposals were made for hunting to continue in a bloodless fashion, a case for the pest control value of hunting was formulated. Both sides have engaged in a discursive battle over the rights of animals and the liberties of humans, the meaning of democracy and the nature of British society. The following section discusses three of the most significant foxhunting legitimations in recent history. Understanding their development will be crucial to understanding the origins of many of the discursive frames evident in the urban fox moral panic.

2.5.1 Fox-as-pest and hunting-as-pest-control

Reinstating the fox as an agricultural pest has formed a key strategy of the foxhunting campaign since the latter half of the twentieth century (Hillyard 2007). If successful, it enables the hunt to be justified as the satisfaction of an economic, even ecological need, as opposed to the satisfaction of a mere desire. Where anti-bloodsports campaigners were previously accused of being motivated by class envy, as opposed to a genuine concern for animal welfare,

supporters of foxhunting today are keen to portray opponents as wedded to a romanticised and anthropomorphised view of the natural world, which ignores the purported fact that wild animals as agricultural pests may need to be killed⁵. However, fox ecologists Baker and Macdonald (2000) argue that the fox-as-pest argument is itself a rural myth designed to distract from the real problems of contemporary animal husbandry and biosecurity. A 1997 report based on research by scientists at the University of Bristol (Macdonald, Baker and Harris 1997) summarises available scientific information on fox predation and concludes that foxes do not warrant their depiction as significant agricultural pests. It found that only 2% of farmers claimed losses due to foxes greater than £100 per year. Another study involving surveys of 220 farmers found that two-thirds of farmers didn't consider foxes to be pests at all (Baker and Macdonald 2000). Even a 1993 survey reported in *The Field*, a pro-hunt journal, found that farmers felt they lost only 1% of lambs to foxes and that only 53% felt fox control made any significant difference to fox predation (The Oxford Research Agency 1993). Sheep farmers are frequently cited as those who are most aggrieved by foxes. However, annual UK lamb losses are estimated at 7-15% and it is thought that at most 5% of these are due to predators, although usually this is vastly over-reported due to the difficulty of accurately attributing particular deaths to predation (Macdonald, Baker and Harris 1997)⁶.

Poor husbandry is the predominant cause of lamb mortality and improved biosecurity and husbandry measures are recommended to tackle this problem. Hill farmers on the whole are more likely to be impacted by fox predation than others because their animals are exposed to harsh conditions. Lambs can lose body heat quickly and become lethargic, leaving them vulnerable to fox predation (Moberly, White and Harris 2004). However, government subsidies to

⁵ Cartmill (1993) notes that the origins of modern-day anti-hunting sentiment are often traced to the Disney film *Bambi*, released in 1942, which is considered to have created an anthropomorphised view of wildlife.

⁶ Foxes are often blamed by farmers for killing their lambs where the only evidence is a dead or dying animal (Natural England 2011). Moberly, White and Harris (2004) reported on research into fox-related incidents of lamb mortality based on farmers' claims. 7.8% of lost lambs were reported by farmers to have been killed by foxes. By comparison, a study on two Scottish hill farms demonstrated that lamb losses could be attributed conclusively to fox predation only 0.6% of the time at one farm and 0.2% of the time at a second farm (White, Groves, Savery, Conington and Hutchings 2000). The authors conclude that "[f]ox predation is not a significant cause of lamb mortality on hill farms and the overall financial impact of fox predation on lamb production is likely to be small".

upland sheep farmers compensate for such losses. In 2013/14, the average subsidy to Welsh hill farms was £40,476 (Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences 2014:9). Baker, Harris and White (2006:2) conclude the following on the basis of scientific literature on the subject:

Fox predation has a direct economic cost to agriculture of approximately £12 million per annum. However, the bulk of fox diet is made up of rabbits, which cause in excess of £100 million damage to agriculture each year. Fox predation therefore also brings significant indirect economic benefits to farmers, and foxes are probably economically neutral to agriculture.

The hunt simultaneously objectifies foxes as vermin and constructs them as worthy opponents by anthropomorphising and attributing human moral qualities and intentionality to their actions. According to avid hunt supporter John Lawrence in his 1818 book *British Field Sports*, it is precisely because foxes are *cruel* predators that it is right to destroy them. Crucially, however, Milbourne (2003) reveals that the fox-as-pest argument is heard only rarely in the everyday talk of those involved in hunting. More frequently, it serves as a motivational account for justification to outsiders⁷. Marvin (2000:203) claims that it is a result of the public campaign against foxhunting that “proponents of hunting have had to resort to an elaboration of the pest status of the fox as a key element in the process of legitimation”. Unlike the strategy of eradication applied to most other vermin, however, the aim of foxhunting is not to hunt foxes to the point of local extinction but to ‘restore order’⁸. Neither do hunted foxes provoke a disgust reaction like other animals that are considered vermin do (see chapter 9). In fact, according to many participants and observers, hunted foxes are admired for their cunning and valued for their ability to ‘outfox’ the pack (Marvin 2000).

Along with elaborations of the pest status of the fox in public discourse, hunters are now forced to downplay the expressive, emotional, aesthetic and ritual

⁷ Marvin (2000:202) agrees that “[t]he terms ‘pest’ and ‘vermin’ seem to be most often given when they are directly questioned about whether foxes are really a nuisance. In other words, it is when they feel the need to justify fox-hunting that they talk of foxes as ‘pests’ that ought to be controlled.”

⁸ As I go on to explain in chapter 9, it is the subversive and transgressive nature of foxes that renders them illegitimate killers, poachers and thieves, and that demands a ritualistic restoration of order.

aspects of hunting and emphasise its utilitarian purpose. In the words of Baker and Macdonald (2000:186), “[f]ox hunting originated as a sport [...] but in defence of its continuation, many now claim that it provides a useful form of pest control”. The pest control function of hunting was the most prominent justification in Milbourne’s (2003) survey of hunt participants, cited by 67% of his respondents, which begs the question whether foxhunting is an effective population management tool, even if the limited agricultural impact of foxes was considered to warrant intervention⁹. Baker, Harris and White (2006:24) argue that to have anything but a short-term effect on fox numbers, 70% of the population would need to be killed and this effort would need to be repeated annually. Prior to the Hunting Act hunts killed between 21,000 and 25,000 foxes annually, accounting for approximately 5% of overall fox mortality (Baker, Harris and White 2006).

The foot-and-mouth outbreak provided an opportunity for research into the likely effects of restrictions on hunting, as there was a one-year ban (2001–2002) to stop the spread of the disease. Baker, Harris and Webbon (2002) counted fox droppings in the aftermath of the foot-and-mouth crisis and found that fox density had declined slightly, contradicting claims by the hunting community that an end to hunting would result in a population explosion. Baker, Harris and White (2006:24) conclude that “[i]t is clear that fox numbers are stable, that fox populations are largely self-regulating, that the ban on hunting is unlikely to have any impact on fox numbers, that widespread culling has no detectable impact on fox numbers and that the economic impact of foxes is low compared to many species of wild animal in Britain”.

Nevertheless, the Masters of Foxhounds Association (MFHA 2016) assert that “[i]n a man made world, the welfare of wildlife (particularly foxes with no natural predator) is better served by management by man rather than left to its own devices” and that “man has a moral obligation to manage foxes having removed its natural predators”. In other words, it is in foxes’ interests to be hunted. This emphasis distracts attention away from the cruelty to the individual and

⁹ In fact, the advantage of killing foxes in general is heavily disputed. Macdonald and Johnson (1996) carried out a study in Scotland and concluded that an absence of fox control had no noticeable effect on lamb mortality.

refocuses it on the purported benefits to the fox population as a whole¹⁰. Eliason (2004:152) argues that the task is about keeping a “millennia old natural balance” and notes that it merely involves replacing foxes’ natural predators, wolves, with hounds, neglecting to mention that wolves were driven to extinction in Britain through hunting in the first place.

The MFHA add that foxes have a status as hunted animals, without which they would be ‘merely’ pests. Without this elevated status, they suggest, foxes would face unceremonious eradication. These sentiments were echoed by one Master of the Spooners & West Dartmoor Foxhounds (2004), who at the time the hunting ban was passed wrote in a hunt report that “[i]n the face of a ban he [the fox] is more likely to live an anonymous life and die an ignominious death on the road or of mange and starvation. Thus depleting all our lives.” Marvin (2007b:340) concurs that with the Hunting Act, “that which is left, or allowed, of a richly complex cultural practice is being reduced to an activity without meaning and the killing of foxes reduced to an ignoble form of pest control”. In other words, yes, foxhunting was considered pest control, but it was a form of pest control that was argued by its proponents to benefit foxes in a number of more or less concrete ways.

Having realised that the argument for pest control has some currency with the British population once the element of perceived cruelty is brushed aside, the hunting lobby have focused a lot of their efforts on this angle. However, the Hunting Act only prohibits the pursuit of foxes and other wild mammals with a pack of hounds, not the killing of foxes per se, and there are many other methods of killing foxes that are more efficient and, some argue, more humane than foxhunting (White, Newton-Cross, Moberly, Smart, Baker and Harris 2003). Therefore, the argument for pest control on its own is usually not considered

¹⁰ Nevertheless, it must be noted that this suggestion of benefits is undermined by the fact that half of all foxes killed by hunts are killed during the autumn cubhunting season, during which healthy, young foxes are targeted in an effort to train the new intake of hounds (Baker, Harris and White 2006). This in combination with the practice of building artificial fox earths to encourage foxes in hunted areas undermines the argument that foxhunting specifically targets the weak, sick and old and carries out one of nature’s inexorable directives (the survival of the fittest) in a way that benefits animal welfare. The ‘holist hunter’ (Kheel 1996) who may claim to have replaced the fox’s now extinct natural predators then in fact practices ‘evolution in reverse’. In another variant of this ethic, the ‘holy hunter’, the quarry is not ‘killed’ by the hunter but rather ‘gives’ his or her life to the hunter. In the case of foxhunting, the human is indeed removed from the killing by the involvement of other animals.

sufficient to justify why foxhunting must continue. The persecution of foxes through hunting is best described as a symbolic rather than utilitarian act. Regardless of the weaknesses of the argument, the proliferation of fox-as-pest and fox-hunting-as-pest-control discourses have the powerful effect of equating farmers' interests with hunters' interests and removing the emotional barriers that make the killing of foxes unpleasant, if not unacceptable, to many people. The success of efforts to make foxes 'killable' is, at the end of the day, more dependent on the power of association and rhetoric than scientific evidence.

2.5.2 Hunting-Act-as-urban-imposition: the media and the rural imaginary

The themes prevailing throughout the conversations and speeches are that the Act is an unacceptable imposition on them contrived by ill-informed urbanites who have a purely social political agenda, it is bad for the welfare of foxes and the stewardship of the countryside, and all those present must work together to have the act repealed or overturned and for true fox hunting to be resumed.
(Marvin 2007:352)

The countryside rallies in the run-up to the ban perpetuated the argument that the campaign against hunting was about a distinctly urban prejudice and an abuse of democracy. The Countryside Rally in London's Hyde Park on 10th July 1997 attracted 100,000 demonstrators under the banner of defending the countryside (Evans 2000). The march was supported by the Masters of Foxhounds Association (MFHA), the newly founded Union of Country Sports Workers (UCSW), the BFSS, the Countryside Movement (CM), the Countryside Business Group (CBG) and the Conservative Party. However, in an effort to frame hunting as a concern for all classes and everyone living in the countryside, pro-hunt Labour peer, Baroness Ann Mallalieu, was asked to give a keynote speech, in which she insisted that "we cannot and will not stand by in silence and watch our countryside, our communities, and our way of life destroyed forever by misguided urban political correctness" (cited in Hart-David 1997:127). The speech set the tone for the campaign, whose goal was to frame the threat to hunting as an attack on the whole countryside and on the values of liberty, tolerance and tradition.

Where the first rally was more openly about foxhunting, the organisers of the Countryside March, which followed in London on 1st March 1998 and attracted 180,000 people, wanted to appeal even more to the wider rural community by framing the march as a statement about countryside issues in general. Nevertheless, the majority of news releases on the organiser's website were still about hunting (Evans 2000). The social fabric of the community and the civil liberties of the rural population had, they claimed, come under threat from an urban government, an argument taken up by right-wing newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *Western Morning News*. The slogan "listen to your countryside" had the dual effect of giving the impression of a united countryside, speaking with one voice (Wallwork and Dixon 2004), and of constructing the hunting debate as a conflict between town and country. *The Daily Telegraph* blamed an "urban, anti-Christian ideology which sees animals as being in no moral sense different from human beings and prudishly refuses to confront the reality of life and death in nature" (cited in Wallwork and Dixon 2004:27). It published an eight-page souvenir supplement, which positioned the countryside at the centre of British national identity and emphasised the value of tolerance and tradition. The newspaper described how "[i]n their tens of thousands they had come, from farms, moors and fells, emptying villages and leaving nature to its own devices for a day in order to let the urban majority know that the rural minority wishes to be left alone" (*The Daily Telegraph* 28/07/1997). The Countryside Alliance's¹¹ official march magazine went further in depicting huntsmen on a village green and comparing their plight to that of persecuted Native American Indians (Wallwork and Dixon 2004). Woods (2003:317) summarises the strategy of the organisers as follows:

First, supporters are encouraged to think of themselves as 'rural' and connect their particular interests with other 'rural' concerns; second, they are directed to differentiate between 'rural' and 'urban' and to identify the 'urban' as the source of their problems; third, they are told that they are an oppressed minority whose identity is under threat and thus mobilised into collective action.

¹¹ The Countryside Alliance was established in 1997 through an amalgamation of the CM, CBG and BFSS.

In his submission to the Burns Inquiry (see *The Guardian* 10/07/2013w), Owen Paterson, who became the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in 2010, said that “it is a fundamental freedom to pursue activities, so long as no harm comes through them to other human beings. Hunting is one of those rights.” However, whilst claiming tradition and cultural rights as their shield, the hunting community appealed to a particular myth of Englishness that itself remained undeniably shot through with class prejudice.

The largest and most well-known of the marches in the run-up to the ban was the Liberty and Livelihood March on 22 September 2002. The march employed the same “countryside speaks out for liberty” trope (Woods 2010) of the earlier marches and sought to situate the countryside, and hence hunting, at the heart of national identity. Organisers tried to appeal to a wider audience by broadening the message to include other rural concerns surrounding unemployment, housing issues, rural deprivation and transport. Indeed, according to a MORI poll on behalf of IFAW, only 27% of march attendees felt that hunting should be the main priority for the Countryside Alliance (Ipsos MORI 2002). March organisers utilised liberal rhetoric in their plea to limit government meddling in countryside traditions (Eliason 2004). The countryside was portrayed as an apolitical space, yet this itself is a feature of conservative discourse. The Liberty and Livelihood March, more so than any previous march, was overtly party-political. Hunting had become a fiercely party-political issue and over one-hundred Conservative MPs and half the Shadow Cabinet had indicated their support by registering for the march, according to *The Daily Telegraph* (19/09/2002).

Woods (2002:226) explains that although the countryside is not in fact a homogeneous space with distinctive voting behaviours, “there is a small minority group of voters who define themselves as ‘rural’ by their participation in hunting, farming and other traditionally ‘rural’ activities, and whose primary political motivation is to defend these interests”. The countryside is a contested space and hunting has become a focal point for competing discourses of rurality or “geographical imaginaries” (Evans 2000:78) of the countryside. Evans (2000:69) argues that the countryside is a cultural construct, a symbolic landscape which is “a representation of human ideology, action and power”. It

can represent nature, tranquillity and recuperation but also backwardness, insularity and deprivation (Woods 2010). In pre-scientific Britain, the countryside represented the wild and dangerous, the home of frightening and imaginary beasts and spirits (Buller 2004, 2009). With the extermination of wolves and the growing interest in natural history, the countryside became more controllable and domesticated (Macnaghten and Urry 1998) and certain wild animals were excluded through habitat management and bounty killing (Dunlap 1999). Buller (2009:10) describes the contemporary countryside as follows:

What we are left with is safe and sanitised nature, a complete reversal from the time when the non-urban used to be a wild place, where nymphs lure homebound warriors and where dark forces lay in wait. Pre-industrial civilisation hid behind the city walls. Post-industrial civilisation on the other hand, having tamed nature, spurns the city for the safety of the suburb and country.

The countryside has become decoupled from the 'wild'¹², itself a "strategic site in environmental politics" (Whatmore 2002:34), through the exclusion of large predatory species and the careful selection (right down to the genetic level) of animals to share rural space, rendering it "accessible, appropriate and unthreateningly recognisable" (Buller 2004:132). The rural idyll, though a space of production, is in the popular imagination also a space of tranquillity and freedom from the troubles of city life.

Associations of the countryside with balance, harmony and timelessness also explain why the countryside symbolises Englishness and features at the heart of discourses of national identity. Here animals themselves play an important symbolic role. Kean (2001) outlines the origins of the conflict over grey squirrels in the post-World War II years. The size of the red squirrel population was declining at the same time as the number of grey squirrels was increasing, lending support for the depiction of greys as a foreign invading force¹³. The reds in turn became "emblems of a mythic past" (Kean 2001:165):

¹² Thomas (1983), Urbanik (2012) and Whatmore and Thorne (1998) have also written extensively about the changing meanings and whereabouts of the 'wild'.

¹³ A further irony is that one of the species declared as the foreign grey squirrels' victim is the pheasant, a species that was imported into Britain for the shooting industry.

The red squirrels, despite their previously acknowledged faults of destruction of trees, were constructed as an established symbol of an idyllic rural Britain. The grey squirrel was both alien – destroying indigenous culture – and liked by those seen as anathema to the countryside – people who lived in towns and the suburbs. (Kean 2001:167)

The hunting debate is in part a contest over the meaning invested in the countryside. Rurality is made to signify a particular state of mind, that of the members of the Countryside Alliance. Just as the demise of the red squirrels symbolised a much greater threat, “any attack on hunting threatens other components of rurality” (Milbourne 2003:290). In other words, once hunting had been wrapped up in the fabric of the countryside, the latter could be appropriated by the hunting lobby to broaden their appeal. Nurse (2013:18) summarises that “underlying resistance to the proposed legislation was a need to both protect a particular countryside way of life and a perception that traditions intrinsic to the notion of countryside and rural dwelling were under threat from those wishing to alter the traditional conception of the countryside”.

A striking difference between the pro- and anti-hunt lobby is that the latter don't appeal to a discourse of place. In fact, they are at pains to emphasise that this is a dispute over animal cruelty, not a simple conflict between town and country. However, “the hunting lobby has fed upon and promoted the perception of a growing urban–rural divide in the UK” (Anderson 2006:722). Against a backdrop of gentrification (Shucksmith 2000) and declining agricultural and land-based industries, many have pinned blame on urban interference. Mayfield (2010:67) notes that “[t]he reverence which has been shown to the countryside as a place of conservation and production has further served to enhance its reputation as an untouchable artefact of those without a proprietorial stake”. The English countryside has a long tradition of resistance to democratisation and change and of resentment towards popular interference, and the particular myth of Englishness attached to it represents nostalgia for a more traditional social hierarchy. The urban, on the other hand, is often portrayed as inauthentic and ungrounded. The urban majority do not understand the countryside, what it means, how it operates, and why it should be preserved, so the argument goes

(Evans 2000). Yet, it is not those who campaign in the name of this particular way of life who are driven by emotion, but rather, allegedly, their opponents (Baker 2006).

Newspapers played an important role in the discursive battle over the countryside and helped those campaigning to achieve 'frame alignment', connecting the interpretive frames of the parties involved in and observing the protest marches (della Porta and Diani 2006, Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford 1986). By incorporating existing rural concerns and intertwining the fate of hunting with that of the wider countryside they further achieved 'frame extension', and appealing to liberal values such as freedom from state meddling and protection of minority interests enabled 'frame bridging'. "Most strikingly," Woods (2003:317) notes, "a rural movement that is largely led by a one-time paternalistic elite has sought to represent itself as an 'oppressed minority'". Finally, 'frame amplification' resulted from the use of hyperbole and emotive language, which portrayed the proposed ban as an attack on the very meaning of Englishness and a threat to national identity. The then Chief Press Officer of the BFSS, Janet George, wrote about having to create contacts with the tabloid and left-leaning broadsheet press and making the campaign relevant to them (George 1999). This only partly succeeded. The *Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian* had been vocal in their opposition to hunting since the 1960s. "These papers published stories in which the themes of cruelty, snobbery and class-antagonism could be exploited in order to discredit the supporters of hunting and coursing", explains Thomas (1983:188). *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and the *Daily Mirror* queried the motives of the participants in the Countryside March and the Liberty and Livelihood March, arguing that a still dominant countryside elite had hi-jacked a campaign that should have centred on genuine rural concerns.

The Daily Telegraph, in contrast to the above-mentioned newspapers, has a more strongly rural readership. According to Woods' (2010) survey of Countryside Alliance members, 50.3% read *The Daily Telegraph* and 15.6% read the *Daily Mail*, compared with only 1% who read *The Guardian* or *The Independent*. An Ipsos MORI poll from 1997 nevertheless discovered that although *The Telegraph* readership was more opposed to banning foxhunting

than the readership of any other broadsheet, the majority of its readers (57%) were still in favour of a ban (Anderson 2006). Reader attitudes and the level and content of newspaper coverage did, however, broadly mirror each other. Of all the national newspapers, *The Daily Telegraph* published the greatest number of articles about the Liberty and Livelihood March at the time (Woods 2010), labelling it “the biggest civil liberties protest in British history” (*The Daily Telegraph* 23/09/2002). The most prominent themes in the coverage by *The Daily Telegraph* around the time of the ban were urban/rural conflict and urban prejudice (Hillyard 2007). Importantly, hunt saboteurs and others who campaigned in favour of a ban lacked much of the cultural capital necessary to reframe the debate (Stokes 1996).

As soon as the ban came into force, proponents of hunting challenged the Act on the grounds that it was invalid because it had been forced through by the House of Commons by invoking the Parliament Acts. A series of legal challenges followed in the UK and European courts, which further invoked the European Convention of Human Rights, in particular the rights to a private life, freedom of association and assembly and freedom from discrimination (Nurse 2013). The House of Lords discussed whether public opinion or prevailing morality provided sufficient grounds to ban hunting with hounds and whether the legislation infringed any human rights. Where previously any assertion of the social and cultural heterogeneity of the hunting field had worked in its favour, the hunting community now had to concede that it was insufficiently homogeneous to warrant a complaint on the grounds of cultural discrimination. Having been unsuccessful in the House of Lords, these complaints were taken to the European Court of Human Rights, which similarly concluded there was no human right to hunt and that the Act was neither discriminatory nor undemocratic (Nurse 2013).

2.6 Appropriating a moral panic: the campaign for repeal

In 2010, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats formed a coalition government. In the run-up to the election, David Cameron promised to give the House of Commons a free vote on the question of whether to repeal the Hunting Act, if his party was successful. However, he was forced to

acknowledge that in coalition with the Liberal Democrats there would be insufficient support for repeal. In an effort to appease hunting voters, Cameron announced that he would allow parliament to vote on whether or not to 'relax' the terms of the Hunting Act, for which there appeared to be greater cross-party support (*Daily Express* 06/03/2014).

The Federation of Welsh Farmers Packs (FWFP) had called for an amendment or 'relaxation' to the Hunting Act, which would change the terms of some of its exemptions. The FWFP, a community of Welsh hill farmers who use hounds ostensibly for pest control purposes, published a study (Naylor and Knott 2013) about the effect of using a pack of hounds as opposed to a pair, as stipulated under the Hunting Act, to flush a fox to guns. Although this research was widely presented in the media as scientific, it had been commissioned by a pro-hunt group, carried out by a pro-hunt vet, and wasn't subjected to any form of peer review. The FWFP claimed that attacks on lambs by foxes had increased since the ban and argued that it was not in foxes' interest to be flushed out by just two hounds (as permitted under the Hunting Act) as this could prolong the stress foxes would experience (*Gloucestershire Echo* 15/10/2013).

The arguments of the FWFP rest on a number of assumptions: that the number of foxes has increased since the ban came into force, that fox predation has a significant impact on farmers and their livelihoods and that the killing of foxes is an efficient means of addressing fox predation. Citing scientific evidence to counter each of these assumptions, the LACS (2013:1) argued that "[t]he call for widening the flushing exemption to allow a full pack of hounds to flush fails on basic logic as, even if this resulted in more foxes killed, it would not reduce fox numbers and might even lead to an increase". Alan Kirby of Protect Our Wild Animals added that "[t]he 'full pack' exemption would surely be available to all hunts, intentionally blurring yet further the line between 'pest control' and hunting for 'sport' and giving them even more opportunity to pretend that any chases, or kills, that resulted were 'accidents'" (*Leicester Mercury* 05/11/2013).

Spokespeople for the hunting community conceded that a relaxation of the ban would be more than just an amendment motivated by an argument for pest control, although the need for pest control was heavily emphasised by

politicians. Owen Paterson MP¹⁴, then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, assured the hunting community that “[n]o one is more keen than me to see the Hunting Act repealed because I believe in the management of wildlife” (*Daily Express* 21/03/2013). The openly pro-hunt newspaper *Western Morning News* (15/10/2013) suggested that this “could mark a first step towards the return of fox-hunting with a full pack of hounds” and Tim Bonner, then head of campaigns at the Countryside Alliance, was quoted in *The Guardian* (01/11/2013) claiming that “[t]he government has made some positive noises about a common sense amendment to the act [that], while a small amendment, would send a significant message to the countryside”.

Shortly after the Conservatives won the General Election in May 2015, the government announced that there would be a free vote in parliament on the issue to make amendments to the existing law in line with the FWFP’s recommendations. Animal welfare charities and anti-hunt groups launched an urgent campaign to stop the amendment from being given the green light, claiming that it would render the Act unenforceable and was effectively a repeal of the law under another name. The Scottish National Party (SNP), which had greatly increased its number of seats in parliament, came under pressure to announce that it would support Labour in voting against an amendment, which it did only days before the vote was due to take place. This forced Prime Minister Cameron to abandon the vote and postpone attempts to change the law.

2.7 Conclusion: hounding the urban fox

The historical and contemporary debate on human/fox relations in the British countryside, much of which focuses on the rights and wrongs of hunting, is crucial for an understanding of the urban fox moral panic and the frames outlined in later chapters. The urban fox moral panic is not about urban foxes

¹⁴ On 27th March 2014, Paterson MP told the House of Commons that he had “received an interesting report from a number of Welsh farmers, which presented a reasonable view that there is an increased problem of fox predation on lands since the Hunting Act 2004 came into force” (HC Deb 2014). In response to a Freedom of Information request (WhatDoTheyKnow 2014), DEFRA revealed that the report he was referring to was the above-mentioned study by Naylor and Knott (2013). However, their report does not mention or present any evidence for an increase in fox predation since the hunting ban. In fact, the only sources cited which address the question of fox predation actually suggest that the opposite is likely to be the case.

alone, but rather draws from and feeds into a variety of discursive struggles over class and social status in modern Britain, the relationship between city and countryside and between humans and other animals in general. The historical hunting debate has a direct impact on the framing of urban fox attacks, making them not only an issue of problematic animal behaviour, which some argue demand lethal measures of control, but also framing them as a new frontier in the conflict between ostensibly urban versus rural attitudes to wildlife.

The hunting lobby is a powerful moral entrepreneur in the urban fox moral panic, not only through the voices of some its main proponents but also through the institutional and editorial voice of newspapers that have historically reflected the interests of hunting communities and their allies. Newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times*, for example, used to contain hunting and coursing columns until the mid-twentieth century (Thomas 1983). Little has changed; *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* predominantly report in favour of hunting, while *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror* remain opposed, in line with the party-political nature of the hunting debate and the political orientations of the various newspapers (see appendix 1). On the relationship between the hunting and anti-hunting lobbies and their preferred newspapers, Anderson (2006:733) writes that “[p]ressure groups are sometimes used as unpaid researchers by the news media, their investigative research being presented as the journalist’s own discovery, with no reference being made to the source”. As hunting is a party-political issue and the urban fox moral panic coincides with the campaign to repeal the hunting ban, I anticipate there may be similarities in the portrayal of urban foxes by different newspapers depending on their political orientation.

There is a clear strategic relationship between the interests of the foxhunting lobby, the knowledge of wildlife management they produce and the application of this knowledge to the debate about urban foxes. As we will see, the figure of the hunted fox provides journalistic hooks for the discursive construction of urban foxes, and the controversy surrounding the Hunting Act shares with the moral panic mange of the same proponents. Scientist Professor Stephen Harris provides the following summary in *The Guardian* (07/06/2012):

The underlying problem is that anything to do with foxes has been politically charged since the upsurge of the hunting debate in the mid-1990s. Until then press stories about foxes were largely balanced. However, influencing public opinion on the need to kill foxes has been a key goal of the hunting lobby.

The history of human/fox relations in the countryside substantiates Kean's (2001:166) assertion that "the explanation for the popularity or vilification (or protection) of certain animals at different times owes less to the behaviour of particular animals and more to broader political, social and cultural concerns in human society". The long-standing debate surrounding foxhunting is a perfect example of one such social controversy that has significant consequences for human/fox relations in rural as well as urban space. As we have seen throughout this chapter, and in the chapters to follow, foxes hold value predominantly as metaphorically symbols as opposed to natural beings. They "straddle the nature–society boundary and as a result become ready candidates for order-restoring cultural practices" (Knight 2003:16).

The voices of members of the hunting community and their allies are heavily involved in the discursive construction of urban foxes. The villainous image of urban foxes that is perpetuated by the media in turn has implications for the campaign to repeal the Hunting Act. Whereas the hunting lobby feeds upon and promotes the perception of a growing urban/rural divide, it is also determined to influence the views of the urban majority on the need to manage fox populations through lethal control. The pest control argument lends support for the portrayal of urban residents as ignorant and naïve, a key argument of the hunting lobby since well before the Hunting Act came into being. In almost karmic fashion, they argue, foxes have imposed themselves on the city in return for the urban imposition on countryside traditions.

CHAPTER 3. Moral Panic and the Social Construction of Deviance

3.1 A sceptical approach to deviance

3.2 Two ideal types

3.3 Moral panic, risk and cultural resonance

3.4 Critiques and challenges

3.4.1 Irrationality, disproportionality and normativity

3.4.2 Temporality and (un)intentionality

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3.5.1. Deviance amplification and interactive kinds

3.6 Conclusion

3.1 A sceptical approach to deviance

The idea of moral panic has been branded “far and away the most influential sociological concept to have been generated in the second half of the twentieth century” (Ditton 2007:1). This chapter outlines, illustrates and contextualises key features of the sociology of moral panic, the theoretical framework that underpins the thesis. I begin with an exposition of the concept of moral panic and the role of moral panic theory within the context of deviance scholarship. This includes an outline of the diverse models of moral panic that have so far been proposed, an exploration of the ways in which moral panic relates to theories of risk and moral regulation, and an evaluation of the main criticisms of this field. Finally, I examine the compatibility of moral panic theory with studies of animal deviance and victimhood and conclude that 'bringing animals in' to the theory of moral panic would be beneficial not only for our understanding of human/animal conflict but also for the advancement of moral panic theory itself. The role of the media and the methods of analysis used to explore their contribution to the urban fox moral panic will be outlined in chapter 4.

Moral panic theory has its intellectual source in symbolic interactionism and labelling theory, in particular the radical interactionist critique, which emerged during the 1960s of prevailing theories of social control. Radical criminologists were influenced by the ideas of Howard Becker (1963, 1964, 1967) and others, whose aims were to reconnect the field of deviance studies to other advances in

sociology, such as studies in the dynamics of collective behaviour, social problems and social movements. This gave rise, in the 1970s, to a new generation of British theorists, including Jock Young, who authored a famous text on the role of the police as amplifiers of deviance in relation to drugs (1971a) and Stan Cohen, whose 1972 study of the Mods and Rockers is seen as one of the foundational texts of moral panic theory.¹⁵

Cohen's book was simultaneously a study of moral panic as boundary-defining and, in Durkheimian fashion, an account of the 'collective effervescence' that often characterises moral panic.¹⁶ What he referred to as a "skeptical approach to deviance" (1971:14) was the outcome of discussions amongst predominantly leftist sociologists in the UK at the National Deviancy Conference (NDC) in 1968. The criticism of traditional criminology advanced by these theorists concerned its lack of a politically or socially engaged perspective and its orthodox assumption that deviance was a discernible class of behaviours that could be defined, measured and addressed, rather than a constructed and ascribed social category. Becker's 1963 work, *Outsiders*, had emphasised that deviance is interactive and consequently that the labelling process of deviance itself deserved greater attention. Deviance is not something that is inherent to a person or behaviour but rather a label, the outcome of interaction between putative deviants and agents of social control. Becker (1963:9) summarises that "[s]ocial groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders".

To understand deviance and to better appreciate why certain actions and attributes come to be labelled deviant, greater attention must be paid to those who are involved in the labelling process. By the 1970s, therefore, the focus of radical criminologists in Britain had shifted to the role played by diverse claims-

¹⁵ In addition to the foundational texts discussed in this chapter, other notable studies that have contributed to this field include Erikson's (1966) study of Puritan witch hunts, Williamson's (1985) research on southern lynchings in late 19th Century America and, more recently, Garland's (2001) theory on the development of a 'crime complex' in British and American society.

¹⁶ Cohen has also subsequently written extensively about 'denial' (2001). Where moral panic is an exaggerated and disproportionate response to deviant behaviour, denial is the complete lack of social reaction or response in situations where a reaction would ostensibly be warranted.

makers, some of whom Becker had labelled 'moral entrepreneurs', in the construction of deviance. Spector and Kitsuse (1977) followed in Becker's (1953) footsteps in writing about marijuana and its changing social meanings. They argued that the behaviour associated with marijuana was invariant but that the way in which drug-taking was being defined was changing. Young (1971b:94) distinguishes between absolutist and relativist social scientists as follows:

The absolutist social scientist [...] does not question, for example, why society reacts against the person who smokes marijuana but not those who smoke tobacco. In contrast, the relativist regards deviancy as not a property inherent in any activity but something which is conferred upon it by others. He turns the searchlight of inquiry, therefore, not only on the drugtaker but also on the people who condemn drugtaking.

In 1978 Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts published a study of what became known as the 'mugging panic'. They observed that whilst a social panic had developed in the early 1970s surrounding a supposed threat posed by black muggers on British streets, street robberies had actually not increased. The mugging panic, they argued, therefore did not denote a growing physical threat but rather evoked a heightened social response that could only be adequately explained with reference to other underlying tensions.

Cohen and others thus proposed that the job of the sociologist is to expand the field of inquiry to encompass power structures and social norms, and to turn attention away from the deviant (or 'folk devil') to the definers ('moral entrepreneurs') of deviance. Cohen (1987:iii) defines his book as "more a study of moral panic than of folk devils". In the same vein, this thesis is more a study of human reactions to urban fox behaviour than of urban fox behaviour itself. Moral panic has become a critical tool with which to challenge social reactions to some putative problems and discredit overzealous forms of social control and law enforcement. The project for criminologists who followed in this tradition was to denaturalise deviance and their approach was self-consciously political and explicitly critical of moral conservatism.

Which issues were chosen by these theorists for analysis, however, has been a source of much criticism, particularly from those who perceive the attribution of the term 'moral panic' to any such case as a denial of the reality or materiality of the issue that evokes such a strong social reaction. As Garland (2008) states, many of the cases chosen for analysis by the founders of moral panic studies could be described as 'soft' crime, including sexual deviance, young offending and drug use. When Hall et al. (1978) proposed that the social anxiety resulting from muggings in the 1970s could be described as a moral panic, they were criticised for suggesting that the social reaction was exaggerated or inappropriate (Waddington 1986). It is certainly true that some cases which might fit the moral panic model, such as the social reaction to the events of 9/11, are infrequently labelled as such. This may be because of the assumption that any critical questioning of the grief and moral outrage that were felt at the time would be seen as insensitive. Waddington (1986:258) adds that "[i]t seems virtually inconceivable that concern expressed about racial attacks, rape or police misconduct would be described as a moral panic". It seems, therefore, that the attribution of the term 'moral panic' is considered taboo for certain issues, an observation I will return to later.

At the same time as moral panic theory might appear limited in its usefulness to some who have been put off by its apparently pejorative implications, moral panic theory has also increasingly broadened out on a theoretical and methodological level. Recent scholarship on moral panic has contributed to and incorporated advances in discourse studies, research on social movements, cultural sociology and risk, and these investigations have begun to cut across disciplinary boundaries to influence not only sociology, but also education, media and cultural studies, as well as having an impact on the popular imagination (McRobbie and Thornton 1995, Hunt 1997).

More specifically, Thompson (1998) observes that research on moral panic took place in two distinct waves. The first wave of theorists in the 1970s and early 80s concentrated on expounding and illustrating the concept. In the 1980s, however, attention turned away from individual, discrete episodes of moral panic and scholars began to focus on broader political and economic developments and how they related to ideological trends. By the mid-1990s,

which Thompson (1998:1) identifies as “the age of the moral panic”, new theorists had come on board, whose emphasis was on large-scale cultural and economic changes, of which moral panics were seen as indicative symptoms.

3.2 Two ideal types

As outlined briefly in chapter 1, the basic feature of a moral panic is disproportionate social reaction to a putative threat to social order, the prevailing moral universe or, more concretely, personal or public safety. Those who are identified as the source of the threat are labelled by theorists as 'folk devils'. The severity of the problem or threat is defined and amplified by the media and society's 'vanguards' or 'moral entrepreneurs', who identify victims, attribute blame to others and disseminate fear and concern to the rest of society. This is usually followed by a call for control, restoration of social order and reaffirmation of traditional moral values. Best (1990) claims that this happens in sequential fashion and takes the following forms: 'grounds' identify and define the essence of a threat, 'warrants' justify why action should be taken, and 'prescriptions' suggest what actions will solve the problem. In contrast to social problems and forms of indignation that are more chronic in nature (see Young 2011), Best (2011) argues that moral panics are usually limited in duration and short-lived; they are media-centred, politically conservative and apparently irrational, although much criticism that has been made of moral panic theory questions this notion of irrationality (see section 3.4.1). Cohen (1972) and Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) have each proposed models which act as heuristic devices or ideal types for understanding the key processes or attributes of a moral panic episode.

Cohen's model primarily emphasises the sequence of events and the social dynamics that are necessary for the development of a moral panic. His famous study of the creation of the Mods and Rockers, which popularised the term 'moral panic', was an analysis of reactions of the media, public and state to clashes between rival gangs along the southeastern coast of England in 1964. He described how each group made sense of the clashes and was specifically interested in how they formulated a particular orientation, which images they deployed to describe the deviant gangs, and how they attributed causation. The

response of the control culture to the Mods and Rockers involved a process of sensitisation, in which other forms of 'hooligan' behaviour came to be blamed on the Mods and Rockers. Social control measures, dominated by the police and the judiciary, were put in place at local and national levels and moral entrepreneurs petitioned politicians to grant the police greater powers to respond. The four primary social agents Cohen identified were the mass media, who play a vital role in the early stages of moral panic by exaggerating, predicting and symbolising deviance, moral entrepreneurs, who campaign for a restoration of order and the neutralisation of threats to dominant values, the social control culture (politicians, the police, the judiciary) and public opinion.

Although Cohen resists the suggestion that his is a linear model, his emphasis on what could be termed the 'stages' of moral panic does suggest a broadly sequential model. Cohen identifies a sequence in which some form of initial deviance is followed by a sensationalist and exaggerated reaction in the media, which then feeds back into deviance and leads not only to an escalation in social control measures but also an escalation in deviance itself. The latter feature, termed deviance amplification, is reliant on feedback loops and interactions between the media, moral entrepreneurs, the control culture and folk devils themselves. Emphasising the interactive nature of deviance, Young (1971b) and Cohen (1972) wrote of the effect of media-driven anxiety on a folk devil's self-identity and subsequent behaviour. Heightened social anxiety and contempt for those classed as deviant isolates folk devils further from the mainstream, which in turn results in the entrenchment of associated deviant behaviours as folk devils 'play up to' the stereotype in a quest for identification and belonging. This intensification or amplification of deviance accounts for the claim that moral panics can foster deviant behaviour or have a shaping effect on that behaviour. Young (2011:151) explains that "once a group is deemed a dangerous other it often becomes, because of social intervention, a dangerous other: the conditions for a moral panic are created by the moral panic, fantasy is translated into reality". Young gives the example of the dangerous concealment of illegal drugs inside a person's body, a form of secondary deviance that has resulted from the legal and ideological 'war on drugs'. Interactionist theorists of deviance had already in the 1960s begun to analyse the role of social control measures in the psychological adjustment of folk devils and emphasised the

importance of 'secondary' forms of deviance that result when deviants begin to behave in ways associated with the labels they have been given.

Hall et al. (1978) later modified the concept of deviance amplification to not only include the apparent intensification of deviance that results from moral panic but also any escalation in its meaning and the behaviours it encompasses. What they labelled 'signification spirals' involved the inclusion in a particular moral panic of peripheral, similar or precursory behaviours or activities, which resulted largely through media amplification of the posited threat. Furthermore, Cohen's emphasis on the general category of moral entrepreneurs was replaced in Hall et al.'s work by a more specific focus on state and official sources, termed 'primary definers'.

In some contrast to what has been termed the processual model of moral panic (Cohen's model), Goode and Ben-Yehuda's (1993, 2009) attributional model provides a list of common attributes of moral panics. Their work, motivated by a long-standing interest in American sociology in social problems claims-making, places greater emphasis on the rhetorical strategies adopted by key actors in the moral panic and seeks to embed moral panic theory within a social constructionist framework which focuses on the definitional processes involved.

Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009:37–43) identify the following key features and characteristics of moral panic:

- a measurable increase in the level of **concern** or social anxiety
- substantial **consensus** about the existence of a threat, at least within a particular segment of the public who are able to ward off alternative definitions
- **hostile treatment** of an easily identifiable folk devil
- concern that is **disproportionate** to the actual level of danger posed
- concern that is **volatile**; moral panics soon dissipate

Comparing Cohen and Goode and Ben-Yehuda's models, Critcher (2003) dismisses the latter as vague and proposes that moral panics in fact have three main dimensions and three main processes. The dimensions are: a process of definition and action, a drawing of moral-symbolic boundaries, and a reliance on

various forms of discourse. The processes he lists are largely based on Cohen's observations, namely those of exaggeration or distortion, prediction, and symbolisation. The resulting multi-dimensional model is applied by Critcher to the study of media-driven moral panics, where media discourse analysis is used to delve into how, why and with what effect a moral panic comes about.

The model applied in the present study is one proposed by Maneri (2013) and based on a modification of Cohen's original model. In the process of trying to operationalise Cohen's processual model, Maneri finds it is actually less an outline of the stages of moral panic than a list of its key features. The Inventory stage described by Cohen, for example, is composed of exaggeration, distortion, prediction and symbolisation, all of which relate to features of discourse such as speech acts, rhetorical style, and the modalities of representation, rather than to discrete stages. Impact, on the other hand, "refers to the appearance of a problem and to its particular scale" (Maneri 2013:172). Maneri argues that "Cohen's stages are more easily interpreted as features of the panic to be dealt with rather than as successive stages that lead from one to the other" (p.172). However, maintaining a chronological framework is important in order to understand how a moral panic develops over time, and thus Maneri's final model represents a focus on dynamic, not discrete, stages as features of the moral panic. The model is outlined and illustrated in chapter 4.

A common feature of all of these models is the recognition that the issues and concerns expressed by way of moral panic have cultural resonance, and that what distinguishes moral panic from risk and other social problems claims is the underlying emphasis on moral threat. This raises the question of how moral panic relates to risk and how the sociologies of moral panic and risk overlap and diverge.

3.3 Moral panic, risk and cultural resonance

Howarth (2012) argues that moral panic theory is essentially a media-centric form of risk theory.¹⁷ Risk, like deviance, has been theorised from a range of

¹⁷ Another such theory is the Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF), which is used to illustrate how risk perception is amplified or attenuated in the process whereby risk

sociocultural perspectives and features prominently in the conceptual repertoire of disciplines including sociology (here the concept made its breakthrough with Beck's 1992 *Risk Society*), anthropology (see Douglas and Wildavsky 1982), and geography (see Kasperson and Kasperson 2001). Theories of risk and moral panic concur that risk is culturally perceived and socially constructed. Risk is not simply a label for objective reality; rather, what is perceived as 'risky' is constructed and mediated through communication. As with moral panic, the implication is not that the events classed as risky are not in fact real, but rather that what is perhaps more significant is the social construct 'risk'. This is a fairly uncontroversial statement, particularly when one appreciates that risk doesn't simply mean 'a dangerous situation or event' but rather is a danger to a particular specified thing (be it people, infrastructure, society order etc.) and the label 'risk' comes with and sets in motion all kinds of institutional responses and mechanisms for prevention, mitigation and so on. Our responses to risks are determined by our social, political and cultural contexts and not merely by the frequency or likelihood of risk events (Zinn 2008, Lupton 1999). In line with moral panic theorists, risk theorists therefore become interested in the discursive management of particular types of people, objects or events as risks. What is risky, how risky it is and what measures ought to be taken to deal with risk are questions that cannot be answered purely in objective, statistical terms. Risk discourse is deployed in the service of protecting norms and boundaries, "a means of maintaining the moral and social order, a way of dealing with 'polluting people' who are culturally positioned as on the margins of society" (Lupton 1999:49).

Beck (1992) argues that we have witnessed a transition in late modernity towards 'risk society'. The social context largely reflects the technological developments of late modernity and the related public anxiety over industrial disasters, including oil spills, nuclear disasters such as Chernobyl, and, more recently, climate change. Many of the risks we take, or are afflicted by, are technological or environmental and have an "inherent tendency towards globalisation" (Beck 1992:39). Risks such as anthropogenic climate change are

communications pass through various signal stations. This model has been critiqued for ignoring the interactional dynamics of text production and proposing a linear model of communication (Howarth 2013).

global and potentially endanger everyone on the planet, including those who did not contribute to them and those who are unaware of their existence. Such risks are pervasive, complex, invisible and often not detectable to the physical sense. Their effects are unpredictable and not limited to a particular class, although groups with fewer resources are often in a worse position when it comes to mitigating their effects. Whilst they are the result of human action, they exceed individual control and even the ability of the nation-state and other traditional institutions to manage them. Many such risks, such as those inherent in nuclear power generation, are also uninsurable. Because of their invisibility and the radical uncertainty surrounding them, risk society risks “only exist in terms of the [...] knowledge about them” (Beck 1992:23). Beck is not saying that these risks are not in fact real, but rather that we are reliant on science, the media, politicians and other claims-makers to make us aware of them; “risks deepen the dependency on experts” (1997:123). They are therefore particularly open to contestation and are variously constructed through scientific and pseudo-scientific knowledge. Beck (1992:29) argues that “in definitions of risks the sciences' monopoly on rationality is broken. There are always competing and conflicting groups [...]. [S]cientists [...] continue to be reliant on social and thus prescribed expectations and values.” Whilst knowledge and management of these risks is paramount, and results in greater bureaucracy, litigation, speculation, regulation and the development of a cottage industry of experts, a defining feature of risk society is public distrust of traditional authorities and institutions (see also Brookes 2000). As we will see, a defining feature of the urban fox moral panic is its sidelining of traditional expert figures, such as scientists.

Prior to risk society, the major risks humanity faced included natural disasters that were limited in time and space. During the industrial age a major social concern was the distribution of wealth, superseded today, according to Beck, by a concern for the distribution of risk. Whereas modernity sought to “free people from the constraints of nature and tradition” (Beck 1992:41) and address the problems of scarcity and starvation, the challenge for modern western societies is less about how to feed the population and prevent starvation and more about how to mitigate the risks that have come about as a result of some of the social and technological innovations we have developed to deal with scarcity. The

search for solutions to hunger has been superseded by a late modern concern with obesity and anorexia, for example. We are, according to atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoermer (2000:17), living in the Anthropocene, in which human activity is “a significant geological, morphological force” and our actions threaten to undermine the existence of not only our own but all other species on the planet. Bostrom (2010, 2013) argues that the most important existential risks that humanity may face over the next century are anthropogenic rather than natural existential risks, and include those brought about through artificial intelligence and advanced molecular nanotechnology. Franklin (2015:83), however, criticises the Anthropocene concept as “unhelpfully humanist” because it reinforces a notion of human supremacy over passive nature. He argues that there is much dispute over the point in history when humanity became an overbearing influence on the planet, with some suggesting it began with the development of agriculture 8000 years ago. It also, he argues, assumes a linear development of crisis which ignores reflexive and restorative human projects. These criticisms are shared by Nimmo (2015:178), who proposes that “[a]n acknowledgement of the sheer scale of the effects of human activity upon the planet is at the heart of the concept and underpins the force of its invitation to critical self-reflection; but in accomplishing this by stressing that no other animal species has ever had a comparable impact on the Earth, it simultaneously invites the sort of emphasis on the ostensibly exceptional nature of human beings that features so prominently in humanist thinking”.

The potentially catastrophic effects of technological innovation have given rise to a reflexive orientation: a preoccupation with the effects and consequences of modernisation, which is “partly linked to the development of mass education and the wide dissemination not just of scientific knowledge but of the principle of doubt on which scientific method is built” (Cohen and Kennedy 2000:86). There are vested interests not only in the way in which risks are managed and abated, but also in concealing them altogether. Spreading doubt and uncertainty, especially in the face of risks whose mitigation would require drastic transformation for a privileged section of the global population, is the source of wealth and fame for thousands of people. Concealing or denying risks of global climate change that results from human action, for instance, works in the

interests of those whose damaging activities have been called into question and who are being called upon to change their ways. Risk management is furthermore increasingly delegated to the individual and regulation functions through the proxy of personal responsibility.

Greater reflexivity, scrutiny and public criticism in general are to be welcomed, but the loss of certainty, not only with regards to science and technology but morality itself, is unsettling and, according to Giddens (1991), leads to a search for moral fixity and a re-anchoring of the self. Contrary to some postmodern interpretations, Giddens argues that reflexive modernity does not render the older moral anxieties irrelevant but rather brings them, once again, to the fore. Ungar (2001:127), however, argues that risk society reflects the growth in “new sites of social anxiety”, which have displaced moral panic. Whereas “the sociological domain carved out by moral panic is most fruitfully understood as the study of the sites and conventions of social anxiety and fear” (Ungar 2001:127), he argues that risk society has taken over. Contrary to the moral panic paradigm and its emphasis on folk devils, “claims making on risk society issues is [...] hedged in by more apparent and sticky issue trajectories, by a more equal balance of power on the part of rival claim makers, and by a comparative absence of distinguishable types of folk devils that evoke deep-seated hostility and fear” (Ungar 2001:287). Even where blame is attributed, it is generally no longer attributed to marginalised groups but rather to institutions, companies and governments. Moral panics, he continues, have a tendency towards the local and remediable, and are frequently steered from above, whereas new risks are distinctly more global and lacking clear solutions. Ungar also argues that the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of risk society threats renders inappropriate a focus on proportionality and exaggeration, which are often argued to be key features of moral panic. He believes that risk society theory is not merely a more relevant analytic paradigm, but that it in fact “throws into relief some faulty research assumptions and procedures found in moral panic studies” (2001:276).

Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2011), however, contend that the older moral threats are still as relevant and perhaps converge with newer sites of social anxiety. Hier (2011:9) also argues that risk society threats “do not replace but rather

conjoin with the existential anxieties that are endemic to (late) modern thinking”, and in line with Giddens' suggestion argues that converging social anxieties give rise to moral panics as mechanisms for restoring social order. Howarth (2013) considers the possibility that including moral and new risk discourses within the same narrative can create a 'superstorm'. Cohen has also sought to reassert the continuing relevance of moral panic theory in relation to risk, arguing that “most claims about relative risk, safety or danger depend on political morality” (2002:xxvi). Reactions to risk society threats, in other words, often resort to moral language. Although one could summarise that “[m]oral panics involve anxious disapproval of moral threats, whereas risk society threats involve fearful uncertainty about material hazards” (Garland 2008:27), the two paradigms are clearly mutually relevant and just as often as material threats are couched in moral language, threats to dominant moral values can be framed as more concrete, physical threats. The distinction therefore becomes a little blurred. Beck's theory is useful for highlighting why people have become more susceptible to or conscious of risk in general. Risk discourses and moral panics are both endemic in late modernity (Howarth 2012), and Thompson (1998:2) notes the “increasing rapidity in the succession of moral panics”. Ungar (2001), Hunt (2011) and Thompson (1998) agree that for the most part it is risk perception which has increased, rather than the phenomena defined as risks themselves.

The underlying emphasis in moral panic theory is a moral threat, although this may not be explicit. As alluded to above, moral threats may be material or immaterial but more often than not, moral conflicts are indeed expressed as material threats (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2011). Moral panics derive from and are manifestations of deeper-lying existential insecurities and moral antagonisms “even though the concern, fear and hostility expressed is nearly always couched in material or physical terms” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2011:22). Moral panics are symptomatic of a politics of anxiety and “successful moral panics owe their appeal to their ability to find points of resonance with wider anxieties” (Cohen 2004:xxx).¹⁸ Panics may be precipitated by changes in

¹⁸ How to define 'success' within the context of a moral panic itself isn't clear. A successful moral panic has variously been described as one which culminates in legislative change (often considered merely a symbolic resolution of the problem) or one where audiences are

the social and moral order or threats to prevailing social arrangements, established hierarchies and the material interests of particular groups (Ben-Yehuda 2009). Jenkins (1992) describes this as a 'politics of substitution', for it involves displacing and projecting blame in the conflict between moral universes onto a suitable scapegoat. Jenkins (1992:10) notes that “[c]laims-makers often [draw] attention to a specific problem in part because it symbolise[s] another issue, which for one reason or another [can] not be attacked directly”. Moral panics therefore resonate with the fears and concerns of society or a certain section of society and serve to reconfirm moral values and remind people of what is respectable behaviour (Cricher 2009). Thompson (1998:8) emphasises that “[t]he reason for calling it a moral panic is precisely to indicate that the perceived threat is not something mundane – such as economic output or education standards – but a threat to the social order itself or an idealised ('ideological') conception of some part of it”.

While the threat need not be 'real', the need to imagine it and to restore the symbolic–moral order certainly is. This argument bears great resemblance to Hacking's ideas expressed in “Risk and Dirt” (2003). Hacking borrows from anthropologist Mary Douglas in his argument that there are 'real', literal risks and symbolic, figurative ones, both of which are significant. Douglas (1966:71), writing about pollution and dirt, stated that “the entire discourse [...] is not really about dirt, but order”. Both theories of risk and moral panic benefit from anthropological contributions to our understanding of the human investment in symbolic boundaries. As will become apparent, one of the most significant boundaries at stake is the distinction between the realms of culture and nature, human and animal. The discourse of moral panic is less about shedding light on deviance and more about illuminating the values, fears and moral antagonisms that gave rise to moral panic as their “acting-out expression” (Garland 2008:21). Young (2007:60) summarises this as follows:

successfully taken in by the frames set by the media, resulting in ideological closure (see chapter 4).

You cannot have a moral panic unless there is something morally to panic about, although it may not be the actual object of fear but the displacement of another fear, or, more frequently, a mystification of the true threat of the actual object of dismay... Further, in the most substantial cases, the objects of panic do represent a threat to the core values, the strategy of discipline, and the justification of rewards of those that panic. Only there is a direct threat of a moral and symbolic kind rather than in a material sense.

An example here is the case of the Mods and Rockers panic, the social background to which was the post-war intergenerational conflict and “cultural strain and ambiguity” (Thompson 1998:40) caused by social change at the time. The Mods and Rockers were representative of hedonism, sexual freedom and youth rejection of mainstream values, and the social response “was as much to what they stood for as what they did” (Cohen 1972:197). Although the events that were covered in the media were those where Mods and Rockers collided with each other, the nature of the panic that resulted is, according to Cohen, better explained by the symbolic threats that the Mods and Rockers posed to the traditional values that had previously formed the basis for social cohesion. More recent moral panics in the post-9/11 era can be considered vicarious expressions of ontological insecurity generated by global threats to economic stability (Young 2009) and a fear of difference and of the 'underclass'. A neglect of the structural causes for rising unemployment and widespread disillusionment with mainstream politics has given rise to a culture of disgust and of blaming the individual. Unresolved anxieties about the ability of modern institutions to operate forms of moral regulation have also given rise to moral panics about parenting and social work, as in the case of Peter Connelly, or “Baby P”, a 17-month-old boy who died in 2007 after sustaining more than fifty injuries over a long period (Warner 2013). In the period while he was abused by his mother and her boyfriend, he had been seen repeatedly by health professionals and children's services and it was they who were blamed in the wake of his death. Warner (2013) documented and analysed the media coverage surrounding his death and the inquiries and convictions that followed and noted the extraordinary reaction, in the form of a moral panic, to social workers.

The consequences of moral panic can include normative transformation and the generation of consensus around or affirmation of dominant moral perceptions. Moral panics encourage people “to turn away from complexity and the visible social problems of everyday life and either to retreat into a ‘fortress mentality’ - a feeling of helplessness, political powerlessness and paralysis – or to adopt a gung-ho ‘something must be done about it’ attitude” (McRobbie 1994:199). As we shall see, many of the official solutions to the urban fox moral panic reflect more of a desire to manage social anxiety and restore faith in various institutions by taking seriously and responding to calls for action than they reflect a desire to comprehend and critically question society's response. The task for those studying a moral panic therefore is to look at “how it is constructed by key actors in ways that resonate with 'wider anxieties' about social transformation and cultural conflict” (Howarth 2013:684). In addition to the kinds of background anxieties described here, other contextual factors that contribute to the activation of a moral panic include previous episodes of a similar nature, easily established links with other current issues, the availability of moral entrepreneurs and other claims-makers who can provide diagnoses and solutions for what is happening, as well as the availability of a readily castigated folk devil (Thompson 1998, Critcher 2003, Jenkins 2009).

Many theorists have re-examined the moral panic concept in the context of recent theoretical and social developments. Hier (2002a, 2002b, 2008) considers moral panic a component within processes of moral regulation, which operate over various temporal and spatial scales and find their expression in the moralisation of everyday activities. However, he contends that a key difference lies in the outcome of moral regulation versus moral panic. Whereas “[m]oral regulation is understood to entail long-term processes of normalization concerning some field of moralized conduct to the end of the 'character enhancement' of those persons subjected to regulation on the one hand, and the self-[re]affirmation of the identity of the regulator on the other [...] [m]oral panics, conversely, do not involve any character reformation of moral deviants” (Hier 2002b:328–329). Lundstroem (2011:314) adds that moral panics tend to be “short-lived storms of outrage, primarily articulated in media contexts”. Critcher (2009:17) has also sought to “reconceptualise moral panics as extreme instances of risk discourses within a process of moral regulation” which operate

in our contemporary culture of fear, in which issues surrounding 'outsiders', idleness, drug use and sexual deviance act as triggers for righteous moral indignation (see also Young 2011). He maintains that moral panics are different from other media-driven social anxieties and fears surrounding environmental and risk society threats. Risk theorists, according to him, have so far paid “scant attention to capitalist economic forces and even marginalize[d] the influence of the mass media” (2011:269). Maneri (2013) summarises these contradicting viewpoints and argues that there are structural similarities and differences between moral panics and other phenomena, including risk society threats, media hypes, symbolic and moral crusades, and that the coming decades will help to clarify how these concepts relate and overlap.

3.4 Critiques and challenges

The preceding discussion of moral panic theory raises many questions. To complicate matters further, the moral panic concept has evolved and been applied to a whole host of different issues. Hier (2011:3) laments that “[a]s moral panic is applied to an expanding number of unfamiliar issues (inside and outside moral panic studies), problems with the analytical boundaries and political underpinnings of moral panic studies emerge”. From the outset there have been staunch criticisms of moral panic theory, from those who thought that the term “lacks any precise theoretical grounding” (Muncie 1987:45) to those who saw it as “a label of disapproval rather than a useful sociological concept” (Best 2011:38) and those who took exception to the use of the word 'moral' because the line between moral and non-moral issues was not adequately specified (Boethius 1994, Cornwell and Linders 2002, Miller and Kitzinger 1998). With regard to the latter, Critcher (2003) emphasises that if there is to continue to be a distinction between moral and non-moral then there must be something about the way in which the threat is portrayed that enables a dichotomy between the basic terms of (inherent) good and evil.

In response, some have dismissed the concept altogether, while others have sought to reformulate the concept to address some of its normative connotations (Hier 2002a, 2008, Rohloff 2011, Rohloff and Wright 2010). Rohloff and Wright's (2010) summary of the major theoretical criticisms of moral panic

theory is one of the most comprehensive and constructive summaries to date. The authors suggest that the main problems with moral panic theory surround the issues of normativity, temporality and (un)intentionality. I discuss each of these in turn, beginning with a critique of the criteria of irrationality and disproportionality, which are closely related to the issue of normativity.

3.4.1 Irrationality, disproportionality and normativity

Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2011:21) define moral panic as “the outbreak of moral concern over a supposed threat from an agent of corruption that is out of proportion to its actual danger or potential harm”. (Ir)rationality and (dis)proportionality are intimately related. The former relates to the content of the panic and the claims that are made about it, and the latter is concerned with the appropriateness of reactions and proposed solutions to the problem. Jones, Gallagher and McFalls (1989:4) explain that irrationality essentially lies in turning “objective molehills” into “subjective mountains”. A response might be irrational, according to Hall et al. (1978:16), “when the media representations universally stress 'sudden and dramatic' increases (in numbers involved or events) and 'novelty' above and beyond that which a sober, realistic appraisal could sustain”. In other words, if anxiety or fear is misdirected, or if the impression of the majority of the population is that more people are involved in the deviant behaviour in question than is actually the case, then there may be grounds for claiming that it is a moral panic. Measures such as the frequency, severity or scope of the problem activity are therefore key to these criteria, although they remain difficult to define. It is thus reasonable to assume that identifying irrationality relies on good knowledge and understanding of the threat as well as the prior epistemological assumption that the 'truth' of the threat can be defined by the analyst. Aside from the fact that this becomes particularly difficult when the threat is in some way future-orientated and beyond calculation, the assumption that the 'truth' about the events or conditions that people are panicking about can be defined would seem to be in conflict with the social constructionist position that the real and the representational are not separate and separable things. McRobbie and Thornton (1995:570–571) summarise this issue as follows:

[W]hen sociologists call for an account which tells how life actually is, and which deals with the real issues rather than the spectacular and exaggerated ones, the point is that these accounts of reality are already representations and sets of meanings about what they perceive the 'real' issues to be. These versions of 'reality' would also be impregnated with the mark of media imagery rather than somehow pure and untouched by the all-pervasive traces of contemporary communications.

Representation is always referred to the arbitration of the purported reality or actuality of the threat. The definition of the latter is fraught with methodological and epistemological difficulties and contradictions. However, Critcher (2009) argues that this criterion is a necessary justification for the critical, arguably normative, 'intervention' made by analysts of moral panic. He states that “[i]f there is no disparity to identify between the reality of the social problem and its representation – if perhaps the distinction between reality and representation is denied – then the whole political point, the urge to 'social justice', has been lost” (p.32).

If one examines the event and the reaction to it only in the context of the immediate circumstances, ignoring the underlying anxieties and cultural resonances described in section 2, it would be easy to dismiss moral panics as simple mistakes in reason, encouraged by media simplification and misinformation. However, Young (2011:253) emphasises that “this ignores the sources of energy, the actual conflicts of culture which occur and the tectonic plates of structural and normative change which underlie them”. Garland (2008) and Young (2009) point out that concern and threat are incommensurable and cannot be reliably weighed against one another. Citing the concerns of others, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2011:26) ask, “*How much* concern is proportional to *how much* of a threat?” How do we distinguish between disproportionate panic and justified indignation? Johnson (1999:20) also asks “at precisely what stage can the response to a perceived threat be realistically said to have superseded the threat itself? And how exactly does one measure the cleft between the two?”

What further makes moral panic a “polemical rather than an analytical concept”, according to Waddington (1986:258), is the lack of clear guidelines to

distinguish between fear, hysteria, alarm and 'panic'. The term 'panic' suggests that reason has been forsaken and is frequently considered a pejorative and dismissive label. Critcher (2003:144) acknowledges that “[t]here is resistance to using an everyday word which lacks sociological precision” but maintains that “panic remains the best available descriptor of the emotional force generated by the issue”.

Lack of clarity regarding the disproportionality criterion has led some to claim that it is misapplied and paradoxical. Cohen understood disproportionality in statistical terms (a quantitative measure), whereas Hall et al. understood it ideologically (qualitatively). Young (2009:14) makes the following distinction:

The response to the event is somewhat proportional to the anxiety, otherwise it would simply not be a fully fledged moral panic. What is disproportionate is the reaction to its immediate manifestation. It is proportional to the anxiety, not the actual event. It is on the surface of things, a mistake in reason, but it is not, on a more in-depth level, a mistake in emotion.

In other words, it is not clear whether proportionality ought to refer to the appropriateness of the response to the actual level of the threat or to the level of anxiety surrounding the threat. Best (2011) and Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) further argue that disproportionate anxiety is a feature of many social problems and is not unique to moral panics.

In an effort to redeem the concept in the context of these apparently intractable epistemological and methodological difficulties, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994:44–5) suggest that objective criteria for irrationality and disproportionality can indeed be found. They argue, for example, that some conditions or behaviours are implausible or simply do not exist. Others do exist but imputations as to their causal mechanisms are flawed. In other cases, figures are exaggerated or fabricated, demonstrably so. Two of the most reliable indicators are change over time (in social anxiety but not the behaviour of folk devils) and the existence of conditions or behaviours that cause harm of a similar kind on a similar scale but that do not escalate into a moral panic. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2011:29) provide the following illustration:

One clue to disproportion, and thus the moral panic, is a sharp increase in indicators of public concern, media attention, and political and legislative activity at a time when the conditions or behavior remains stable or is declining. Between the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, the number of news stories on school shootings and school killings skyrocketed, at a time when the number of these incidents was plummeting.

If there is no variation in the condition, they argue, then the definition of the condition must have more to do with the social and historical circumstances of those who seek to define it than with the condition itself. The lynch pin, again, is the statement that the condition does not change, based on supposedly valid, objective indicators, an argument that Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) consider to be a paradoxical lapse into realism from scholars who spend their efforts relativising definitional claims about deviance. They accuse moral panic theorists of “ontological gerrymandering” (Woolgar and Pawluch 1985:224) and argue that it is not clear how one can know which definitions are ripe for ontological doubt and which are supposedly 'objective' and true. Watney (1987) proposes that sociologists can only adjudicate this contest of representations by measuring the social response to deviance against their own, socially contingent understanding. At this point, “as with the phrase moral panic itself, can the word 'disproportionate' be a code for something which we don't like for ideological or other reasons?” (Lashmar 2013:65). Even Cohen (2002:xxxvi) now concedes that the criteria of irrationality and disproportionality are problematic:

We have neither the quantitative, objective criteria to claim that R (the reaction) is 'disproportionate' to A (the action) nor the universal moral criteria to judge that R is an 'inappropriate' response to the moral gravity of A. [...] The critics are right that there is a tension between insisting on a universal measuring rod for determining the action/reaction gap – yet also conceding that the measurement is socially constructed and all the time passing off as non-politically biased the decision of what panics to 'expose'.

It is clear that the sociology of moral panic is fundamentally constructionist, by virtue of its focus on how deviant behaviour is defined and framed. However, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2011:24) demonstrate that there are different strands of constructionism:

When moral panic is conceived of in strict constructionist terms, analysts find themselves unable to differentiate a balanced and reasonable response to a real or putative condition from a disproportionate and exaggerated one. Similarly, when objectivists conceive of problems in purely materialist terms, they are unable to account for the gap between what people worry about and what objective data suggest they should worry about. Contextual constructionism offers ground to negotiate these tensions and to better address certain key criticisms of moral panic.

To a strict constructionist, 'objective' claims are merely social constructs, whose verification is outside the scope of constructionist inquiry (Spector and Kitsuse 1977). Strict (or radical) constructionists focus on claims-making and the operations of representational systems without subjecting competing claims to evaluative inquiry.¹⁹ Hammersley (1992) is sceptical of the usefulness of accounts that claim only to be as equally valid as others and suggests that one could go so far as to call this approach self-refuting: if everything we know is a social construct, and social constructionism is therefore itself a social construct, then there is no way to suggest that social constructionism is the only appropriate epistemology!

Moral panic scholars, however, are by definition contextual or moderate constructionists (Best 1993). They would argue that analysing definitions (including their own) as social constructs whilst also evaluating and convincing others of their validity by using the same reasoning tools that others are able to access is not contradictory. Contemporary qualitative research resists claims to grand narratives and objective truths and the culture of scepticism and reflexivity is carried through the moral panic concept, even if some interpret the moral panic label as unnecessarily pejorative and epistemologically dubious.

¹⁹ However, this is not an ontological claim about reality itself, but rather an insistence on the fact that the meaning of reality is socially constructed. In other words, it represents scepticism of ontological claims about reality (Burningham and Cooper 1999).

These observations connect with the issue of neutrality and normativity in moral panic research. Far from being neutral, moral panic theorists are open about their desire, through critical questioning, unearthing of opposing viewpoints and voices, and perhaps the use of provocative and controversial concepts (of which 'moral panic' is one!), to provoke discussion and promote change. They do not set out to achieve credibility by arguing that their analysis is definitive but rather seek to present a convincing account that will be taken seriously for its empirical richness and powerful argument. This is the same 'contradiction' that is found in studies of environmental risk that simultaneously seek to highlight particular environmental threats and question or undermine the ways in which they have been framed, by scientists, politicians, popular culture etc. The task of the contextual constructionist is to examine claims-making about purported social problems and, using some of the criteria outlined by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2011), to identify and explain the nature and extent of the anxiety surrounding a particular threat and the relationship between threat, anxiety and response.

Returning to the issue of normativity, Garland (2008:22) notes that “[w]hile the sociologist can find solid ground – or something close to it – when measuring rates of conduct, the extent of material damage, or even the size of a risk, it is more difficult to assess the validity of the moral judgments made by others”. However, Cohen (2002:xxviii) maintains that “this objection makes sense if there is nothing beyond a compendium of individual moral judgements. Only with prior commitment to 'external' goals such as social justice, human rights or equality can we evaluate any one moral panic or judge it as more specious than another.” Moral issues are not outside the remit of sociological assessment, especially when they are couched in dubious material terms, and their evaluation should not constitute a sociological taboo. The status of morals, values and politics within academic research in general is a hotly contested one and drawing attention to one's political and moral biases as a researcher can cast a veil of doubt over what is written. The temptation to cultivate an image of the dispassionate observer and masquerade as the 'liberal' scholar (Root 1993) becomes greater the more scholars set out to produce research that will be acceptable to a wide audience, including academics, activists and lay people with different, often competing values and commitments. It is now common

practice for social scientists, particularly those in the ethnographic tradition, to acknowledge where their own biases might have influenced their research, but curiously this is often done in a somewhat apologetic fashion. The current situation with regards to the practice of reflexivity is certainly one of imbalance, where some biases (e.g. feminist, pro-animal rights) are reflected upon more frequently than those that have enjoyed universal privilege (e.g. humanist). This has the effect of giving the impression that some biases are more distorting than others. The invisibility of what I would call 'mainstream biases', which is often the unintended consequence of reflexivity, is problematic and distracting. For scholars in the fields of critical inquiry, including Critical Animal Studies, a case is being built for moving beyond reflexivity, and for advocacy in the social sciences, with a view to shifting the markers of epistemological acceptability so that validity is no longer determined by the purported absence, or indeed the apologetically acknowledged presence of the researcher, but rather by their committed presence and their informed, well-formulated and *consistent* attitude towards social and ecological injustices. Consistency is also a criterion by which moral issues can be evaluated, in a manner that in many ways resembles the criteria of irrationality and disproportionality described above. When there is a disparity between, for instance, attitudes and behaviours towards one species of animal and another then that disparity needs to be explained and either justified or called into question.

Critcher (2008:1141) notes that “moral panic analysis is ultimately based on the view that social science has as one of its core functions an ability to assess the claims made about the status of a social problem or deviant group. This is never easy and always challenging but should not be abandoned.” Moral panic analysis is therefore often classed as a political and not merely intellectual project. Hunt (2011:56) claims that this results in “a tendency to commit analyses in advance to political disapproval or normative judgment about the issue under consideration”. Best (2011:49) further observes that moral panic theorists “have often been willing to use conservatism as a political litmus test for moral panics”. The moral panic concept is thus frequently dismissed as value-laden and ideologically biased. Denouncing and debunking certain forms of social action or anxiety on the basis, supposedly, of prior ideological commitments is unacademic and renders moral panic an invidious and arbitrary

label. However, while I would agree that the sociology of moral panic is in part a political project, I would emphasise that it is self-consciously so. Cohen (2002:xxxi, emphasis in original) explains this attitude as follows:

The empirical project is concentrated on (if not reserved for) cases where the moral outrage appears driven by conservative or reactionary forces [...] the point was to expose social reaction not just as over-reaction in some quantitative sense, but first, as tendentious (that is, slanted in a particular ideological direction) and second, as *misplaced* and *displaced* (that is, aimed – whether deliberately or thoughtlessly – at a target which was not the 'real' problem).

This does not mean that those who are motivated by a passion to address injustice or oppression to inquire further into a particular issue are blind to contradicting evidence, any more than those who refuse to acknowledge or are unaware of their privileges and biases are. Moral panic theorists are driven first and foremost by an attitude of scepticism, “an attitude of knowing disbelief, an urbane refusal to be taken in or carried away” (Garland 2008:21). The epistemological criteria for what is commonly considered to be good empirical research were constructed according to a particular canon of research that assumes for scholarship an untenable amoral relativism with respect to all but its procedural norms. Research that seeks to challenge relations of dominance, whether they be between men and women, the rich and poor, or humans and other animals, must simultaneously challenge the hegemony of existing research paradigms, their ontological foundations and markers of validity and reliability. Moral panic theory does this by breaking down the iron divide between realism and relativism and making the case that scholars can and do still have a role to play in explaining and evaluating social reaction. The analysis of moral panic is a critical and interventionist project.

Maneri's (2013) response to the above-mentioned criticisms is that a critical empirical assessment of the problem at the heart of the moral panic should not be avoided. In an effort to redeem the disproportionality criterion, he argues that it would be perverse to conclude that all truth claims are equally valid, regardless of the privileged status that some of them occupy. He (2013:184)

offers the following words of caution: “What should be avoided is the forced alternative between saying that something exists or that it is socially constructed ('just a moral panic'). 'Facts' may be there, but nonetheless the 'problem' is socially constructed and it is precisely the nature of this construction that should be addressed.”

The solution Maneri proposes involves measuring disproportionality according to discursive dynamics as opposed to external measures, focusing on what he refers to as “the degree, quality and logics of its [the problem's] amplification” (Maneri 2013:184). The term 'amplification' relates to the representation of the problem and replaces the term 'disproportionality' and its problematic external indicators. Maneri argues that amplification can be assessed in a number of ways, by examining the language involved in the construction of the moral panic, including figures of speech, the use of statistical and other ad hoc evidence, common discursive tags that convey alarm and exceptionality, such as 'invasion', 'plague' and 'emergency', the use of prominent headlines, emotional language etc. As we will see in chapter 8, journalistic norms and news selection criteria, together with the ready availability of statements and reactions from moral entrepreneurs, are further conducive to the portrayal of new and emerging threats, characterised by an increasing wave of incidents. Maneri (2013:184) observes that “a correspondence assumption [...] – that is, the implicit idea that the greater the coverage, the greater the significance and proportions of a given phenomenon – makes certain the idea of an incumbent threat is taken for granted by all the actors involved”.

3.4.2 Temporality and (un)intentionality

The moral panic label is generally given to temporary, short-term episodes, as opposed to chronic forms of othering and moral indignation. Rohloff and Wright (2010) argue that a focus on the present and temporary can lead to a neglect of historical processes that led to the moral panic. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994:229) respond as follows:

A close examination of the impact of panics forces us to take a more long-range view of things, to look at panics as social processes rather than as separate, discrete, time-bound events. Moral panics are crucial elements of the fabric of social change. They are not marginal, exotic, trivial phenomena, but one key by which we can unlock the mysteries of social life.

Some moral panic theorists have viewed moral panic as an outcome of journalistic practice, the role of the media in general being to frame and give shape to an emerging story, which not only gives rise to heightened anxiety but may also lead to deviance amplification (see chapter 4). McRobbie and Thornton (1995:560) claim that moral panics are now a commonplace feature of everyday life:

Rather than periods to which societies are subject 'every now and then' (Cohen 1972/1980:9), moral panics have become the way in which daily events are brought to the attention of the public. They are a standard response, a familiar, sometimes weary, even ridiculous rhetoric rather than an exceptional emergency intervention. Used by politicians to orchestrate consent, by business to promote sales [...] and by the media to make home and social affairs newsworthy, moral panics are constructed on a daily basis.

To what extent moral panics are the inevitable outcome of journalistic practice or deliberately orchestrated by parties with a vested interest remains disputed. Goode and Ben-Yehuda's (1994:135) 'elite-engineered' model of moral panic paints a picture of the ruling classes conspiring to "deliberately and consciously [undertake] a campaign to generate and sustain concern, fear, and panic on the part of the public over an issue that they recognize not to be terribly harmful to the society as a whole". Hall et al. (1978) examined moral panic as a component of the practice of cultural hegemony and incorporated the concepts of ideology and false consciousness in their analysis. They proposed that the mugging panic of the 1970s, in which young Afro-Caribbean men were the folk devils, distracted from the crisis of capitalism and created the necessary social consent to generate a cultural shift towards law and order and away from the liberal, hedonistic values of the 1960s. The mugging panic thus played a crucial role in diverting attention away from a crisis in social progress, rising inflation

and failing economic policy. Hall et al.'s was a less conspiratorial interpretation than Goode and Ben-Yehuda's, and they acknowledge that "the ruling classes themselves substantially believed the definition of an emergent social crisis which they were propagating" (1978:220). Mugging had been presented in the media as a new and growing social problem, even though muggings were not new or increasing in frequency, according to official statistics. What had happened was that the 'mugging' label had taken on a new meaning which incorporated all sorts of other acts and behaviours that were not intrinsic to mugging itself. However, this expansion in meaning had enabled the media to get away with creating a picture of a growing problem, to scapegoat young black men, and to create the conditions necessary for the state response in the form of police mugging squads and more punitive sentences. Krinsky (2013:6) thus concludes that "[m]oral panics [...] must be understood not merely as occasional incidences of public concern and fear, but as diversionary manifestations, intended to maintain the status quo, of a continuing historical crisis". The 'crisis of hegemony' had forced the elite to re-establish consensus through fear and distraction. Much as they are spontaneous, unintentional events, moral panics therefore are produced by and reflect the social structures, conditions and conflicts at the time. Hall et al. not only shed light on the socio-political context to the mugging panic but predicted the politics it would give rise to during the Thatcher years.

Hunt's (1997) genealogy of moral panic lists Hall et al.'s (1978) study as an example of the elite-engineered model of moral panic. They are sceptical of Cohen's (1972) earlier assertion that moral panics arise spontaneously through public opinion that is a product of cultural strain and ambiguity. Hall et al. argue that political, ideological forces are at work. In the grassroots model, which Cohen's *Mobs and Rockers* falls into, moral panics are driven, unselfconsciously, from the bottom up, on the basis of public anxieties and moral concerns. Hunt (1997), however, critiques this artificial separation between political ideologies and public anxieties and suggests that both are fundamentally interlinked. Finally, the interest-group model is described by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009:67) as "[b]y far, the most common approach to moral panics". For some groups, moral panics present an opportunity "to expand their influence and resources by focusing public attention on perceived

problems that fall within their scope of activity” (Jenkins 1992:6). Social movements, for instance, are common moral entrepreneurs who “launch crusades” and use fear to grab the public's attention (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2009:67). In other words, groups often have strong vested interests in manipulating and intensifying fear and exaggerating risk, not least to affirm normative boundaries and legitimise particular responses to conflict.

McRobbie (1994) has convincingly argued that original models proposed by Hall et al., Cohen, Young, and Goode and Ben-Yehuda need revising in light of greater popular and media use of the term 'moral panic'. Journalists themselves sometimes use the term to query politicians' intentions, thus further muddying the popular understanding of deliberateness in the generation of moral panics.

3.5 Bringing animals in

In this thesis I also seek to re-examine moral panic theory in light of the incorporation of non-human animal folk devils. The following final section of this chapter considers whether moral panic theory, broadly understood, lends itself to being applied to instances where it is the actions of animals that generate social anxiety. In his original formulation of the concept of moral panic, Cohen (1972:1) asserted that deviance need not be restricted to human actors but may apply also to “a condition, episode, person or group of persons”. Leane and Pfennigwerth (2011:36) note that much recent scholarship has demonstrated how “animals become symbolic pawns in human debates” and panics involving animals may thus be symbolic of wider concerns surrounding not only changing human/animal relationships but also conflicts between groups of humans.

Animals may play a variety of roles, not limited to folk devil status. Mica (2010) suggests the following typology for the inclusion of animals in moral panics:

- Moral panics about transgressive animals
- Moral panics about human deviance in which animals are the victim
- Moral panics about human deviance *leading to* animal transgression

Mica (2010) argues that the moral panic model could be used to shed light on cases where a particular species or sub-group of a species has become defined as 'problem animal' on account of its transgression of physical and/or normative boundaries set by humans. There need not be a human consensus surrounding the reality or severity of transgression. After all, to take the example of urban environments, there exist competing imaginative geographies that variously define the rightful place of animals in the city. Moral panics in this context may become a focal point for the playing out of competing views, the momentum behind the panic being the conflict over which particular views will dominate. This is the socio-spatial context of the urban fox moral panic, although, as we will see, foxes are not the only folk devils in this case.

Yates, Powell and Beirne (2001:3) also contend that “if animals are present in moral panics, then their roles tend to be passive and their voices peripheral to the main script”. They give the example of a moral panic surrounding horse maimings in the English countryside, in which horses and their human companions were the innocent victims. Another interesting case to consider, where animals are victims of human deviance, is the moral panic that broke out in Washington State, USA, after a man died following sexual relations with a horse. Brown and Rasmussen (2010:159) note that “[t]his bizarre story of rural bestiality garnered a level of attention disproportionate to the crime and its societal impact”. Their analysis of this case considers the arguments that were made in the aftermath of the incident and which contributed to new anti-bestiality legislation that was subsequently brought in. They conclude that the underlying social anxiety stemmed from the boundary transgression, both literal and figurative, inherent in acts of bestiality and zoophilia more generally. The particular incident in Washington State “represents a blurring of both the boundaries of rural/urban and those of sexual propriety” (2010:167). The former is significant because the perpetrator was an outsider from an urban area and “[t]he rhetorical construction of the event implied that deviance came from elsewhere, emerging from sites of urban decadence or, worse, from Internet communities who threatened to descend upon the state in order to violate its animals” (Brown and Rasmussen 2010:167). Whereas bestiality is generally considered a particularly rural form of deviance, this incident was more representative not only of urban sexual transgression but also of the supposedly

corrupting effects of urban outsiders on rural communities. The other prominent theme identified by Brown and Rasmussen was the inability of animals to consent to sexual interactions with humans, although this is unlikely to have been the cause of the public's disgust reaction (see Hurn 2012). Brown and Rasmussen (2010:169), however, make the interesting point that "to say that human/animal interactions ought to be governed by consent makes sexual interaction an outlier in the interspecies bond". If consent is not an issue when animals are killed and mistreated for other purposes, such as for entertainment, fur, food or scientific experiments, why does consent become such a prominent theme in anti-bestiality discussions (see also Hurn 2012)? This question is left unanswered but Brown and Rasmussen (2010:171) conclude that "the ontological difference [between humans and other animals] is determined not by the reasoned judgment of a rational subject but, rather, from the feeling of disgust provoked by the boundary crossing". It is, according to them, a response best described as abjection, when simultaneous revulsion and attraction threaten to undermine the boundaries between the self and other (see chapter 9). Bestiality threatens to undermine the distinction between human and animal and the moral panic thus served to re-establish this boundary.

Molloy (2011) has illustrated the symbolic role played by animals in human social conflict through her analysis of the moral panic surrounding 'dangerous dogs' in the UK. She demonstrates how attitudes towards particular dog breeds, including Pit Bull Terriers (PBTs), have changed over the last couple of decades and how they reflect concerns over working-class masculinity. Although they were previously perceived as loyal, brave family pets, PBTs are now included under breed specific legislation which serves not only to restrict breeding and ownership of PBTs, but also stigmatises particular groups that have been associated with them. She again highlights the importance of the loss of clear boundaries between culture and nature, human and animal, and notes that "nowhere is the line between nature and culture more blurred than within pet-keeping practices where nonhuman animals are brought into the domestic sphere" (Molloy 2011:109). However, her analysis goes further in suggesting that the discourse surrounding 'dangerous dogs' was heavily centred on a perceived relationship between ostensibly aggressive dog breeds and their marginalised, aggressive, male owners. The media played an important role in

creating this moral panic in the 1990s, developing and extending the 'dangerous dogs' discourse to incorporate elements of social deviance.

Animal agency, transgression and human social conflict are prominent themes that will resurface in chapter 9, as they illuminate the factors underlying the urban fox moral panic. The remainder of this chapter discusses one of the primary obstacles to the inclusion of animals as folk devils in the theory of moral panic, the notion of deviance amplification, before concluding with an outline of the form this moral panic analysis will take.

3.5.1 Deviance amplification and interactive kinds

Given that the media operate in the language of humans, and therefore outside of the sphere of understanding of most other animals, can the concept of deviance amplification apply to animals? To what extent are animals impervious to our labelling? Can animals be aware of and act in accordance with the stereotypes promoted by the moral panic? In other words, can urban foxes become aware of the moral panic surrounding them and alter their behaviour? To begin to define what 'awareness' might mean and how it applies in this context would take us on a tangent into cognitive ethology that, although interesting, is not really necessary here. Rather, I will respond to this challenge by applying Hacking's (1988, 1992, 1999) concept of *interactive kinds*.

Hacking begins with a recognition of the interactive nature of all ideas and classifications. Labels, he argues, are known to have a shaping effect on the states, behaviours, or actions being labelled. The labels 'anorexic' or 'dyslexic', for example, are not merely harmless descriptors but act as disciplinary devices. These labels, in other words, have wide-ranging effects in terms of the treatment or help given to those who are diagnosed with these conditions, the matrix of institutions and practices that surround these classifications, the stigma they carry and so on. These labels, or *kinds*, therefore interact with the state, condition or behaviour that is thus classified, the result of which is to modify the meaning of these kinds. Hacking (1999:104) argues that "classifications [...], when known by people or by those around them, and put to work in institutions, change the ways in which individuals experience

themselves – and may even lead people to evolve their feelings and behavior in part because they are so classified”. Furthermore, “[c]lassification of people and their actions affects the people and their actions, which in turn affects our knowledge about them and classification of them” (Hacking 1988:55). There is, in other words, a kind of feedback loop at work whereby behaviour is followed by classification, which leads to a modification in behaviour, which in turn necessitates a change in the classification or its meaning. People may conform to the label they have been given, or develop with it and help develop it, or they may reject it. What matters is that their reaction may cause others to alter either their classifications or the beliefs they have associated with those classifications. Important for our case is Hacking's (1999:103) assurance that those who are being classified need not themselves become aware of the classification in order to react to it.

Children are conscious, self-conscious, very aware of their social environment, less articulate than many adults, perhaps, but, in a word, aware. People, including children are agents, they act, as the philosophers say, under descriptions. The courses of action they choose, and indeed their ways of being, are by no means independent of the available descriptions under which they may act.

However, children, he claims, are different to non-aware entities such as quarks, which he labels *indifferent kinds*. Whether we call a quark a quark or some other name makes no difference to the quark. Hacking himself is never explicit about whether other animals should be considered interactive or indifferent kinds, so the question becomes whether animals are more similar, in terms of the criteria posed for interactive and indifferent kinds, to children or to quarks. One could start by considering one of the main ways in which humans come into contact with other animals on a daily basis: through the consumption of their flesh. Which animals we label 'edible', or in some cultures 'halal', impacts on the distribution, breeding and behaviour of those animals. Bogen (1988) further gives the example of labelling a drug such as marijuana illegal. This has a direct feedback effect on the marijuana, because it is increasingly grown secretly indoors, thus altering the physical appearance of the plant itself. Consider another example: bacteria or cancer. Hacking (1999:166) objects to the description of bacteria and cancer as interactive kinds because “[w]hat

happens to tuberculosis bacilli depends on whether or not we poison them with BCG vaccine, but it does not depend upon how we describe them. Of course we poison them with a certain vaccine in part because we describe them in certain ways, but it is the vaccine that kills, not our words.” To return to the edible animals example, the impact on those animals cannot just be a result of what activity is called for by our classification of them but should, according to Hacking, result from the classification, the idea, itself. But returning to the dyslexia example above, the power of the concept surely resides in its dissemination and use. It is what we *do* with the label and how society responds to it that lends it meaning and sets the looping effects in motion. Cooper (2004:79) dismisses the idea that “being affected by ideas is of greater metaphysical significance than being affected by, say, antibiotics”, in the case of bacteria. Cooper (2004:79) further recalls Hacking's suggestion that “feedback caused by the subject's awareness of being classified is important because it results in feedback occurring at a faster rate than that which affects natural [indifferent] kinds”. When challenged further on the looping effect in the context of animals, Hacking (1992:190) contests that it takes place “not at the level of individuals but through a great many generations”. The looping effect, in other words, impacts upon the evolution of the species rather than the development of the individual animal from birth into adulthood. However, animals brought into the home and classified as 'pet' as opposed to 'wild animal' will in time mould their behaviour to human expectations of what is acceptable behaviour for an animal in the home. A fox rescued as a cub and kept as a pet will always exhibit certain species-specific traits but will adapt and learn to fit in with human expectation. Whether or not the pet fox becomes *aware* of the label 'pet' or the fact that it is being labelled is less important than the fact that the fox becomes aware of what the human, who *is* aware of the label, expects. The human who classifies the fox as a pet may choose to instigate a programme of reward-based training to teach the fox about these expectations. If we were to attempt to domesticate the fox as a species, we would do so at the level of phylogeny (over the generations), without foxes needing to be aware that this process is taking place, but that is not to say that change as the result of labelling cannot take place on an ontogenetic level.

What matters, according to Douglas (1986:101) is that “[i]n the same way as sexual perverts, hysterics, or depressive manics, living creatures interacting with humans transform themselves to adapt themselves to the new system represented by the label”. Awareness is not really a defining feature of interactive kinds. Correspondingly, awareness of a pejorative label in the moral panic context is not itself the trigger for deviance amplification. Rather, the expectations, institutional practices and remedies, and the social ostracism that can result from the label are what trigger the folk devil to respond in some way. This also relates to an oft-misunderstood feature of social constructionism. Defining child abuse as socially constructed, for example, is not an intellectual way of saying that child abuse is in some way imaginary or not real. It is also not a way of saying that the effect of the label comes from the label itself. Rather, it comes from its institutional and social milieu. It is not the representation in itself that matters but rather what we go on to do in response to that representation.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the background to the theory of moral panic, discussed the models proposed by diverse theorists and reflected on some of the main criticisms levelled against this school of thought. It concluded with a brief discussion of the implications of bringing animals in as victims or agents of transgression, a theme that will be explored in greater depth in later chapters. We have seen that moral panics are usually unintentional developments and volatile manifestations of ongoing processes of moral regulation, although they may also be deployed in the service of particular groups or ideologies. Although “differences have existed concerning what constitutes a moral panic, the boundaries of the term 'moral' in this context, and what should be understood by the term 'panic'” (David, Rohloff, Petley and Hughes 2011:216) and the scope of the concept has shifted to respond to and incorporate changes of a social and theoretical nature, what remains is “a critical social science approach to challenging power, a humanist orientation to the co-construction of social relations through meaningful interaction, an interventionist approach to changing rather than simply describing social reality, and a qualitative interest in cultural interpretation” (David et al. 2011:227).

The remainder of this thesis will consider the media-driven social anxiety surrounding urban foxes as an example of moral panic. To determine the nature of the urban fox moral panic and examine the remedies that have been proposed to rid urban areas of the purported threat, I will contextualise and critically evaluate the claims that have been made in the media. To examine the definitional processes involved in the construction of the threat and the conditions that have given rise to it I will apply a form of Critical Discourse Analysis, outlined in the following chapter, to the claims made in a comprehensive sample of British print news and broadcast media. The following chapter will also analyse the role of the media in the generation of moral panic.

I adopt neither a processual nor an attributional model but incorporate aspects of both Cohen and Goode and Ben-Yehuda's theoretical frameworks, drawing more closely from the model proposed by Maneri (2013). The theme of transgression also calls for a greater appreciation of the significance of space, both physical and metaphorical, in the analysis of social problems construction, which is reflected by a greater reliance on geographical material in the final chapters. My aim is to use moral panic theory to reflect on the particular case of urban fox attacks, which will also enable me to illustrate and comment on processes of moral panic in general and return to some of the complexities and challenges identified in this chapter. This iterative move between theoretical and empirical analysis is key to developing the moral panic concept (Critcher 2011). Further to Cohen's (2002) recent emphasis on the growing importance of social movements, folk devil 'advocates' and identity politics, the final substantive chapter of the thesis focuses on the role of the urban fox moral panic in the contemporary campaign surrounding foxhunting (and vice versa).

CHAPTER 4. Critical Discourse Analysis, Animals and Media Texts

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Moral panic and the media

4.3 Language and the human/animal binary

4.3.1 Defining 'Discourse'

4.4 Critical Discourse Analysis

4.4.1 CDA and corpus linguistics

4.5 Sampling and methodology

4.6 Conclusion

4.1 Introduction

We react to an episode of, say, sexual deviance, drugtaking or violence in terms of our information about that particular class of phenomenon (how typical it is), our tolerance level for that type of behaviour and our direct experience – which in a segregated urban society is often nil. (Cohen 2002:8)

Where people have no direct experience to inform their understanding of social problems and risks, they are reliant on either informal networks or the media to guide them, and even where direct experience exists, their perception is influenced by the interpretive frameworks of others. This is particularly relevant for human/animal relations, for in a world where many animal species are variously discouraged from occupying ostensibly human spaces, “human understanding of animals is shaped by representations rather than direct experience” (Baker 1993:1).

As outlined in chapter 3, all models of moral panic have a particular interest in the role of language, discourse and the media, and the relationship between discourse and social practice. In the attributional model advocated by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) the emphasis is on the rhetoric and styles of argument employed by claims-makers, whereas Cohen's (1972) processual model is interested, at a more macro-level, in the ideological discourses that surface in the construction of a moral panic, and Hall et al. (1978) add an appreciation of

the ways in which the media are implicated in the discursive reproduction of dominant ideologies and power structures. Moral panics themselves can be considered discursive technologies or forms of discourse, according to theorists who have considered the potential for deepening moral panic theory by drawing on theoretical developments in the field of discourse studies (Thompson 1998). Johnson (1999:26) emphasises that “moral panics are most likely to flourish in situations where perceived 'problems' can be mapped onto already-existing world-views, and there are many ways in which the insights afforded by discourse analysis can further our understanding of such processes”. She proposes that moral panic theory would benefit from incorporating detailed analyses of the texts through which they are constructed and which contribute to the signification spirals described by Hall et al. (1978). Theoretical contributions from discourse theory, including a focus on intertextuality and framing and a toolbox for textual analysis, enable a potentially richer understanding of the relationship between folk devils, moral entrepreneurs, the control culture, the media and social change (Thompson 1998).

This chapter begins with an exposition of the role of the media in the generation of moral panic, followed by a consideration of the role of language in social and cultural change. Language use and language possession are also examined for their significance in reinforcing and challenging the human/animal binary. I consider common critiques of studies that focus on representation and reflect on their implications for our appreciation of the materiality and agency of animals. The second half of the chapter outlines the theory and method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which usefully combines a micro focus on text with a more macro focus on social action to illustrate the relationship between society and discourse. Epistemological and methodological insights from CDA, combined with corpus analysis tools and a focus on framing, have the potential to benefit moral panic studies where a choice of micro- or macro-level focus would otherwise limit analysis. I explain the role these methods will play in my analysis of news media texts and outline the specific tools used. The form of CDA advocated here necessitates a multi-level, multidisciplinary approach to the study of news discourse and its role in the urban fox moral panic and experiments with a variety of qualitative and quantitative techniques.

4.2 Moral panic and the media

The media consist of a system of signs that are coded in particular ways and lend coherence to text and image. They are “the intervening substance through which impressions are conveyed to the senses” (Edwards and Cromwell 2006:1) and have great symbolic power. They play a crucial role in priming debate, focusing public awareness, setting the agenda and shaping public opinion, and thus exist in a dialectical relationship with social order and change (Tulloch and Zinn 2011). The media, according to Thompson (1998:246), have the “capacity to intervene in the course of events and shape their outcome, as well as the capacity to influence the actions and beliefs of others, by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms”. For the public, “news reports as resources serve to set emotional tones for the rhythms of life and reminders of ideals of the order and disorder that threaten peaceful neighborhoods and the cosmologies of 'normal order'”, and for the analyst “news reports as topics provide a window into organizational frameworks of reality maintenance and their relevance for broader societal definitions of situations, courses of action, and assessments of a lifeworld” (Altheide and Michalowski 1999:475).

Cohen was the first to establish the importance of the media to moral panic and acknowledged that they “have long operated as agents of moral indignation in their own right: even if they are not self-consciously engaged in crusading or muck-raking, their very reporting of certain 'facts' can be sufficient to generate concern, anxiety, indignation or panic” (2002:8). Cohen's account of media reporting on the Mods and Rockers argued that it displayed features of exaggeration and distortion, prediction, and symbolisation. The latter occurs when “a word (Mod) becomes symbolic of a certain status (delinquent or deviant); objects (hairstyle, clothing) symbolise the word; the objects themselves become symbolic of the status and the emotions attached to the status” (Cohen 2002:27). The media play a crucial role in the discursive construction of moral panic during what Cohen termed the Inventory stage by generating processed or coded images of deviants and their behaviours. Newspaper reports of the Mods and Rockers exaggerated their violent behaviour and reinforced their sense of identity, as well as mobilising public

opinion to support greater police powers and severe punishments for delinquent behaviour. Cohen's account thus suggests that moral panic originates with the media and much of his study was “devoted to understanding the role of the mass media in creating moral panics and folk devils” (Cohen 1972:17).

Hall et al.'s (1978) analysis of the mugging panic, on the other hand, described the process starting with the judiciary and the police, whose testimony was taken up and acted upon by the media. The media are not usually primary definers of deviance but rather secondary definers who translate official statements into public idiom, adding commentary and interpretation that would fit the cultural maps and models of their target audience. According to Hall et al., violence and deviance are exaggerated and over-represented to justify the elite view and defend the proportionality of their response, which by way of the public idiom also *appears* to represent public opinion. They argued that the media have a tendency to rely heavily on the ideologies of the elite and of authoritative institutions, and that they are therefore structurally inclined to reproduce their definitions of deviance. In other words, primary definitions are transformed into public idiom which is 'inflected' with the hegemonic agenda (see section 3.4 on the concept of 'hegemony'). “This initial framework”, they say, “then provides criteria by which all subsequent contributions are labelled as 'relevant' to the debate, or 'irrelevant' – beside the point. Contributions which stray from this framework are exposed to the charge that they are 'not addressing the problem'” (1978:59). The discursive frames of the powerful are thus naturalised, objectivised and given an air of public consensus. Hall et al. (1978:75–6, emphasis in original) conclude that “the relations between primary definers and the media serve, at one and the same time, to define 'mugging' as a *public issue*, as a matter of *public concern*, and to effect an ideological closure of the topic.” The media may also act as primary definers and moral entrepreneurs in their own right, identifying issues and putting pressure on public officials to act.

In both cases, newspapers in particular fomented fears and created consensus for the changes in policing that would lead to the processing of more offenders, giving rise to signification spirals and deviance amplification. In other words, moral panics are forms of discourse that define how particular issues are discussed and perceived, and consequently what remedial actions are taken.

Which media reports gain traction and come to shape public perception is largely determined by their cultural fitness and the manner in which they appeal to our values and fears. Many in turn serve as negative identification models, reinforcing what are socially acceptable identities and behaviours. Howarth (2013:683) proposes that “[i]n making sense of these, journalists draw on wider social debates to construct their own meanings, and in so doing they not only take a position in debates and in relation to events, but they also have the potential to shape these and with it social change”.

In the context of social problems and moral panic, the media thus have the power to “[b]aptize transgression” (McRobbie and Thornton 1995:565), “fan public indignation” (Young 1971a:37), and in some cases play an active role in creating or amplifying deviant or criminal behaviour. Young (2011:249) summarises the roles played by the media in the generation of contemporary moral panics as follows:

[F]irstly in rapidly propagating stereotypical images of deviance; secondly in creating rising spirals of alarm; thirdly in propelling the process of deviancy amplification, whereby the deviance of the group or individual was steadily ratcheted upwards giving rise, in some cases, to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Whereas both Cohen and Hall et al. maintain the centrality of the media as important actors in the moral panic, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) have a tendency to underestimate and under-represent their role, treating the media as mere channels for information transmission but not as actors in their own right. This, according to Critcher (2003), distinguishes the British from the American tradition of moral panic theory. A common criticism of some social constructionism is that it demonstrates “little recognition that the mass media may themselves transform information and affect the deviance of people or groups” (Shoemaker, Chang and Brendlinger 1987:353). Maneri (2013:189) notes that “[n]ot enough studies in this field have engaged with the way journalists actually work, and almost none has analyzed the symbolic material produced in the process using the tools provided by the disciplines that deal with its very substance, that is, language”. He proposes that a media text-based study of moral panics would benefit from a detailed analysis of news coverage

of a particular issue, event or series of events over the course of a moral panic. Maneri used news media coverage from 1997 of sexual assaults in two separate Italian towns to distinguish a new set of five stages in the resulting media-driven moral panics: *Warning*, *Impact*, *Propagation*, *Reaction* and *Latency*. The first of these stages, *Warning*, represents the period prior to the occurrence of key events, where normal journalistic norms apply. Smaller episodes may generate initial media attention and sensitise journalists to a particular issue, although this need not always be the case. Indeed, the *Warning* stage is not always evident or distinguishable in all moral panics. The second stage, *Impact*, occurs when disproportionately high levels of news coverage (in comparison to routine journalistic norms) follow a key event, such as, in the case of the urban fox moral panic, a fox attack on a child (see chapter 5). Coverage is likely to reach its highest point in the *Impact* stage, with most major newspapers covering the story on a particular day. The *Impact* stage is also the point at which an initial news theme is established, which can be summarised by a series of key facts relating to the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where* and *how* of the event. This stage is followed by *Propagation* where the topics and frames used to describe folk devils and victims are developed and commentators explain and evaluate the incident(s). As a result of developments during this stage, events that previously would not have been considered by the mainstream media to be newsworthy are given greater attention. In other words, the threshold for news coverage of a particular issue or event is lowered, which results in a rise in the number of news articles on a particular theme and may set in motion the process of deviance amplification (see chapter 8 for more on news thresholds). It is not only the frequency of news coverage which changes, but also the nature of it. New instances that on their own might not have attracted national attention are connected to earlier events and portrayed as additional examples of a continuing emergency. These incidents may be distorted to fit the news theme established earlier or the news theme may be adapted to enable their inclusion. The news theme therefore plays a crucial role in the framing of initial and subsequent events. The *Propagation* stage, according to Maneri, is key to giving the impression that there is an escalation in the frequency or severity of an issue or series of events.

The fourth stage, *Reaction*, usually overlaps with the *Propagation* stage but is different in quality and voice. *Reaction* is composed of statements from moral entrepreneurs such as politicians and social movement actors, as well as experts and law enforcement professionals, who offer diagnoses or prognoses and propose solutions. Instead of news facts relating to the *who, what, when, where, why* and *how* of the story, statements in the *Reaction* stage usually address the *what next*. During both *Propagation* and *Reaction* interpretations are offered and links to wider social issues are made. The basic frames established in each of these stages may themselves meet with resistance from actors who seek to re-frame the issue entirely. *Reaction*, according to Maneri, is key to deciding the trajectory of the moral panic. New evidence or authoritative perspectives that dismiss earlier claims may put an end to the moral panic altogether. Alternatively, various members of the control culture may respond with words or actions that are aimed at assuaging people's fears or resolving the issue. Writing about a moral panic surrounding sexual assaults in Italy, Maneri (2013:182) emphasises that “[i]t is possible to 'do things with words' (Austin 1975), but it is also possible to 'say things with acts': one thousand policemen on the beach probably will not prevent other sexual assaults but will surely make clear 'who' is the problem and that something 'is being done'”.

The final stage in the moral panic is the *Latency* stage, which sees coverage returning to levels comparable to pre-*Impact* levels, either because the moral panic has been defused by counter-evidence or other convincing viewpoints, or because a lack of new incidents makes it difficult to sustain. The media themselves may be at the receiving end of criticism for their part in whipping-up a panic, as we will see in chapters 6 and 7.

In addition to an understanding of the stages of moral panics in the media, Tulloch and Zinn (2011) have argued that sociologists interested in the construction of social problems in general would benefit from a better understanding of media logic, news values and the structural characteristics of the modern corporate media to appreciate how news is generated and how exaggeration and other features of moral panic may arise. Chapter 8 deals in depth with the characteristics of the news media and how certain features are conducive to moral panics in general and the urban fox moral panic in particular.

Cornwell and Linders (2002), de Young (2004), McRobbie and Thornton (1995) and Miller and Kitzinger (1998), convincingly contend that moral panic theorists often take for granted that the media audience are passive recipients of claims and images of deviance, rather than acting upon and interacting with media messages. Tester (1994) questions whether it is appropriate to assume that evidence of a moral panic in the media translates into real social anxiety: that there is a straightforward relationship between media and public opinion. Best (2011:41) also notes that “[i]mplicit is the assumption that a wave of press coverage reflects a corresponding wave in public concern but there is rarely any supporting evidence, such as public opinion polls, to document shifts in public opinion, let alone in the level of panicky behaviour”. It is assumed, more often than it is demonstrated, that media representations of particular events or issues, with claims relating to severity, frequency, intentionality and blame, cause the public to perceive an issue in a certain way. Moral panic studies often employ indirect indicators of concern and are very focused on media content, which is a dubious surrogate for public alarm (Thompson 1998). A text-based micro-analysis of media content is insufficient for an examination of the correspondence between media-implied levels of concern and actual public opinion.

On the one hand, this failure to empirically demonstrate that there is genuine public alarm may be due to the fact that it is difficult to measure a change in public perception, never mind infer that change is due to media representation. Public opinion data for the period prior to the outbreak of a panic may be inadequate, inaccurate or simply non-existent. Concern and consensus, both important features of moral panics, according to the models described in chapter 3, may be difficult to identify on the basis of an analysis of media texts alone, and the attribution of concern to the coverage of an event or issue in the media may be even harder.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that in Hall et al.'s (1978) model Cohen's (1972) emphasis on consensus had given way to an emphasis on the mobilisation of consent. It is unlikely that any public reaction to issues at the heart of modern-day moral panics exhibit the kind of widespread agreement and homogeneity that consensus implies. McRobbie and Thornton (1995) have

highlighted that in contemporary 'polyphonic' societies there is arguably greater scope for pressure groups, folk devils and their representatives to launch counter-claims and undermine the appearance of a social consensus. However, regardless of the levels of public consensus and concern, diverse actors remain reliant on the rhetoric of concern to generate the consent needed to put in place measures ostensibly aimed at addressing the problem. The rhetoric of concern functions as a simulacrum of public opinion, which can be used to legitimate drastic measures that might otherwise be met with greater resistance. Whereas concern is listed as one of the defining attributes of moral panics by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009), Maneri (2013:185) insists that "concern should not be considered a social phenomenon, an ingredient of moral panic (...), but as activity (of concerned claims makers) and as a topic of media discourse". Maneri proposes that more important than ascertaining the correspondence between media representations of public concern and empirically observable public opinion is to illustrate how the media mobilise the rhetoric of concern and what effect this has on the control culture and on the material lives of folk devils. Correspondence between media-implied levels of concern and actual concern is not necessary for a moral panic to be effective in prompting a restoration of order through punitive measures. Critcher (2003:137) agrees that "[i]n moral panics support from the public is a bonus not a necessity. In any case, it can be constructed, largely by the media." References to public opinion and public concern in the media can have an impact on politicians and administrators and can prompt them to respond, whether the level of concern reported in the media mirrors the actual level of public concern or not.

The diversification of media markets is often used to call into question the supposed hegemonic relations that exist between the media, law enforcement, the state and other powerful moral entrepreneurs. McRobbie and Thornton (1995) argue that moral panic theorists must attend to the ways in which a more diversified media and greater social leverage of folk devils to launch counter-claims have altered the role of the media in moral panics and the nature of moral panics themselves. Folk devils, particularly since the advent of the internet and social media, are not all voiceless and incapable of contesting the dominant framework. McRobbie and Thornton (1995:567) highlight that "[p]ressure groups have, among other things, strongly contested the vocalicity of

the traditional moral guardians; and commercial interests have planted the seeds, and courted discourses, of moral panic in seeking to gain the favourable attention of youthful consumers". This dimension of the moral panic becomes particularly interesting in the context of moral panics centred around a non-human folk devil: who can be said to 'speak for' animals and (how) can they speak for themselves? To begin to answer this question, it is important to consider the wider consequences of representations of animals for human/animal relations, particularly in the context of debates surrounding who 'speaks for' animals.

4.3 Language and the human/animal binary

The media play a key role in the construction of ideas about nature and animals (Phillips, Fish and Agg 2001). Animals are popular subjects and objects in the media; "animals sell papers" (Rollin 2008:xvi). Their portrayal can have a real material impact on their lives by encouraging attitudes and actions towards them. Any analysis of the role played by the media in the generation of a moral panic must pay close attention to the linguistic and discursive tools they utilise and their social effects. The linguistic turn in the social sciences paved the way for a greater appreciation of the social functioning of language, particularly its role in the maintenance of and challenge to morality, power and social identity. Language, as I explain in this chapter, exists in a dialectical relation with culture and social structure and thus is not only an important tool in the maintenance of social order but also in the transformation of social structures and hence must be grappled with by those who promote change. The "sociological and ideological 'work' that language does [...] is routinely 'overlooked'" according to Fairclough (1992:211). He credits Althusser and other structuralist philosophers for their important contributions to our understanding of the role of language in shaping and reproducing power relations but argues that they pay insufficient attention to the transformative potential of language use. The following section therefore delves into the various effects and potentials of language and discourse in the context of human/animal relations and examines the challenges and consequences of focusing on human representations of other animals.

The words 'human' and 'animal' provide a logical starting point. An analysis of these two words yields more than just insights into animal representations and their impacts on our treatment of animals, but also demonstrates how humans stand in relation to otherness and difference in general (Wolfe 2003). Humans organise their world by way of classificatory systems. Human/animal relationships are characterised by a basic dualism where the great diversity of other-than-human life is collapsed into one catch-all term (animal), which strictly speaking also contains the very category it is set in opposition to (humans being just one species of animal). However, as Grosz (1989:xvi) explains, binaries give the impression of being “not only mutually exclusive, but also mutually exhaustive”. Adams (1993:2) adds that “[d]ualisms represent dichotomy rather than continuity, enacting exclusion rather than inclusion [...] [and] the second part of the dualism is not only subordinate but in service to the first”.

Haraway (1991), Latour (1993), and Ingold (1988, 1995a) famously historicise the human/animal dualism, examining how society and nature, human and animal, have been purified into “distinct ontological zones” (Latour 1993:10). Throughout history, figures have emerged that have threatened to destabilise the human/animal binary, one notable case being the discovery of the Piltdown Man in 1912. Although later revealed as an elaborate paleoanthropological hoax, Piltdown Man's bone fragments were initially taken as evidence of the existence of an early human that straddled the boundary between 'man' and 'animal'. The binary itself remained unscathed, although at the time some interpreted it as a transition to a 'trinary' between white European/Piltdown and non-white 'savage'/animal (Goulden 2009).

A more modern challenge to the human/animal binary is the Great Ape Project, which advocates granting restricted 'human rights' to primates on account of their biological similarity to humans. A lot of intellectual work has gone into challenging the view that humans have a monopoly on language and tool use, intentionality, and self-awareness (see Cavalieri and Singer 1993, DeGrazia 1996). Others have emphasised the primary importance, in terms of assigning moral value more generally, of the capacity to suffer and experience emotions such as joy and fear (Goodall 1971, Singer 1975, Balcombe 2006). Chimpanzees are boundary-straddling figures because they are more closely

related to humans than they are to other apes (Chimpanzee Sequencing and Analysis Consortium 2005). The proponents of the project argue that, if granted, these rights would lead to a destabilisation of the human/animal binary and an eventual extension of rights to most other animals if those characteristics that are thought to define the human species are found beyond the species barrier (Cavalieri and Singer 1993, Wolfe 2003). However, critics have argued that this attempt at deconstructing the human/animal binary only reconstructs the binary along different lines (Peterson 2009). Where the essence 'animal' is rendered 'like' the human through a comparison of capacities and characteristics, the human remains the benchmark for moral value and eligibility for rights. According to these critics, the focus on biological or ethological similarity therefore remains a dubious means of escaping this dyad, and any truly liberatory project must focus not on bringing animals 'inside' through moral extensionism on account of their similarity, but on a greater valuing of difference.

Hall et al. (1978) assert that meaning, which forms the basis of culture, is relational and dependent on difference. 'Human' is defined in opposition to 'animal', and human subjectivity and sense of self arise through an awareness of what is 'other'. Otherness exists in a complex relationship with identity, and is both necessary for the development of the self and a threat to it. Anderson (1997) sought to trace the lineage of contemporary animal exploitation back to the origins of domestication and writes about how the animal and the wild came to symbolise the internal human animal that required taming. He highlights how ideas about human uniqueness, civilisation and savagery have shifted over the centuries, and how spatial segregation, the taming of nature and the bringing of animals into the home have given rise to and perpetuated particular relationships between humans and other animals and between particular human social groups and others. The domestication of the human animal and the wild animal became a mark of progress and civilisation, setting a precedent and providing justification for the violence entailed by the twin projects of domestication and civilisation. Domestication and wildness were powerful metaphors in the distinction between indigenous peoples around the world and the 'civilised' people of the West. A common theme was the representation of indigenous peoples as savages who had not successfully transcended their

internal animality. They were portrayed as driven by instinct and their tools, in contrast to the more sophisticated tools developed by civilised Westerners, did not qualify as 'technology' (Ingold 1995b). The language of human/animal difference, particularly with regard to the notions of wildness, instinct and base animality, thus underlies many other binaries and provides the categories into which women, people of colour and other subjugated groups have historically been excluded on account of their purported similarity to 'brute beasts'. Spivak (in Osborne 1991:229) explains that this is "why all of these projects (...) seemed to be alright; because, after all, these people had not graduated into humanhood, as it were". It is notable that many racist slurs, sexist insults and terms of abuse stem from the vocabulary we use to refer to other animals, including words such as 'bitch', 'pig', 'monkey', 'foxy' and the word 'animal' itself, used to evoke an image of the sub-human, uncivilised and immoral (see Leach 1964). Dunayer (1995, 2001), Baker (1975) and Adams (1990) comprehensively demonstrate how the use of animal metaphors to describe humans, particularly women, illustrates the negative associations we have of these animal terms.

Human identity-making is therefore bound up with our perceptions of the civil versus the wild, culture versus nature. Keith Thomas (1983) emphasises the importance of binaries for the process of self-definition and references other anthropologists, such as Mary Douglas and Raymond Firth, on the role that animal symbolism plays in the derogation of other humans considered outsiders. Douglas (1975:289) summarises that "in each constructed world of nature, the contrast between man and not-man provides an analogy for the contrast between the member of the human community and the outsider".

Western culture is founded on a set of discourses and relations between humans and other animals that have been labelled 'speciesist', where speciesism is defined as "a prejudice or bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species" (Singer 1975:7) which results in the "failure, in attitude or practice, to accord any nonhuman being equal consideration and respect" (Dunayer 2004:5). Conflating the innate with the animal, as the human/animal binary and the discourse of animality do, has the effect of glossing over lines of continuity between humans and animals and denying other animals a cultural life (Haraway 1989). The

figure of the Animal is deployed in a manner which regulates human behaviour towards human as well as non-human animals. Myths are constructed around the Animal (Barthes 1957) which reflect and naturalise human biases, inscribe prejudices and permit the abjection of animals. The discourse of species, which is implicated in the false dichotomy between humans and all other animals, is at the heart of the institution of speciesism. It is the product of humanism which reduces intra- and inter-specific diversity to the singularity of species with the effect of allowing humans to devalue individual animals.

This has the effect of generating the conditions for a particular ethics of encounter where the primary ethical unit is the species or population, rather than the individual corporeal being. An example of such an encounter is the shooting of an animal whose species is classed as 'pest' or 'vermin'. The shooter in the role of pest controller engages in an ethical encounter with the species or population that the individual animal is a member of, rather than with the animal itself in a way that's rarely done with human individuals vis-à-vis species; or rather when it is, it is denounced as genocide. It is when animals as individuals break free from the confines of their species and the expectations we have for their species that we might find ourselves in a different ethics of encounter.

Some of the most famous animal media stories involve individual animals that have, in some way or other, withstood human persecution or simply outwitted humans. In 1998, Butch and Sundance ('the Tamworth Two'), two porcine siblings that escaped on the way to the abattoir and managed to evade their captors for over a week, became a media sensation and the subjects of a campaign to spare them when they were eventually recaptured (Paraventi 2001). They were granted an individuality that lifted them out of their status as 'livestock' and resulted in their retirement to an animal sanctuary. Phoenix the calf, a young bovine 'symbol of hope' during the 2001 foot-and-mouth outbreak was similarly saved after a campaign in the *Daily Mirror* called for her to be spared (*The Observer* 29/04/2001). What these and similar animal news stories had in common was that "the meanings attributed to each of the individuated and named animals called on a rich and complex corpus of cultural reference points to affirm their moral worth" (Molloy 2011:6). In other words, the animals

were made relatable-to and worthy of sympathy. Emphasis was put on their age and innocence, they were given names, and newspaper articles used familiar narrative conventions and intertextual references to generate a particular audience response. The images that accompanied these articles themselves were decontextualised with the effect of lifting the animals out of their usual environments (the farm or the slaughterhouse) and into a less 'charged' space. Pictures were often taken with the animals looking straight at the camera, communicating directly with the reader. This was particularly remarkable because animals destined for human consumption are not usually anthropomorphised and individuated (Lerner and Kalof 1999). However, their portrayal in this way enabled audience members to feel compassion and prompted them to call for the animals to be spared without requiring them to re-examine their own practices of animal consumption.

The idea that humans are in some fundamental way different in characteristics and ethical considerability from other animals is discursively naturalised (Stibbe 2006). In the context of animal industries, Goatley (2002, 2006), Jepson (2008) and Stibbe (2001) demonstrate how language is value-laden and can have the dual effect of being conducive to concealing other animals' suffering and eliminating consideration for it. This has important ideological effects because even though only a minuscule proportion of the human population are directly involved in animal killing, it requires the tacit consent of the majority. Language and discourse play a key role in the manufacturing of consent. Agnew (1998) describes how the physical isolation of humans from the animal suffering perpetrated by the livestock industry is compounded by forms of symbolic isolation, including the ways in which animal flesh is packaged and displayed and the language used to describe it. He applies the theory of moral disengagement (Bandura 1999) to this context and examines various linguistic mechanisms for the denial²⁰ and justification of animal use and suffering, including deindividuation, euphemistic labelling, selective inattention, distortion, displacement and diffusion of responsibility. Euphemisms are particularly common. Labelling animal flesh 'pork' or 'ham' and using words such as 'animal housing' instead of 'cage', and 'processing' and 'meat production' instead of

²⁰ In his later work, Cohen (2001) also wrote extensively about language and mechanisms of denial.

'slaughter', according to him, facilitates detachment. Mitchell's (2006, 2011) analysis of livestock industry publications further documents a move towards the use of the word 'harvest', which arguably renders animals more like plants. Stibbe (2003:385), in his examination of pork industry technical language, concurs that industry jargon renders pigs as inanimate objects and proposes that "language is as important as the technology because language plays a central role in the design, construction and everyday operation of the farm". Linguistic devices such as metonymy ('broilers' and 'layers') are rife in animal industries and contribute to the linguistic reification of animals as production machines (Mitchell 2011).

Human/animal difference is further reinforced in mainstream English language through the use of different words to denote the same physical characteristics or behaviours, depending on whether they are performed by animals or humans, such as 'gestation' in place of 'pregnancy' and 'feeding' in place of 'eating' (Blackwell 2002). Where ostensibly 'human' words are used in the animal context, they are often enclosed in scare-quotes or given the addition of a modal verb such as 'may'. To do otherwise in a formal context is liable to be dismissed as dangerous anthropomorphism. Pejorative terms to describe animals as 'infesting' rather than 'inhabiting' their environment furthermore have the effect of rendering their presence illegitimate and making them more killable. Even grammar and morphology are important. Mass nouns such as 'game' or 'quarry' mask the identity and number of hunted animals, and give the impression that being hunted is these animals' natural purpose.

Although they emerge out of and reflect struggles over morality, these linguistic conventions contribute to the process of 'adiaphorisation', whereby some of our ways of relating to other animals become so naturalised that they are exempted from the need for moral evaluation (Wolch and Emel 1998). Some language-centred attempts to challenge speciesism and the human/animal binary, to render animals ethically visible and bring about change in the material relations between humans and other animals, have therefore focused on the language used to describe and justify such relations, while others have questioned whether it is language possession itself that is a distinctly human quality with particular moral value. Having as their constituency a group lacking what

humans would refer to as a 'voice', those who campaign for different ways of living with and alongside other animals acknowledge the role that human representations of other animals play in perpetuating the status quo and seek to change them. Some ecofeminist scholars have attempted to construct theoretical discourses centred around the re-representation of animals, a strategy sometimes labelled 'verbal activism'. Adams (1990), Dunayer (1995, 2001) and Jepson (2008) have campaigned for the phasing out of words that encode ostensibly exploitative meanings. However, when one takes the word 'animal' itself, other available labels for the category of 'all animals that are not human' also contain the negative dualistic terms 'non' (as in 'non-human animal') or 'other' (as in 'other animal' or 'other-than-human animal'), which only serve to entrench the perceived dominant status of the human animal over all others. In an attempt to bridge the lexical gap between humans and animals and highlight the importance of verbal associations, Kemmerer (2006) proposes the word 'anymal' for all species that are not human. Derrida (2008) alternatively coined the term 'animot', which in his opinion escapes the conception of all animals in the general singular ('the Animal') and instead emphasises their multiplicity and singularity.

Adams's (1990) solution to the problem of the 'absent referent', whereby the word 'meat' for example is stripped of its referent point, is to reinstate animals through ostensibly more 'honest' and 'accurate' linguistic and pictorial representation. There are several problems with this approach and with verbal activism in general, which bear some similarity to the earlier criticisms levelled at moral panic theory (see chapter 3). Baker (1993:5) argues that "it seems doubtful that the rallying-call for the liberation of language in this particular way will prove a sturdy enough proposal to achieve acceptance in a popular context; and without the prospect of its acceptance the call would do little more than allow both writer and readers to feel unjustifiably self-righteous". Substituting one word for another may well cause people to reflect on the relationship between signifier and signified, but it does not address the other semiological system at work in the subjugation of animals: the myth of human superiority over animal life itself (Barthes 1957). The first criticism of verbal activism therefore is that it assumes a straightforward, oversimplified and linear relationship between the representation and abjection of animals. Although

there is a great deal to be gained from understanding how representation impacts upon the material relationships between humans and other animals, the relationship between representation and material effect is not linear but complex. A focus on discourse rather than a simplistic analysis of linguistic conventions can address this concern.

The second problem with analysing the cultural meanings that are 'imposed upon' animals and replacing them with purportedly more accurate representations is with the distinction between representation and 'actual reality' and the difficulty of accessing that reality, particularly when the self-identity of animals is concealed. The relation between representation and reality is the source of much academic controversy (see chapter 3). Harvey (1996) argues that it makes little sense to divide the world into discursive and extra-discursive realms. However, it is not necessary to make claims as to the 'real' animal set in opposition to the representational, symbolic and rhetorical uses of animals. Rather, the latter must be taken seriously in their own right for they have as much conceptual weight and material import as any conception we might have of the 'real' animal.

Thirdly, others critique representationalism for relegating the (animal) body and agency to the margins of inquiry (Rorty 1991:96). It could be argued that getting stuck on human intentions for and representations of other animals has the implication of denying the role that animals themselves play in performing human/animal relations. Despite the laudable aim of destabilising prevailing representations and essentialisms, a focus on the language used to describe animals risks reinstating the notions of human primacy and animal passivity, effectively excluding animals from the creative process of human/animal encounter. Humans, as the creators of language and representation, generate images of animals that are themselves voiceless and devoid of agency (Whatmore 2003). A focus on the representational dimensions of the social thus could be said to be incompatible with the aim of drawing attention to the interests and the capacity for intentionality, agency and even resistance of other animals (Wilbert 2000). In other words, not only do most human representations of other animals relegate animals to the position of 'lesser' creatures, but the social constructionist focus on discourse itself may be to the detriment of an

appreciation of the role of animal performance and agency (Haraway 1992, Whatmore 2002). An assumption that animals are “blank paper” (Tester 1991:46) upon which humans impose their own meanings itself arguably constitutes a form of anthropocentrism.

Many criticisms of social constructionism stem from around the time of the practice turn in the social sciences. Writing about the tension between social constructionist and relational or performative theories, cultural geographer Demeritt (1994:163) argued that “the metaphor of landscape as text [...] suppresses any trace of other, nonhuman actors from the production of landscape”. A move away from nature and animals as texts to be interpreted for their cultural significance to humans entails de-centring the linguistic and discursive and addressing the implicit denial of animal agency. A relational, performative view of agency rejects dualistic culture/nature and human/animal frameworks (Castree 2005) in favour of hybrid ontologies, which highlight the more-than-human and more-than-textual nature of the social world (Thrift 1999, Murdoch 1997, Latour 1993, Wolch and Emel 1998). They conceptualise agency as a product of relation, not an inherent capacity of corporeal bodies. Haraway's (1991) 'material-semiotic' ontology similarly emphasises the interplay between the discursive and agentic dimensions of the social.

Nigel Thrift (1996:7), a key proponent of non-representational theory, argues that “practices constitute our sense of the real”. However, to advocate a focus on discourse is not to set the representational over the real or the discursive over the practical/material. It is rather a recognition that what we know and understand about animals affects and is affected by our treatment of them and that this knowledge and perception is structured and shaped by human agency and culture. Knowledge is gleaned in one of two ways: symbolically or somatically. Somatic knowledge of urban foxes, based on first-hand sensory perception, is not as widespread as our symbolic knowledge of them. It is reasonable to assume that British people have encountered foxes more often in books, newspapers, television programmes etc. than in real life. Attitudes to most animals, according to Baker (1993:25) “are in large part the result of the symbolic uses to which the concept of the animal is put in popular culture”. “Culture”, he argues (1993:10), “does not allow unmediated access to animals

themselves. Our attitudes, our prejudices and indeed our sympathies are all filtered through or clogged up in this thick but transparent mesh (or mess) of history, culture, public opinion, received ideas.” Conceptualising discourse as practice demands an appreciation of the encounters humans have with real animals and how these in turn impact upon discourse. In other words, it is a combination of our constructions of foxes and our ability (or not) to experience foxes in the flesh that shapes human/wildlife connections (Matless 2000). This is not entirely contrary to Whatmore and Thorne's (1998) emphasis on wildlife as a relational and fluid achievement and is summarised by Baker's (1993:4) claim that “[c]ulture shapes our reading of animals as much as animals shape our reading of culture”. Nevertheless, Molloy (2011) and Baker (1993) both emphasise the importance of investigating what representations reveal about how we perceive and treat other animals. Discourse defines the limits of what can be said about, and hence done to, other animals, therefore directly affecting their material lives. Real animals are caught up in discourse, which shapes and is shaped by public perception and which gives rise to and legitimates particular forms of human/animal relations.

[I]nasmuch as animals are discursively constituted as 'animal' within systems of production and through webs of relations, animals are embodied material beings with interests. What is at stake then is that there is a relationship between the discursive construction of animals and the material reality of animals' lives. [...] [W]here animals are not discursively constructed as having any moral worth, they are treated accordingly as property, objects, machines and things. (Molloy 2011:9)

McNay (1994:58) contends that we must “restore discourse to its character as an event”, as a practice that shapes the very reality of which it speaks, not as something that operates on a separate dimension from other ways of engaging practically with the world. Baker (1993:xvii) clarifies that “[t]o emphasize questions of representation is not [...] to deny any particular animal's 'reality', in the sense of that animal's actual experience or circumstances. Instead, the point is to emphasize that representations have a bearing on shaping that 'reality', and that the 'reality' can be addressed only through the representations.”

Focusing on discourse as a form of practice does not deny the independent materiality of animals. Nor should it be dismissed as anthropocentric, especially since such an investigation is often motivated by a desire to contextualise and challenge impoverished discourses and prevailing human/animal relations. As I discuss in chapter 9, it is precisely when real animals exert their agency and destabilise existing categories or refuse to be categorised altogether that the cultural order is threatened. Many scholars in the newly 'animalised' disciplines of geography (see Philo and Wilbert 2000) and sociology (see Tovey 2003) have turned to a study of those animals considered 'pest' or 'vermin', for it is their agency and tendency to constitute "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966/2002:36) that is variously used to justify and challenge human supremacy. The human/animal binary is of course not the only relevant binary. The binaries of tame/wild, inside/outside, culture/nature, and urban/rural are also important to understanding how threats to the cultural order that complicate or destabilise binary categories are responded to by mechanisms (words and actions) that purify and expel those who have transgressed, in an effort to reinforce boundaries (Kristeva 1982). Candelaria (in McFarland and Hediger 2009:302) proposes that "[i]f the route to breaking through [the] 'poverty of discourse' is to see in animals more of 'what we consider valuable in ourselves [...] above all, agency,' then vermin must play an essential role, because they express an agency that is above and beyond that of other animals".

4.3.1 Defining 'discourse'

The word 'discourse' has been used in various ways by the above-mentioned scholars. Before outlining the method used in this thesis for the analysis of discourse, we need a working definition of this concept, which is used across disciplines to mean different things. In the field of linguistics, discourse is defined as "language above the sentence or above the clause" (Stubbs 1983:1) and may simply be used to refer to a sample of spoken or written text. Gee (1990) offers a distinction between discourse with a small 'd' and discourse with a capital 'D'. The former refers to instances of language use, whereas the latter describes a form of language tied to a particular context and accompanied by and suffused with a particular set of values, ideologies and consequences. To confuse matters, most theorists who broadly subscribe to Gee's definition of

Discourse don't tend to use a capital D. Foucault, whose ideas on discourse have been influential across the social sciences and humanities, himself defines discourse in a variety of ways, "treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (Mills 1997:6). To develop an alternative to structuralism and hermeneutics, Foucault sought to divert the social scientific focus to the study of discursive practice. Discourses, he proposed, are "practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972:49). Discourses function as enouncements, defining entities, subjects, objects and statements and constructing repeatable relations between them. The identity of the speaker, or discursive subject, is created and sustained through discursive practice. Meaning originates in the relation between speaker, object and audience, not purely in the speaker's own intentions. Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse thus has the effect of de-centring the subject.

Foucault's early work (1972) considered particular discourses, including medicine, psychiatry, and economics, drawing out what he perceived to be their conditions of possibility. His later work (1980) provided a greater emphasis on the relationship between power and knowledge. Power, according to Foucault, is not simply repressive but also has productive dimensions in that it produces identities through discourse. Discourses therefore are "technologies of power" and "technologies of the self" (Foucault 1980), operating through the techniques of discipline and confession. Foucault's writings on governmentality (1991) are instructive for their analysis of the relationship between various modernist discourses and institutionalised forms of power. Examining how society defines and reacts to the behaviour of criminals, sexual deviants and the mentally ill through discursive practice, Foucault demonstrated how these definitions simultaneously function to prompt the rest of the population to moderate their own behaviour. The discursive moment becomes synonymous with the exercise of power. In other words, discourse is a manifestation of the power/knowledge nexus. Knowledge and power exist in an intimate relation, where both are dependent on one another. "Discourse", Foucault (1984:110) wrote, "is not

simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.”

Foucault's main contribution to the study of discourse therefore is his appreciation of the central role that discourse plays in social practice, particularly as a battleground for the struggle over truth and power. Truth exists only in relation to prevailing 'discursive formations', defined as the systems of rules of power/knowledge that provide the conditions of possibility of particular statements in a given context and moment in time. What is known and regarded as true therefore is only so in relation to particular structures of discourse. Shapiro (1981:162) notes that “Foucault takes the language–politics connection to a higher level of abstraction, one that permits us to go beyond the linguistically reflected power exchanges between persons and groups to an analysis of the structures within which they are deployed”.

Language is not synonymous with discourse but studying the language used in particular settings or in reference to particular events is one of the primary methods of uncovering traces of discourse. Returning to the question of reality vs. representation, Macnaghten (1993:53–54) argues that “discourse theorists [...] share a rejection of realism in epistemological terms. In other words, they share an assumption that 'knowledge of' can never be knowledge of an extra-human dimension (e.g. a word of science, objective fact, etc.), as all knowledge is irretrievably connected to a reality – produced, bounded and sustained by human meanings and constructions.”

Fairclough, whose method for discourse analysis I outline next, defines discourse as written or spoken language use (1992:62) and a form of social practice. He argues for a dialectical view of discourse which emphasises that “discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped” (Fairclough and Wodak 1997:258). In other words, discourse simultaneously represents the world and constitutes it in meaning. Scientific discourses, for example, are dependent on culture/nature and human/animal binaries but they simultaneously reinforce these binaries. Language, one feature of discourse, is implicated in the perpetuation of speciesism but it is not solely the cause of it.

Discourse analysis was used by Faucher (2009) in her study of the sensationalism and over-representation of youth crime and violence in Canadian daily newspapers. By deconstructing the language used by these newspapers in their portrayals of youth, she was able to identify the media techniques used to portray youth crime as an enormous social problem, which included the use of disease metaphors and fear discourses and the reliance on binary oppositions between innocent and evil. Welch, Price and Yankey's (2002) earlier research on representations of juvenile crime in New York had uncovered a moral panic of 'wilding'. Through discourse analysis of newspapers covering the issue of 'wilding', Welch et al. identified many of the same discourse themes and techniques as Faucher (2009) did in her analysis, including discourses of animalisation and dehumanisation and the use of hyperbole to create the impression of a youth menace. Fairclough (1992:65) summarises that "[i]t is important that the relationship between discourse and social structure should be seen dialectically if we are to avoid the pitfalls of overemphasising on the one hand the social determination of discourse, and on the other hand the construction of the social in discourse. The former turns discourse into a mere reflection of a deeper social reality, the latter idealistically represents discourse as the source of the social." Analysing both the ideational and interpersonal dimensions of meaning, according to Fairclough, enables a better appreciation of the dialectic between discourse and social structure.

4.4 Critical Discourse Analysis

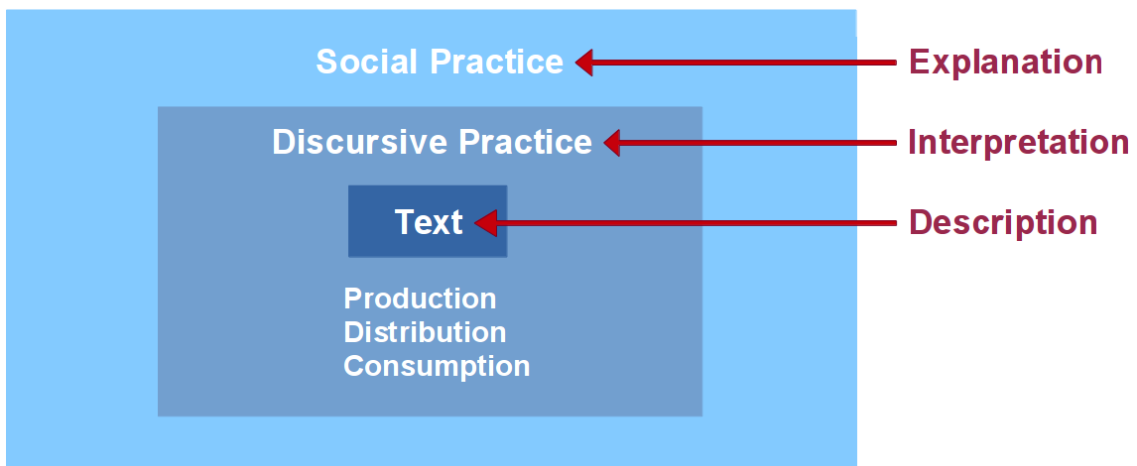
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theory and method of discourse analysis that "offers not only a description and interpretation of discourses in social context but also offers an explanation of why and how discourses work" (Rogers 2004:2). CDA is best exemplified in the works of Fairclough (1992) and Teun van Dijk (1991, 1995a and b) and is predicated on a social constructionist view of discourse, influenced by postmodern and poststructuralist contributions to discourse theory, as well as neomarxist cultural theorist (Hall 1990) insights into the role of discourse in the articulation and maintenance of particular ideological interests.

Fairclough's "social theory of discourse" (1992:62ff) draws on Foucault's theory of discourse, Kristeva's (1980) emphasis on intertextuality and Halliday's (1985) systemic-functional linguistic theory. The latter is also highly influential in the field of critical linguistics, which is concerned with the dual analysis of text and socio-political context. Early contributions to critical linguistics tended to focus at a micro-level on the lexico-grammatical elements of textual analysis, at the expense of an analysis of discursive genre, intertextuality and the interpersonal dimensions of discourse (Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew 1979). The field of linguistics in general has been criticised for giving insufficient attention to the nature of discourse as a form of social action (Potter 1997). Although insights from critical linguistics play a role in the close analysis of text in CDA, social theorists generally advocate a greater appreciation of how texts are produced, interpreted and put to use in social struggles. Macnagthen (1993:55), who examined a variety of texts to unearth the social construction of the word 'nature' and how various constructions of nature are used to legitimate and perpetuate particular social realities, argues that "what lies central to each construction is not the use of the same grammatical terms but the social relationship encapsulated by these terms, the outlook they engender, and the activities they legitimate". His version of discourse analysis instead "identifies the analytical unit at the level of social function as opposed to the level of individual grammar" (1993:55). He identified particular constructions of nature, such as 'nature as wilderness', and noted which concepts, metaphors and other figures of speech were attached to each construction, before highlighting their argumentative uses and material effects. Foucault's insights on discourse further provide an alternative to a micro-analysis of the linguistic features of text by looking at the extra-linguistic rules and conditions of possibility for particular statements in particular contexts.

Fairclough's (1992) CDA makes the case for a drawing together of both dimensions of analysis to highlight how a text-based, linguistic discourse analysis can inform an understanding of the socio-theoretical aspects of discourse and vice versa. The micro-textual elements of discourse are analysed at the same time as discourse is historically and socially contextualised and unearthed as a form of social practice and a vehicle for social change. CDA sets out to attend to the interplay between these various dimensions of discourse.

Fairclough (1995:57) explains that “[c]ritical discourse analysis of a communicative event is the analysis of relationships between three dimensions or facets of that event, which I call text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice”.

Fig.4.1 Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse (1992:73)



The text is the initial object of analysis. Discursive practice relates to the production and interpretation of text and is the dimension that “[mediates] between [...] text and sociocultural practice, in the sense that the link between the sociocultural and the textual is an indirect one, made by way of discourse practice: properties of sociocultural practice shape texts, but by way of shaping the nature of the discourse practice, i.e. the ways in which texts are produced and consumed, which is realized in the features of texts” (Fairclough 1995:59–60). The third dimension, social practice, refers to the socio-historical context and the institutional surroundings of the discursive event, which impact upon the form that the discursive practice takes.

Each of Fairclough's dimensions requires a particular type of analysis. The first is a descriptive analysis of the text(s) in question according to three 'categories of function', the “ideational, interpersonal and textual” (Fairclough 1995:58). Fairclough (1989:110–111) provides a list of linguistic elements for textual analysis, largely drawn from Halliday's (1985) systemic-functional linguistics. CDA is not a linguistic theory and does not insist on a complete list of linguistic elements for the study of text. Rather, it focuses on particular properties of text

that exhibit discursive elements of dominance. Halliday (1985) demonstrates how particular lexical and grammatical features of text function to represent the world in a particular way, construct social relations between individuals and groups and constitute conventions for certain types of media. His work is particularly informative regarding the social and ideological functions of linguistic forms. Fairclough divides his text analysis into vocabulary, grammar, text cohesion (the linking together in various ways of clauses or sentences) and text structure (the overall organisation of the text). Focusing on intertextuality and interdiscursivity further helps to illuminate a text, with the former referring to the use, whether through assimilation or contradiction, of other texts and the latter being defined as “[t]he use of elements in one discourse and social practice which carry institutional and social meanings from other discourses and social practices” (Candlin and Maley 1997:212). The combined recommendations from Halliday (1985), Fairclough (1989), Hyatt (2006), van Dijk (1991) and Potter and Wetherell (1989) are here used in the linguistic analysis of textual data, in addition to a number of corpus linguistics tools outlined below.

The text analysis stage is also the appropriate moment to operationalise concepts of news theme and frame to identify key features of the moral panic, its main actors and stakeholders and the interactions between them, and the progression of the panic through the stages described by Maneri (2013). Maneri (2013) suggests that the original news theme(s) can be identified by summarising what individual newspapers say about the participants, processes and circumstances of the event or issue at the outset. News themes and frames emerge with the selection of “some aspects of a perceived reality [to] make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman 1993:52). Discursive frames define the focus, parameter and boundary of discussions surrounding a particular topic or event, emphasising the relative importance of different aspects of a topic and tapping into a variety of discourses (Altheide 1997). Frames are defined by Gitlin (1980:7) as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse”. They are interpretive packages which give

meaning to an event or issue, not only through what is said but also through the unuttered assumptions and presuppositions they rely on (Gamson and Modigliani 1989). Frame-building occurs as a result of the interaction between the media, social elites (Gans 1979, Tuchman 1978) and social movements (Cooper 2002, Snow and Benford 1992). Frames in the news can be identified by looking at “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (Entman 1993:52). Framing devices can include, among other things, metaphors, euphemisms and images, which together with the selection of sources, quotes, and examples and the phrasing of headlines can give a quick indication of the frame(s) being constructed.

Identifying frames in a sample of texts involves inductively creating a framing typology composed of topics, common frames, their key elements and the themes and wider discourses that connect them. The above-mentioned CDA theorists further ask why certain frames gain currency and why some voices are more prominent than others. Some of the motivating questions for this linguistic and framing analysis therefore are:

- What are the key events and turning points in the moral panic?
- How are folk devils identified and constructed?
- What characteristics, behaviours and intentions are attributed to folk devils and how are their actions imbued with moral value?
- What linguistic devices are used to make these constructions more or less overt?
- Whose perspectives and voices are included and excluded?
- What specific arguments and argumentative strategies are used to lend legitimacy to a particular version of events?
- How are links established between news facts and wider social problems?
- How do news selection criteria change over time?

These various tools and questions for text analysis enable an analysis of change over time and a comparison between different texts, newspapers and newspaper genres. This forms the bulk of the analysis.

The second form of analysis, which corresponds with the discursive practice dimension of the discursive event, consists of an explanation of how news media texts come into being and are processed. A focus on the production of texts is complimented by an examination of the complex distributive nature of these texts. Although an empirical analysis of the consumption of texts is considered by Fairclough to be a part of this stage, there are a number of reasons why this thesis doesn't venture into what could be labelled the analysis of audience reception. Empirical research on information processing and media text reception has demonstrated that they are simultaneously a function of text, context and prior knowledge or attitudes with regard to the issues at hand. The media influence our perceptions and this occurs through subtle and less subtle mechanisms, including persuasion and omission. Some audience members may lack the knowledge or ability to detect these mechanisms, while others may be able to resist them due to their prior experience, knowledge or beliefs. Van Dijk (1995b:24) glosses over this inherent complexity and concludes that "all other things being equal, we must assume that the vast array of different discourse structures not only function to strategically enact, express, signal, disguise, emphasize or legitimate, social position, and hence power, of speakers, but also to control the minds of recipients in desired ways". Fairclough's solution to the question of audience reception is to look for traces or cues in the production of texts that can aid in analysing how these texts may be interpreted by their audience. Newspapers in particular are likely to frame issues in a way that is thought will resonate with their readers.

However, Schroeder (2007:81–82) criticises the assumption that discourse practices don't require independent empirical investigation and proposes that "the media text as it appears on the newspaper page, or on the TV screen, or on the website, reveals very little about the multiple discursive constraints and opportunities affecting, on the one hand, the team of people producing it in the complex division of labor of the contemporary media, and on the other hand the multiple interpretive repertoires at work when the recipients make sense of the

verbal and visual features in contexts of everyday life". He interviewed audience members and demonstrated that their perception of advertisements for example could not be assumed or understood purely on the basis of an analysis of the media texts alone. Schroeder (2007) restates Swales and Rogers' (1995) recommendation for a 'discourse ethnography' stage in CDA, which focuses on the actual production and reception of texts. This is in line with Stubbs' (1997:100) assertion that "language and thought can only be related if one has data and theory pertinent to both: otherwise the theory is circular". In other words, they propose that non-linguistic evidence of the nature of text production and reception must ideally be sought to substantiate any claims made about the relationship between text, discursive practice and social practice. For reasons explained earlier in this chapter regarding the importance, where moral panic is concerned, of the rhetoric of concern, the thesis will use secondary sources to infer the relationship between newspaper frames, reader reception and action. An empirical examination of text consumption is beyond the scope of the thesis.

The third stage of analysis is social analysis or explanation, which demonstrates how the preceding findings relate to the perpetuation or challenging of prevailing ideologies and discursive hegemonies. The object is to "trace explanatory connections between ways (normative, innovative, etc.) in which texts are put together and interpreted, how texts are produced, distributed and consumed in a wider sense, and the nature of the social practice in terms of its relation to social structures and struggles" (Fairclough 1992:72). This dimension calls for the incorporation of social-theoretical concepts, including ideology and hegemony. Fairclough here relies on an understanding of power derived from the Italian Marxist political theorist Antonio Gramsci's (1985) theory of hegemony. Hegemony is the ideological domination of particular classes or groups. It operates insidiously by promoting consensus over values and beliefs, in turn lending justification to the more coercive forces that are used to repress those who don't subordinate themselves to hegemonic rule. Much like Foucault's conception of power, hegemony is not fixed but exists in a state of 'unstable equilibrium' and thus becomes the object over which there is social struggle. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) interpret hegemonic struggle as a struggle over discourse, over the prevailing definition of what is true. Fairclough (1989, 1992) also emphasises the role of language in hegemonic struggle and in the

'naturalisation' of a particular worldview. Discursive practice, the production, distribution and reception of texts, is part of the process of hegemonic struggle and is responsible for the perpetuation or transformation of social structures and relations. According to van Dijk (1993, 1997, 2001), who has written extensively on the relationship between ideology and discourse analysis, discourses do ideological work.

The classical Marxist tradition defined ideology as the set of ideas promulgated by the ruling class, which is manifested in the false consciousness of subjugated groups. Contemporary critical theorists propose that ideology in fact suffuses everything and is deeply embedded in all elements of social systems. An ideology is a set of ideas, grounded in practice and ways of life, that structure our perception of reality and our alignment with particular norms and conventions. Ideologies act as frameworks for shared social cognitions by influencing the mental representations of individual members of a group and consequently influencing their actions. They are the “shared self-definitions of groups that allow group members to co-ordinate their social practices in relation to other groups” (van Dijk 1997:26). By influencing our mental models of ourselves and others, ideologies contribute to the production of meaning through discourse (van Dijk 1999 and 2001). Ideologies are acquired through discourse and social practice and either directly or insidiously affect our interpretation and portrayal of events and situations. A lot of what we define as ethical or unethical, true or false, for example, is the result of the struggle for the naturalisation of ideology through discourse (van Dijk 1993). Ideological closure, even if it is only temporary, is the mark of a successful moral panic, often accompanied by the recognition that 'something must be done'. Powerful ideologies are those which are implicit and embedded in every facet of the social system, including language, and which are considered commonsensical or natural portrayals of the world. Fairclough (1992:72) emphasises the often insidious power of ideology and states that “in [...] producing their world, members' practices are shaped in ways of which they are usually unaware by social structures”. Ideologies and hegemonic discourses are, to use Foucault's words (1980), simultaneously 'technologies of power', which are enforced by authorities and which constrain and enable individual action, and 'technologies

of the self', values and norms that are internalised by the individual and that function in a self-disciplining way.

CDA proposes that discourse is implicated in the instantiation and symbolic reproduction of dominance through ideology, which exists at the interface between the cognitive and the social. Discourses, in other words, are ideologically invested and function to sustain power relations whilst leaving individuals with the illusion that their agency and compliance are still subject to free will. Crucially for the context of moral panic, ideology does not necessitate a deliberate conspiracy between the media and powerful elites because the media merely adopt views that are considered true and natural. What is considered true and natural is constituted by hegemonic discourses on the matter. Hall (1982:88) summarises that “[i]deology is a function of the discourse and of the logic of social processes, rather than an intention of the agent”.

Fairclough's model for CDA thus enables a focus not only on the specific linguistic elements of texts but also on how discourse is related to social order and transformation. CDA illustrates how the media is a site of intense cultural struggle and a source of cultural leadership, rather than just an automatic channel for dominant views. The historical circumstances and the dimensions of production and consumption of texts allow us to answer questions about whose interests are served and what the social consequences are.

A well-known example of CDA is van Dijk's (1992) research on the relationship between discourse and racism, which has expanded the sociological understanding of the discursive construction and concealment of racist attitudes. He argued that “a study of the functions of discourse in the reproduction of white group dominance should take place within the broader perspective of a social and cultural theory of racism and ethnicity” (1992:88). In other words, a comprehensive study of racism must attend to the micro-dimension of language, including the disclaimers, euphemisms and other deflectors employed by those that hold racist attitudes, as well as the macro-structures and ideologies surrounding them. To analyse the social function of discourse, one must attend to the interrelation between these levels. Van Dijk (2005:355) formulates the following overarching questions for CDA: “How do

(more) powerful groups control public discourse?” and “How does such discourse control mind and action of (less) powerful groups, and what are the social consequences of such control, such as social inequality?”

Ethically, epistemologically and methodologically, the fields of Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Animal Studies (CAS) have a lot in common. A CDA rooted in the methods described above could productively be used to analyse the discourse of speciesism and could be combined with social-psychological theories of moral disengagement (Bandura 1999) to analyse the social effects of this discourse. The word 'critical' in CDA and CAS alludes to a number of their ontological, epistemological, methodological and ethical features. Firstly, CDA and CAS counter the mainstream epistemological bias towards value-neutral research and openly embrace normativity. Borrowing from the Frankfurt school of critical theory, CDA rejects the pluralist relativism of much postmodern theorising around discourse and insists on the existence of real structures of oppression and on the ethical imperative of raising awareness of these structures. CDA has been labelled by Burr (1995) as a form of action research which seeks to uncloak and challenge otherwise hidden power relations. By highlighting how these are reinforced through discourse, critical theorists are able to illuminate struggles between opposed groups and draw attention to alternative, marginalised voices. A critical attitude implies a hermeneutics of suspicion regarding hegemonic discourses and 'official', pseudo-neutral explanations of events. CDA is defined by Wodak and Meyer (2001:96):

[D]iscourse analysis with an attitude, [...] research [which] combines what perhaps somewhat pompously used to be called 'solidarity with the oppressed' with an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power. Unlike much other scholarship, CDA does not deny but explicitly defines and defends its own socio-political position. That is CDA is biased – and proud of it.

This commitment merges with a CAS critique of academic research in the field of human/animal studies, which often regards animals as merely theoretical 'agents provocateurs' that are “good to think [with]” (Lévi-Strauss 1962/1963:89) rather than as sentient individuals with their own agency and interests (Best

2009). The purportedly descriptive nature of other forms of discourse analysis, which do not pass comment on the content of materials analysed, is challenged for its inadvertent perpetuation of the status quo with regard to oppressive power relations:

CDA is essentially dealing with an oppositional study of the structures and strategies of elite discourse and their cognitive and social conditions and consequences, as well as with the discourses of resistance against such domination. In that respect, it goes beyond the usual methodological criteria of observational, descriptive and explanatory adequacy. Adding the criterion of critical adequacy presupposes social norms and values and introduces a social or political ethics (what we find wrong or right) within the scholarly enterprise as such. It is not surprising that such a view is often seen as 'political' (biased) and hence as 'unscientific' ('subjective') by scholars who think that their 'objective' uncritical work does not imply a stance and hence a sociopolitical position, viz., a conservative one that serves to sustain the status quo. (van Dijk 1995b:19)

Inevitably, the 'critical' dimension of CDA has received a lot of criticism. Widdowson (1995:169) argues that "CDA is, in a dual sense, a biased interpretation: in the first place it is prejudiced on the basis of some ideological commitment, and then it selects for analysis such texts as will support the preferred interpretation". Along with Koller & Mautner (2004), Orpin (2005) and Partington (2004), Widdowson (1995) alleges that analysts are likely to cherry-pick materials that confirm or support a prior ideologically committed standpoint and ignore those that don't. To address this criticism, critical theorists emphasise that they merely set out with the aim of uncovering hidden power relations and opening up a space for alternative viewpoints, which does not equate to or necessitate deliberately and deceptively omitting data from consideration. On the contrary, Wodak and Weiss (2007) stress that the key ingredient of the notion of 'critical' theory is self-reflexivity, alongside methodological clarity. Moving between estrangement from and engagement with texts facilitates a critical reading by allowing the analyst to variously adopt positions both inside and outside of discourse. Van Dijk (1995a) adds that the critical dimension of CDA is about uncovering who has preferential access to

public discourse and control over its properties and how this in turn affects the attitudes and actions of others.

4.4.1 CDA and corpus linguistics

To address the accusation of distortion resulting from researcher bias in CDA, Baker (2006, 2010, 2012) investigated whether incorporating corpus linguistic approaches in the analysis would improve confidence in the interpretation of data. Corpora are “large bodies of naturally occurring language data stored on computers” (Baker 2006:1), which may be compiled by specifically selecting texts from a particular genre or topic, or may consist of large volumes of written and spoken data that represent natural language use in general. An example of the latter is the British National Corpus (BNC), a reference corpus made up of over 100 million words taken from a variety of sources, including academic books, journals, periodicals, newspapers, works of fiction, essays, and letters (BNC 2015). Corpora are manipulated and analysed using various computational processes to uncover patterns in language use. This involves a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the former being based largely on corpus linguistics tools, including word-cluster frequencies, concordances, collocations, and keywords analyses, and the latter being necessary for the interpretation of results. A corpus linguistics focus on form can complement the more functional, qualitative focus on content in discourse analytic methods (Biber, Conrad and Reppen 1998). While corpus analysis will not yield a set of frames and discourses, it can be used to identify patterns that point to their existence. Collocates, for example, are implicated in the maintenance of discourses, and point to particular associations that readers may not be consciously aware of. Goatley's (2002) CDA of the representation of 'nature' on BBC World Service Radio, for example, identified common collocates of animal words, such as the word 'whale' which occurred most frequently with words such as 'killed', 'killing' and 'hunted'.

There are several ways in which corpora can be incorporated in the study of discourse, with more or less emphasis being placed on corpus linguistic results, often depending on whether the analyst's disciplinary background lies in linguistics or a social science field (Tognini-Bonelli 2001). Some analyses are

driven by or based on corpus methods, while others are more qualitatively oriented but complemented by corpus methods. Partington's (2004, 2006) corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) rely heavily on quantitative corpus methods, whereas van Dijk's (1991) use of corpus linguistics was motivated by the need to manage and find a 'way into' large volumes of newspaper articles. Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery's (2013) study focused on representations of Islam and Muslims in the British press. They looked at collocates of key search terms, examining their dispersion across the corpus, and then plotted the frequencies of particular words occurring before or after these search terms in key newspapers. This, in combination with more qualitative CDA methods, enabled them to uncover semantic prosodies (Stubbs 2001) and draw conclusions about the British media's tendency to represent Muslims as alienated, easily offended and in conflict with 'The West'. Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010:99) concur that corpus studies can help to “deconstruct hidden meanings and the asymmetrical ways people are represented in the press”.

Baker (2012) highlights the importance of taking into account the difference between raw and proportional data when comparing corpus data from different newspapers. Corpus linguistic methods can produce a skewed picture if one merely compares newspapers on the frequency of particular words or other features without taking into account that some newspapers may simply contain a larger volume of text. Proportion, rather than frequency alone, can be used as a measure of saliency, particularly where the focus is on a comparison between newspapers or on change over time. Caution also needs to be exercised in the 'weighting' of texts that make up a corpus. Some texts may be more important or more influential than others, thus deserving more attention. Determining saliency over frequency is not easy but it is important in analysing the influence of particular texts. Fortunately, many modern web-based corpus analysis tools have developed ways of measuring saliency. *SketchEngine*²¹, for example, produces frequency counts as well as saliency scores, based on a LogDice calculation developed by Rychlý (2008).

²¹ SketchEngine is an online Corpus Query System, which can be used to conduct collocational, concordance and key word analyses on a selection of readily available corpora or a self-built corpus.

4.5 Sampling and methodology

In the following section I outline the stages and methods used for sample generation and analysis, which correspond to the text analysis phase of CDA.

Stage 1 – Sample generation

Using the digital newspaper archive *Nexis UK* I have built a corpus of British national newspaper texts, including background and feature articles, columns, editorials, and letters to the editor that contain references to 'urban fox*' anywhere in the text. The asterisk (*) functions as a wildcard symbol to include word variations such as the plural 'urban foxes'. Data was collected from national tabloid and broadsheet newspapers via the *UK National Newspapers* source file on *Nexis* for a five-year period from 1 January 2009 until 1 January 2014 (see appendix 2 for a list of all newspapers included in this source file). The search term 'urban fox*' initially yielded 837 articles for this period. The search was further amended by eliminating false positives, such as items yielded by the search that referred to urban foxes in the context of sports teams as opposed to urban wildlife, and by carefully considering possible false negatives to ensure that keywording didn't omit other relevant articles. I also conducted a search for the term 'city fox*', the results of which were incorporated in the sample (see appendix 3 for the final list of newspaper items included in the sample). What this process revealed is that the term 'urban fox' is quite well established. Searches for 'urban' AND 'fox*' on the other hand yielded more results than the *Nexis* service was able to display.

For each of the newspapers contained in the sample, *Nexis* lists digital archival coverage (historical reach) and publication frequency. Coverage for all of the newspapers contained in my main sample dates back at least to the 1 January 2009, if not well before. Deacon (2007) notes that digital archives are not infallible, and editorial embargoes, accidental duplicate entries or omissions, and unitisation errors occur from time to time. Where there is a great emphasis on the representativeness of a sample and a particular reliance on quantitative methods, these issues pose implications for the validity and reliability of analysis. I have sought to address these concerns by checking for false

positives and negatives, eliminating duplicates from my sample, and checking for unitisation errors. There were no temporary or permanent embargoes on items contained in my sample.

Three further searches for the term 'urban fox*' were conducted, to provide a historical perspective on the frequency and/or nature of the coverage of urban foxes. The first was a search query for the period from 1 January 2004 until 31 December 2008 and the second for the period from 31 October 2000 until 30 October 2001. Their uses are elaborated in chapter 5. Finally, to provide a snapshot historical picture of coverage in *The Guardian* and its sister Sunday paper *The Observer*, two of the most thoroughly archived British national newspapers, a search was carried out for 'urban fox*' from 1 January 1912 until 31 December 1998 (ten years before the start of my main sample), using the *ProQuest Historical Newspapers* database. Despite yielding just 56 results for this entire period, it gives an interesting longitudinal insight into what was written about urban foxes up to over a century ago.

Stage 2 – Coding, framing typology and qualitative textual analysis

The qualitative data analysis software *NVivo 10* was used for the storage and coding of newspaper items²². Initial coding was done at the unit/item level and involved labelling each item according to which newspaper it belonged to, whether it was from a tabloid or broadsheet, which year it was published in, and which section of the newspaper it featured in. Once key discursive events had been identified, items were again coded according to whether they related to particular events.

Later coding was undertaken at the level of the individual text in chronological order. Having identified the first key event, a 'fox attack' on twins Lola and Isabella Koupparis on 6 June 2010, items published in the period between 1 January 2009 and 6 June 2010, later labelled the *Warning* phase, were coded in a process resembling the 'grounded theory' method described by Strauss

²² Items are defined as units of newspaper content yielded by Nexis. These include, among others, letters to the editor, editorials and feature articles, news articles, and magazine supplements. 'Items' is a more accurate descriptor than 'articles' because not all of the results yielded by Nexis could be described as articles.

(1987). This inductive method involved the identification of initial frames. Items published for a two-month period after the incident were coded in a similar manner to establish a framing typology. The full sample of newspaper items was then coded according to this framing typology, in an iterative process that involved adding to and modifying the typology until 'theoretical saturation' was achieved. Finally, the most salient frames were analysed, annotated and, where appropriate, combined to establish broader discursive themes. Editorials were selected for the most intensive linguistic coding and analysis, using the methods described in section 4.4.

Stage 3 – Quantitative corpus analysis

To incorporate a corpus analysis dimension, I investigated the tools offered by Lancaster University's *BNCWeb* to compare features from my corpus of newspaper articles with the British National Corpus. The BNC contains texts from the 1960s onwards but is now very outdated, having not been updated since 1994. However, Blommaert (2005) has criticised CDA for neglecting change over time, which for any discourse-based study of moral panic is an important consideration. Although not an ideal comparison, the BNC is widely considered a valuable source of data for the period prior to that which is covered by most digital newspaper archives and can thus provide insights into the change over time in representations of particular key words. However, data in the BNC is not composed solely of news texts and it is not possible to limit searches to particular source genres. The decontextualised nature of BNC data thus means that interpretation and comparison with the newspaper medium is difficult. Upon searching for the term 'urban fox*' it was also discovered that the volume of data was simply insufficient to make linguistic analysis viable.

Instead, corpus methods were used to provide statistical insights into the differences between particular publication periods or newspaper markets. Several sub-corpora were generated from the main sample and recompiled using the web-based tool *SketchEngine*. This tool was used to determine concordances and to analyse the grammatical and collocational behaviour of key terms. As demonstrated by van Dijk (1991), these methods are particularly appropriate for the discovery of patterns in large volumes of data that would

otherwise be difficult to see. Corpus methods can provide useful quantitative evidence of hegemonic discourses and other patterns that can be further interpreted through qualitative analysis. Interpretation is vital and researcher bias may inevitably creep in when choices are made as to which patterns to analyse in more detail. Choice is involved at every stage from the generation of a corpus to the choice of techniques for analysis and the interpretation of results. There are many corpus linguistic techniques that can be used and Baker (2012) warns that they may yield contradictory results. I have sought to address this issue by experimenting with different word spans, different cut-off points for statistical significance tests in *SketchEngine* and by comparing collocational and concordance data, as recommended by Baker (2006). Most of the methods used here are aimed at the lexical level, and lend themselves less to grammatical and semantic analysis.

Stage 4 – Visual materials, broadcast media and other texts

The above stages of analysis are limited to linguistic data from newspaper articles. Unfortunately, *Nexis* omits visual data such as photographs and illustrations that often accompany newspaper articles and which are powerful ways of framing text. Photographs are cultural texts that can serve as framing devices or “story-telling instruments” (Haraway 1989:41) and their analysis is important to generate a richer appreciation of media discourse. Visual media tend to use more sophisticated semiotic systems than written text and their impact ought not be underestimated. The conventions of 'looking' at animals, as many anthropologists and cultural theorists have argued, often tell us more about ourselves than they do about the animals we are looking at, whether the gaze be through the lens of a camera or the bars of a cage (Malamud 1998, Berger 1980). I therefore searched for online editions of the articles that appeared in my main sample. Many online news websites publish articles along with the visual materials that accompanied them in the print edition. Their placement in the online edition may not be the same but the pictures themselves are nevertheless worthy of analysis. *Nexis* does confirm whether an article was accompanied by an image and usually includes the image caption, which enabled identification of the corresponding image in the online edition.

Furthermore, as CDA makes very clear, no text exists in isolation. Texts function intertextually, drawing upon other texts, often from different genres, in their constitution. The latter is referred to as manifest intertextuality. Texts are transformed into and out of a series of other texts and a full appreciation of textual meaning and impact requires an analysis of these intertextual chains. At this stage in the analysis, I thus incorporated a selection of additional textual materials from broadcast and social media, industry publications and campaign group resources.

During the main sample period (1 January 2009 until 1 January 2014), several important television documentaries were broadcast by Channel 4 and the BBC, and these are referred to in many of the items in my main newspaper sample (see appendix 4 for the list of documentaries). Each documentary was coded using the framing typology generated in stage 2.

4.6 Conclusion

A key lesson from Foucault's writings on power and knowledge is that power does not refer simply to physical coercion and exploitation but has a symbolic, representational dimension which involves the ability to generate and distribute knowledge of others. Discourse is a form of power that reflects and influences the ideologies and infrastructures that give rise to particular human/animal relations. Whether defined as physical coercion or discursive hegemony, conditions of power are scarcely more unequal in any general relationship than the one that exists between humans and other animals. To focus on representation is not to deny other animals' material reality or agency but rather recognises that animals exist in a world of human techno-scientific intervention. Their populations and ecologies are shaped within the confines of human ecomanagerialist infrastructure, which is the product and performance of particular discourses.

In order to assess the impact of media discourse on the treatment and lived realities of animals, one cannot consider the former in a social vacuum but rather has to examine it in the context of extant human/animal relations and society/media relations. The project for media-centred studies of human/animal

relations, as laid out by Molloy (2011:10), is to “attend to various relations between the economics of (media) production, the aesthetics and conventions of representational practices, the norms of human–animal relations and the historically situated discourses that connect and contextualize them”. CDA is highly sensitive to context at multiple levels: the internal context of media language, the dimensions of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, the institutional frames and sociological variables that define the context of production and reception of media texts, and the broader socio-historical context of discursive practices.

What sets CDA apart from many other methods for the analysis of news articles, including traditional mass communications research, is that it analyses them as a particular genre of discourse. This is important because, as Fairclough (1989:54) emphasised, “[t]he hidden power of media discourse and the capacity of [...] powerholders to exercise this power depend on systematic tendencies in news reporting and other media activities. A single text on its own is quite insignificant: the effects of media power are cumulative, working through the repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency, particular ways of positioning the reader, and so forth.”

CDA is a multi-level form of analysis that traces explanatory connections between particular instances of discursive expression and wider social practices. Many other methods limit themselves either to the macro-level politics of human/animal relations or the micro-level elements of discourse, without giving sufficient empirical attention to the interactions between these levels. Texts are the products of discursive practices and these exist in particular socio-historical contexts. Meaning comes not from texts interpreted in isolation but rather derives from the interactions between these various levels. Van Dijk (1991:45) proposes that “discourse analysis specifically aims to show how the cognitive, social, historical, cultural or political contexts of language use and communication impinge on the contents, meanings, structures, or strategies of text and dialogue, and vice versa, how discourse itself is an integral part of and contributes to the structures of these contexts”.

CDA advocates an analysis of all levels of discourse, from grammar to style, pragmatic strategies and speech acts, strategies of legitimation and manipulation, with an ever-present emphasis on how particular ideologies are reproduced and resisted. Lexical style variously signals power and moral position as well as functioning on a persuasive level to influence thoughts and actions. Syntactic style foregrounds certain views whilst rendering others less significant or hiding them altogether. Rhetorical features further add emphasis to the lexical, semantic and syntactic features of texts. In other words, language is not looked at in a static sense but rather examined at the level of social function to uncover what social relationships are implied (Luke 2002).

As outlined above, my enquiry starts with a text analysis in chapters 5, 6, and 7, which combine a qualitative approach from discourse studies with a quantitative approach from corpus linguistics to illustrate the stages of the urban fox moral panic and provide a detailed exposition of the main frames in evidence at each stage. Chapter 8 focuses on the discursive practice dimension of text production. The final chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the social practice dimension of CDA. It contextualises, interprets and critiques the values and myths embedded in the discursive constructions of urban foxes.

CHAPTER 5. Warning and Impact

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Trends in newspaper output

5.3 Warning

5.3.1 Trends

5.3.2 Editorials and features

5.3.3 Adjectival concordances and historical samples

5.4 Impact

5.5 Conclusion

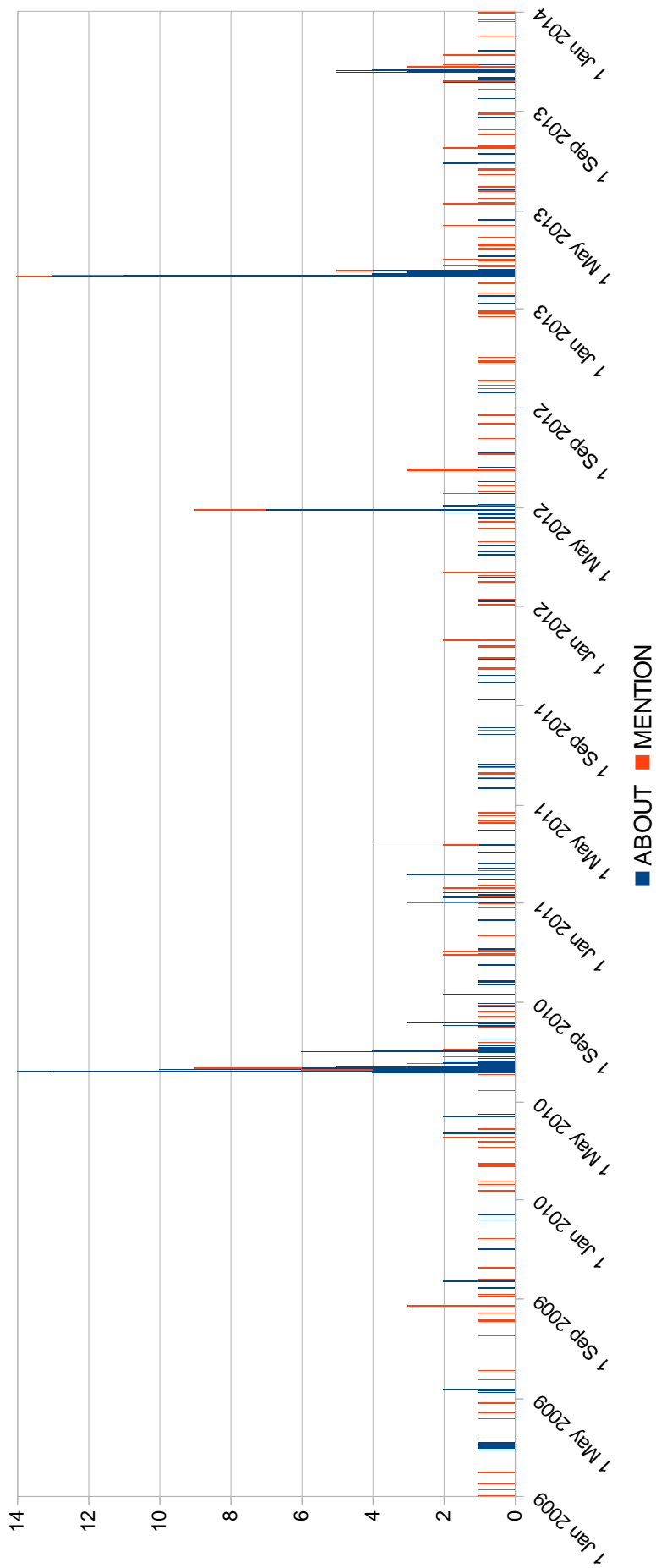
5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an identification and interpretation of trends in newspaper output about urban foxes contained within the main sample, as well as an additional five-year sample prior to this. Four *Warning* phase editorials or feature articles are then selected for in-depth analysis before the whole corpus of *Warning* phase news items is subjected to an adjectival concordance test. This, together with several historical samples, provides an initial insight into the changing representations of urban foxes in the print media. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of newspaper coverage immediately following a fox attack on two twin girls in London, which constitutes the *Impact* phase.

5.2 Trends in newspaper output

The items contained in the main newspaper sample cover the period from 1 January 2009 until 1 January 2014. For an initial overview of the trends in media coverage of urban foxes during this period, all 461 items were coded according to whether they were 'about' urban foxes (urban foxes forming a substantial focus of the text) or whether they merely 'mentioned' urban foxes (urban foxes are not a major subject of the text). Figure 5.1 shows the distribution across time of the sample.

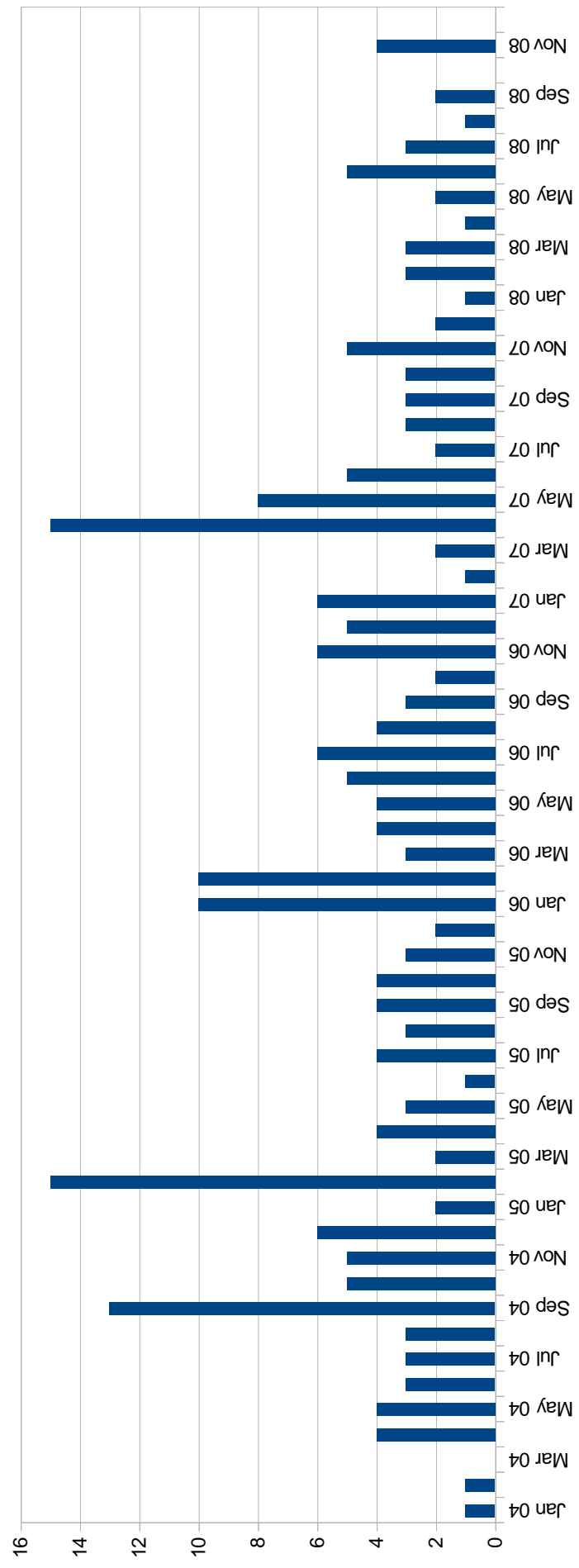
Fig.5.1 Number of items about and mentioning urban foxes per day
01/01/2009–01/01/2014



Looking particularly at the items about urban foxes (blue), there are two noticeable spikes in newspaper coverage, the largest of which centres around the months of June and July 2010, with a further large spike in February 2013, and at least two smaller spikes in April 2012 and October 2013. A closer examination of newspaper items during these periods reveals that the two large spikes in newspaper activity centre around fox attacks on children, whereas the two smaller spikes appear around the time of the broadcasting of two television documentaries about foxes.

Based purely on these publication frequency observations, it is reasonable to assume that the period from the start of the sample until the first spike in June 2010 would correspond with what Maneri (2013) labels the *Warning* phase. To ascertain whether any major events preceded this period, a further search query was carried out in Nexis for the five-year period from 1 January 2004 until 31 December 2008, yielding the following monthly number of newspaper items containing the search term 'urban fox*':

Fig.5.2 Number of newspaper items containing *urban fox** per month
01/01/2004–31/12/2008



On average, four items containing references to urban foxes were published each month, with a marked increase in September 2004, February 2005, January and February 2006 and April and May 2007. A closer look at each of these periods reveals the reasons behind each increase. In September 2004, several readers' letters were published in the *Daily Express* (1, 14, 15, 17 and 20 September), each offering a different opinion on urban foxes. The first was a defence of urban foxes written from the standpoint of an animal welfare organisation, the second claimed that urban fox numbers were increasing and argued that banning hunting with hounds would lead to more foxes being shot for pest control, the third and fourth letters defended urban foxes and condemned negative news coverage of them, and the final letter castigated urban residents for not knowing the "true fox" like countryside residents do. Several further letters were published in Murdoch-owned *The Times* (20 September) and *The Sun* (21 September), the former arguing that foxes kill for sport, not for food, and the latter again condemning "townies" for their ignorance. Interestingly, these letters were not written in response to published articles about urban foxes, but rather seem to have been prompted by the general increase in interest in foxes at a time when the proposed ban on hunting with hounds was being voted on in the Houses of Parliament. Aside from an article in *The Independent on Sunday* (17 September 2004) about wildlife moving into cities, the majority of items about urban foxes published this month were readers' letters. A brief search for the more general search term 'fox* AND hunt*', on the other hand, yielded a staggering 271 items for the month of September 2004, compared to just 23 items in the first month of the main sample (January 2009), confirming the suspicion that the increase in newspaper content about urban foxes in September 2004 is likely to have been related to the proposed ban on hunting with hounds.

Similarly, in February 2005, the month when the hunting ban came into effect, columnist James Delingpole published an article in the *Daily Express* (7 February) blaming "townies" for the decision to end foxhunting and warning them of the risks foxes pose to humans. Delingpole highlights two fox attacks that occurred in the preceding years and which resulted in the human victims sustaining minor injuries. Many of the other items published during this month were letters in response to articles published in *The Sunday Telegraph* (6

February) and the *Daily Mirror* (7 February) about a purported increased risk to cats from “hungry foxes”.

The spike in January 2006 was caused by a string of articles in the *Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Times* about pest controllers who shoot urban foxes at night. The *Daily Mail* and *The Daily Telegraph* wrote from the perspective of a reporter accompanying a marksman on the job, whereas *The Guardian* reported from a more removed perspective and *The Times* focused on the views of activists who condemned the killing. All articles mentioned the claim (although not all endorsed it) that an increase in urban fox numbers was responsible for an increase in lethal measures being taken. The volume of news items published in February 2006 corresponds to various media reports on a new Volkswagen model called Urban Fox. Advertisements and reviews for a natural history documentary about London's foxes are responsible for the increase in items published during April 2007, and the smaller spike during the following month relates to a number of articles offering advice on chicken husbandry and gardening.

From 2004 until 2008 there were no spikes in newspaper coverage that compare in scale to the increase in coverage during June 2010 and February 2013. However, what the brief snapshot of this earlier period reveals is that not only was there debate about urban foxes, with various claims about population growth and an increase in risk of fox predation, as well as debate about culling urban foxes, but there was also some critical commentary on the content of news coverage of urban foxes itself. Some of the coverage was sparked by the ban on hunting with hounds, which came into effect in February 2005.

5.3 Warning

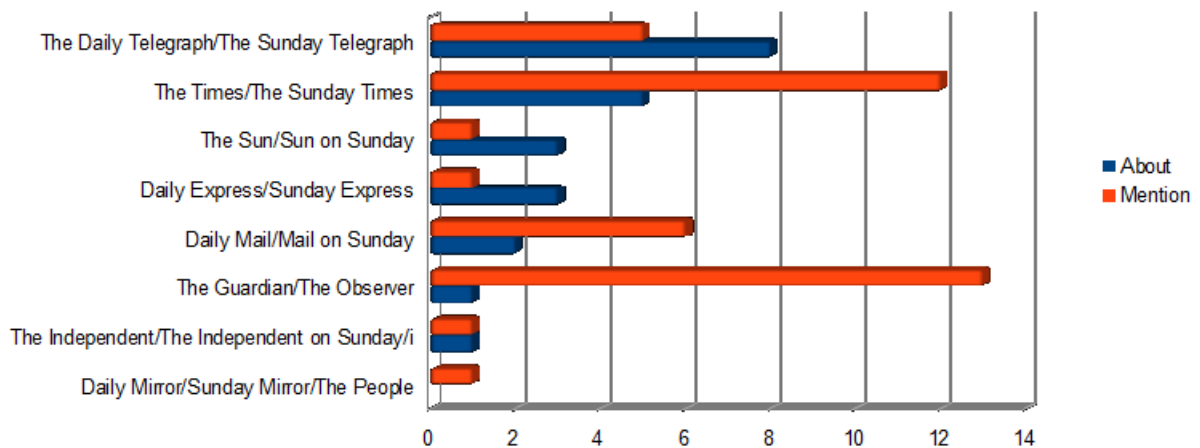
5.3.1 Trends

Maneri (2013) explains that during the *Warning* phase, routine journalistic norms govern media output on the topic in question. However, *Warning* is crucial for creating the conditions for the subsequent *Impact* stage and, according to Cohen (1973:22), involves “some apprehensions based on

conditions out of which danger may arise”. Common elements of this phase include speculation, prediction and rumour about events to come, sensitisation of the population to cues of danger, and occasional false alarms.

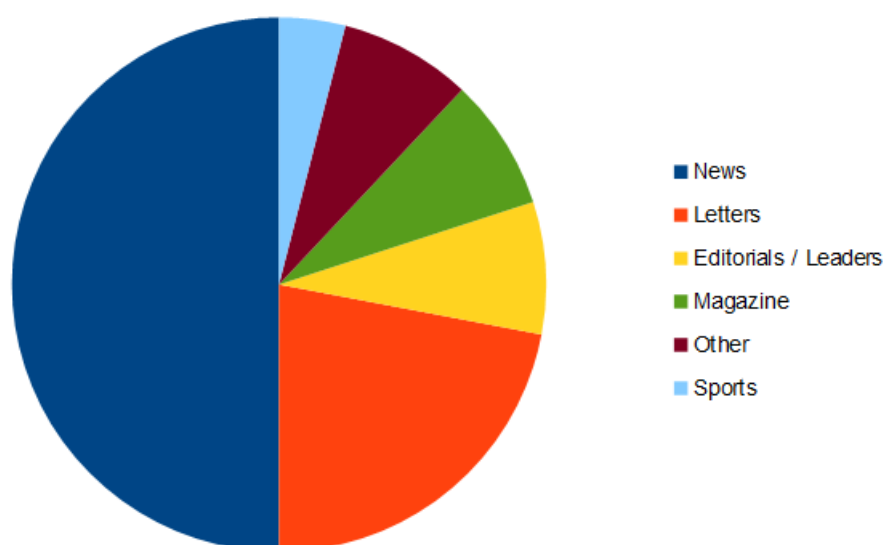
During the period from 1 January 2009 until 6 June 2010, a total of 63 items containing mentions to urban foxes were published in the national newspapers contained in my sample. Of these, 24 items were coded as being specifically about urban foxes, with a further 39 items containing mentions of urban foxes. Figure 5.3 shows the distribution across newspapers of these items. The centre-right and right-wing tabloids and broadsheets published more articles, letters and other items about urban foxes during this period than left-leaning and centrist papers, such as *The Guardian* and *The Independent*.

Fig.5.3 Number of items about or mentioning urban foxes per newspaper 01/01/2009–06/06/2010



Of the items coded as 'about' urban foxes, half appeared in the news section of the various newspapers, and five in the letters section, with only a small number of editorials, leaders and feature articles dedicated to urban foxes during this period (see figure 5.4).

Fig.5.4 Distribution of items about urban foxes according to newspaper section
01/01/2009–06/06/2010



5.3.2 Editorials and features

Four articles were identified as worthy of in-depth analysis and comparison because they occupied a prominent position within their respective newspaper, being either editorials, feature articles or other opinion pieces. Each article was coded according to the procedure outlined in chapter 4, focusing on linguistic features, argumentative strategies, frames and discursive themes.

1. “Pets? No, foxes should be driven to extinction”
(Simon Heffer, *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 March 2009)

In late February 2009, *The Daily Telegraph* launched its Urban Fox Count, a survey of readers' urban fox sightings and experiences. A series of short articles published between 28 February and 9 March 2009 encouraged readers to contact the newspaper with their fox sightings to be plotted on an interactive online map in order to give an idea of the current size of the fox population in built-up areas. Data was also shared with Bristol University's Mammal Research Unit and the UK's Wildlife Trusts. The newspaper's environment correspondent regularly summarised findings, and towards the end of the survey columnist and associate editor Simon Heffer published a short feature. His opening line (“Whenever I write about the problems of our uncontrolled wildlife and the need to start killing a lot of it [...]”) establishes the premise that 'control' and 'wildlife'

go together: wildlife is either controlled or uncontrolled. Foxes, to him, are not just wildlife but “pests”, “vermin” and “filthy, disease-ridden, destructive scavengers that are no better than outsized rats”. People who disagree with him about pest control are labelled “deviant bunny-huggers” and victims of a “totalitarian society” that has “[succeeded] in its brainwashing”. Heffer expresses his amazement and frustration at stories of householders who “keep urban foxes”, dismissing them as “demented”. Their perspective, he argues, is the “ultimate sign of the moral degeneration of our people”. He concludes with a recommendation that “[f]oxes, of course, should be hunted, and those in areas where hunting is unpractical should be shot, poisoned or gassed to the point of extinction”. Heffer's repeated use of non-hedge adverbs, such as 'of course' in the above sentence, and his avoidance of common pest control euphemisms (such as 'culling' and 'control'), indicate that he considers these statements to be common-sense and incontrovertible. Heffer makes several lethal and currently illegal recommendations for what should be done about urban foxes but offers little argumentation for why these actions need to be taken. Instead, the article relies on hyperbolic language to highlight the deplorable characteristics of foxes as well as those who seek to defend or even tame them. The overall tone is one of exasperation and conveys a sense that action on urban foxes is already long overdue.

2. “Cherish your foxes as status symbols” (Simon Barnes, *The Times*, 9 May 2009)

A longer and more detailed editorial was published in *The Times* two months later. It reads as a clear defence of urban foxes, with a focus on debunking common myths surrounding them. The introduction stretches out over two paragraphs, as author Simon Barnes recounts his experience of watching a fox from his sister's bathroom window: “a vision of transcendent beauty”, “a moment of glorious revelation” and an “outlook [that] was wonderfully and suburbanly verdant”. He describes the fox as follows:

Not just any fox. A fox of beauty and charm and elegance, apparently freshly groomed, lithe and gleaming red. The white tip of his brush vanished into the lilac and then for a moment I saw him continue his journey along the top of the wall, a creature at home in his world, unstoppably self-confident and positively glowing with health.

The poetry of these initial paragraphs gives the impression that what is being described is not an abundant, pestilent species, but a rare or mythical creature that is a privilege to behold. Barnes reflects on the deeper significance of “[coming] up against the wild world deep in the haunts of humankind” and suggests that “[i]t is a message that we haven't concreted over every last square inch: that we haven't bugged it all up quite yet; that there is a way in which human beings can live alongside the wild world”.

The register then changes abruptly as he launches into a section about “urban myths”, relating to the size and distribution of the urban fox population, as well as health and disease, behaviour, diet and physical appearance. It is clear that he thinks negative attitudes to urban foxes rest on a series of easily challenged rumours and misunderstandings. He begins by stating that “[t]hey are not 'coming in', they are not increasing either. They have an established and stable population in most towns and cities in this country.” Barnes explains that foxes have lived in urban areas since at least the First World War and stresses that human agency was involved in the subsequent growth of the urban fox population: “Towns expanded into the countryside and the foxes changed their behaviour and adapted, thrived and made the most of this new opportunity.” Humans, in his eyes, are the real transgressors, whereas foxes are merely doing what any resourceful and enterprising species would do. The fact that urban fox populations are thriving, he argues, suggests that they “cannot be dominated by sick, ill-fed and diseased animals. There are plenty of urban foxes, therefore they must be healthy.” Foxes undergoing their annual moult are often mistaken for having contracted mange, he says. Another myth Barnes seeks to debunk is that foxes “survive by raiding dustbins”. In fact, wheelie bins, which are harder for foxes to open, are replacing dustbins in many cities. Barnes refers to a study by Bristol University's Professor Stephen Harris which “showed that more than half the food of urban foxes is deliberately put out for

them by human beings". In other words, human agency is once again to blame. Barnes warns that skinny foxes should not be compared to domestic dogs which are often "overfed and under-exercised" and proposes that "[f]oxes, urban or not, are lean, pared-down survival machines". This myth-busting section is followed by an assessment of our attitudes to urban foxes and some initial suggestions as to who may be to blame for the "huge hostility" they arouse from some people. He describes the attitude of such people as follows:

They find it disturbing, rather than the reverse, to have wild things playing an intimate part in human life. Foxes are sometimes shot and generally seen as vermin. Newspapers play up the scary aspects and, besides, the pro-hunt people always cast foxes as anthropomorphic villains. In truth, foxes are just mammals trying to make a living, same as you and me.

There are a few "legitimate complaints" people may have against urban foxes, including damage to their gardens, but these are often exaggerated and, in any case, eradication is futile: "If you shoot up your local foxes, you are merely creating a vacancy." Finally, in a return to the sentiment expressed in the headline, Barnes explains that "foxes like a good class of neighbourhood", preferring leafy suburbs over areas with little green space. Therefore, "[t]hey are not pests but status symbols". We should identify with and cherish them, for they are signifiers of class rather than markers of degeneracy. This is the second use of the language of class in this editorial, as Barnes earlier asserted that "urban foxes do not represent some pitiful scavenging underclass".

The editorial prompted readers to send in their reactions and a series of letters was published over the following week that disagreed with Barnes's assessment of urban foxes. One reader (12 May 2009) complained that fox numbers were indeed increasing and that his garden had "been taken over by them". The reader describes how a neighbour had been prompted to seek help from a wildlife charity to protect his pets. The charity caught a vixen, treated her for mange and then released her "into the wild". The reader concludes by stating, "I have seen how they are 'trying to make a living', but I see no reason why they should do so at my expense". Another reader replied (14 May 2009) that this response "appears to display a healthy dose of urban ignorance". The reader,

who lives in a rural village in West Sussex, asks, “But what is the fox going to eat when released into the wild, far away from its usual diet of fast-food scraps, dustbin waste and garden guinea-pigs? The farmer's chickens and lambs and the local gamekeeper's pheasants and partridges?” Interesting is the equation of 'the wild' with the countryside and his emphasis on the property status of the animals living in it (livestock and game). Just like foxes in the 'wild', urban foxes should be shot, he concludes, rather than relocating them “and then leaving it up to country folk to clean up the urban mess”.

3. “Fantastic Mr Urban Fox”

(Professor Stephen Harris, *Daily Mail*, 14 December 2009)

Professor Stephen Harris of Bristol University, whose research was cited in Barnes's editorial, himself published a leading article in the *Daily Mail*. It is similar to Barnes's piece in that it dispels some of the myths surrounding urban foxes and reads both as a defence of their actions and, additionally, as a defence of our “love affair” with foxes. Harris's authority on the matter is made clear from the start and the reader is reminded throughout that Harris has “been studying urban foxes for more than 40 years”. Yet, despite being written by a scientist, there is no science lexis and the register remains informal. The reader is spared the jargonistic, sometimes euphemistic language scientists use to describe animal behaviour and one is left wondering not only why the author resorts to such an informal register but also what prompted this scientist's intervention in the first place. The first question is more easily answered, given that the piece appears in one of the UK's leading tabloid newspapers, which demands a particular register. However, just like the two articles summarised above, Harris's piece is not written in response to any particular events. Nor does it appear to target a specific audience, beyond the anticipated readership of the *Daily Mail*.

Harris begins with the lines, “Whisper it – but deep down, we city dwellers love our urban foxes. [...] [a]ll this hostility is just an act. Secretly, we adore these red-coated interlopers.” This immediately raises the question: if we really love urban foxes, why are we secretive about it? Speaking from the perspective of an urban resident (“our cities”, “we city-dwellers”), Harris describes and offers

his assessment of the human relationship with urban foxes. Much like Barnes's suggestion that humans are enchanted by them, Harris asserts that people “marvel” at these “enchanted creatures” but that they also need to be reminded of the consequences of their actions.

The words he uses to describe urban foxes, such as “resourceful”, “skilled”, “intelligent”, “adaptable”, and “relaxed”, suggest that he thinks they are not out of place or uncomfortable in urban areas. Instead, they are “thoroughly at home in our human habitat”. Recounting a list of amusing stories involving urban foxes, such as the fox that was spotted in the House of Lords or the fox that ran across a football pitch mid-match, Harris notes that “they've certainly taken to city life” and “like living alongside humans”. Harris doesn't remark on any change in the urban fox population but notes that they have in fact inhabited British cities for almost eighty years. In the online version of the article, the title is lengthened by the addition of the following line: “The reason why our so-called pests are so at home in our cities.” The use of the metadiscursive marker 'so-called' further suggests that Harris wishes to distance himself from the discourse of pestilence. Nevertheless, to the urban resident, foxes do represent the countryside: “It's like a little bit of the countryside has suddenly come to town.” But “unlike their country cousins, who are hunted and shot at daily the 14 per cent of foxes who live in towns and cities have little to fear from humans”.

This lack of fear is largely down to human action. Like Barnes, Harris emphasises the role of human agency in prompting and sustaining problematic fox behaviours. He talks in particular about feeding urban foxes and encouraging them into the home. The way he introduces this topic suggests that he expects readers to be surprised by the suggestion that people feed urban foxes:

Yes, that's right feed them. [...] I'm not talking about waste food they scavenge from our bins [...]. I am talking about food that is deliberately left out for them.

Harris gives examples of some of the “unexpected results” of feeding. One woman regularly welcomed a fox into her home and gave him his own food

bowl. The fox became the “object of her affections” and would “climb up on the lady of the house's lap for a bit of a nap and to have his head stroked.” Harris does concede that foxes may occasionally take a small pet “that has been inadequately protected in a back garden”, but not only does he spare the reader the gory details of such incidents, it is also clear that he places the responsibility on the pet 'owner'; not so much the fox. The “kind-hearted, nature-loving suburbanite” has to be reminded that foxes will do what comes naturally to them.

Harris's deliberately anthropomorphic language encourages the reader to look at fox behaviour from the perspective of foxes. For example, he writes from the perspective of a vixen who had chosen to create an earth for her cubs underneath somebody's warm floorboards. She is only doing what is obvious and natural for her. Encouraging the reader to sympathise with the destructive behaviours of another fox, he writes, “[w]hat could be better than resting out of harm's way, next to a large lump of warm metal and playfully passing the time by gnawing the nearest piece of plastic or rubber?” The fox is “simply playing” and doing what it naturally wants to do. Similarly it may take a “curious nip” at a baby, but “no serious injuries have ever been recorded and it pales into statistical insignificance compared with the far more serious attacks on infants carried out by dogs”. Harris urges readers to put foxes' actions into perspective. His conclusion can be read as an endorsement not only of foxes' presence in urban areas but also of residents' love and affection for them: “I see no reason why our love affair with the urban fox should not continue. They've certainly found a habitat niche in our cities – but they've also found a place in our hearts.”

4. “Outfoxing predators is not easy”

(Dorothy-Grace Elder, *Daily Express*, 20 March 2010)

Finally, the *Daily Express* published an editorial by former Scottish National Party politician, Dorothy-Grace Elder. The title suggests that the primary emphasis of her article is likely to be on the predatory nature of urban foxes. Indeed, she opens with the claim that “[t]he fox invasion of Scotland's towns and cities means death for some household pets”, and the article is accompanied by a photo captioned “[t]he wily fox has plenty of targets from

which to choose in an urban environment”. Elder begins by listing a number of what she considers remarkable sightings of urban foxes “outside No 10 Downing Street” or “[gatecrashing] Westminster Abbey”. Foxes were “even bold enough to outfox Royal security”. She goes on to claim that “[i]t is estimated that London has been invaded by at least 10,000 foxes”, omitting to mention not only the source of this estimate but also the time-span to which it refers. If 10,000 foxes had migrated to London over the course of a week this would lend greater credibility to the claim that the city was dealing with an invasion, than if this number of animals had bred in cities over the course of several years or even decades. The omission of this information, as well as the repeated use of the word 'invasion' throughout the article bears some similarity with the tabloid discourse of immigration. A further similarity to the British immigration debate in the tabloid press is Elder's insistence on the failure of authorities to take appropriate action. She claims, for example, that “Scotland, despite increasing complaints from the public, hasn't even surveyed numbers properly” and “‘pro fox' websites and useless information sheets from local authorities play down or ignore such killings [of pets]”. She variously accuses authorities of being useless, of downplaying the issue, of not reacting, of not taking responsibility for increasing fox numbers, of siding with foxes, and of engaging in a “cover-up of the true extent of their killer instincts”. She laments that “Glasgow City Council's fox information sheet says loftily: 'Foxes are part of the wildlife community’” and interprets the unwillingness of authorities to take action on urban foxes as a sign that “foxes are icons of the politically correct”. In other words, Elder refuses to entertain the possibility that councils have come to the conclusion that foxes are not as big a problem as they are made out to be and/or that nothing can be reasonably done about them, but asserts that they are unwilling to act for political reasons.

In contrast, Bristol University's Mammal Research Unit are cited as saying that the urban fox population in some places is “absolutely exploding”, that urban foxes are “becoming desensitised” and even “invading houses”. This statement about fox populations contradicts what Professor Harris, the head of Bristol's Mammal Research Unit, himself wrote in the *Daily Mail* article above. Closer investigation of the source of Elder's quote reveals that it came from a then-PhD candidate at the research unit, rather than being an official statement. Elder

does not mention scientific opinion again until the end of the article, where she concludes that “[t]he experts at Bristol University agree that, with the lack of official fact-finding, ‘the only way to find out more is to ask the public’”. It is not clear whether the source meant that what is needed is more scientific research into public opinion, or whether her intention was to imply that the public are the ultimate authority on urban foxes. Elder appears to have taken it to mean the latter and encourages readers to email her with their views and experiences.

The earlier examples of changing fox behaviour are followed by “[b]ut there is a more sinister side that is given little exposure”, and before resolving the suspense, the tone of the article changes abruptly. Elder recites a story about how she once rescued a kitten from a “gang” of foxes that subsequently went on to kill the mother and the remaining litter in a “savage attack”. The language used to describe urban foxes and the threat they pose to pets simultaneously criminalises fox behaviour and exonerates pet owners. Elder tells of how foxes, “urban gangsters”, “broke into a garage” and how the “fox gang tore apart wires and boxes and substantial barriers protecting the kittens”. In other words, she is keen to emphasise that the kittens' owners had taken appropriate precautions to fulfil their duty of care but that the foxes, “known for their cunning”, had deviously broken in and “slaughtered” the kittens. Elsewhere, she reports, foxes had also “formed gangs” and were “stalking pets”. Another cat owner, a lawyer, describes how foxes “had [his] cat surrounded”. In a compelling prediction of events that were to unfold just months after the publication of Elder's editorial, this lawyer warns that “[o]ne day, a fox might nip a toddler and then people will have to wake up to taking responsibility for increasing numbers”.

Just as the reader is left to wonder what “taking responsibility” would entail, Elder adds, “[f]oxes are beautiful [...] Being a sappy lump about all animals, I am not suggesting mass killing or the cruelty of snaring.” Following on from the hyperbolic language of the preceding section, this caveat has the effect of restoring credibility in the author's proposal for reasonable action to be taken. Given the anthropomorphically labelled cruel instincts of foxes, readers could be forgiven for thinking that less humane actions would in fact be proportionate. However, Elder is not explicit about what authorities ought to do. Instead, she goes on to report that she “spoke to farmers and the National Farmers' Union,

and, while killing of lambs and chickens has increased, they had no direct evidence that the Scottish Parliament's ban on hunting with hounds, which came into force in 2002, is solely to blame". The phrases "no direct evidence" and "solely to blame" give the impression that at least anecdotal evidence exists to suggest that a ban on hunting had led to an increase in fox numbers and a resulting increase in predation. Significant here is not only the author's suggestion that the ban on foxhunting, a rural pastime, is relevant to the urban fox issue but also her reliance on a business association (the NFU) for an evaluation of fox population change. "What the farmers confirm", she continues, "is that foxes kill more than they need to eat, they are serial killers for the sake of killing". Instead of asking scientists for an explanation of surplus killing among mammal predators, Elder chooses to continue with the portrayal of foxes as violent criminals, motivated not by the need for sustenance but by "serial killer" instincts. In the absence of official statistics that confirm her suspicions, Elder argues that "the increasing number of firms specialising in fox control is one indicator of the growing problem". In other words, public concern is considered an adequate proxy for the changing size and behaviour of the fox population. Finally, Elder suggests that urban foxes "themselves often need help because some are infected with a type of mange that can lead to a painful, prolonged death". Furthermore, these "city slickers" don't cope well when they are trapped and relocated to a non-urban environment where they suddenly have to fend for themselves. This portrayal of urban foxes as helpless city scroungers is somewhat at odds with her earlier insistence that they are cunning criminals, save for the conclusion that both don't 'belong' in cities or elsewhere for that matter. As their behaviour cannot be reformed and relocation is ruled out as an option, all that remains is for foxes to be killed, although Elder is never explicit about what she thinks should be done.

Elder's article prompted the publication of two letters from readers, the first of which applauds her for having "the guts to highlight the urban fox menace" (24 March 2010). Contrary to Harris's earlier suggestion that it was fox-lovers who felt they couldn't be open about their feelings, this reader agrees with Elder that urban foxes are a taboo subject for local authorities: "Some neighbours treat these foxes as pets by feeding them and if it were their dogs that caused this damage the law would step in – but not for the fox." This is followed by another

warning that “[t]he fox menace will increase and it is not until a child is attacked or a disease epidemic spread that others will pay attention”. The second reader (24 March 2010) laments that “[u]nfortunately there is bound to be an outcry when it comes to carrying out cullings” but proposes that “legislation is required to control fox numbers”.

What all of these articles have in common is that none of them were written in response to a particular event outside of the media coverage of urban foxes itself. Heffer's feature article was prompted by the results of *The Daily Telegraph's* Urban Fox Count, but the count itself was not set up in response to a particular incident. All four articles offer different views on questions relating to urban fox population size, behaviour, and risks, and what, if anything, should be done about urban foxes. Heffer and Elder argue that authorities are failing in their responsibilities to address a growing problem, whereas Barnes and Harris's interventions suggest that existing anxieties and responses to urban foxes are based on myths and misconceptions and are out of proportion with the risks posed by urban foxes.

5.3.3 Adjectival concordances and historical samples

The corpus analysis tool *SketchEngine* was used to compile a subcorpus of all news items during the period from 1 January 2009 until 6 June 2010. To derive further clues as to the themes and discourses surrounding urban foxes during this period, an adjectival concordance analysis for the search term 'fox*' was conducted, recording all adjectives that appeared within a five-word span either side of the search term. A closer reading of concordance lines was required to establish whether adjectives actually referred to rural foxes or were negativised (e.g. prefaced with the word 'not' or the phrase 'it is not true that'). The following table shows adjectival concordances for the word 'fox*', combined into category themes, with words occurring more than once shown in bold and words that referred exclusively to rural foxes or were negativised shown in brackets.

Table 5.1 Adjectival concordances for 'fox*', 1 Jan 2009–6 June 2010
n=63 (newspaper items)

Category	Adjectives
Physical appearance	beautiful; skinny; bushy-tailed; filthy; lean; skanky; pitiful; almost hairless
Health	mangy; sick; injured; underfed; disease-ridden; healthy; infected
Age	old; young
Character	wily; dangerous; brave; fantastic; destructive; different; harmless; pipegnawing; tame; nocturnal; adaptable; (scavenging); (pitiful);
Population / number	plenty; thousands; 10,000
Change	braver; bolder; more common
Location	urban; city; local; British; resident; (rural)

After 'urban' and 'local', 'wily' was the third most common adjectival modifier for the word 'fox*'. However, adjectives used to describe urban foxes were both positive and negative. While adjectives relating to health and physical appearance were most often negative, those describing the character of urban foxes alluded to their destructive and wily natures as well as commenting on their adaptability and bravery and emphasising that they are harmless. Adjectives that referenced the difference between urban and rural foxes and between current and previous urban fox populations were common, particularly relating to changes in the population size and character of urban foxes.

To provide an historical comparison, a further corpus was constructed from newspaper items yielded by a search for 'urban fox*' between 31 October 2000 and 30 October 2001, the earliest period for which all of the sampled newspapers were fully archived, apart from the *Daily Star Sunday* and *Independent Print*.

Table 5.2 Adjectival concordances for 'fox*', 31 Oct 2000–30 Oct 2001
n=40 (newspaper items)

Category	Adjectives
Physical appearance	red ; particularly bushy; bushy; very fine; large; stunningly beautiful; cute; cutesy; little; low brown; male
Health	hungry; blind; poor
Age	newborn; adult; four months old
Character	eccentric; libidinous; frantic; squirming; quite wearied; sly and cruel
Number	three; 14; 5000; 15,000; widespread; fairly common; more than [rural foxes]; ten [...] per square km
Change	-
Location	urban ; local; predominantly urban; city (rural) ; (countryside)

The most striking differences between tables 5.1 and 5.2 are the overwhelmingly positive adjectives for physical appearance and the lack of adjectives referencing change in the earlier sample. However, a closer look at the items contained in this earlier sample reveals that there was already some discussion of rising urban fox numbers. Whereas 'fox*' most frequently modified the noun 'menace' in the more recent sample, the words for which 'fox*' most often acted as a noun modifier in the earlier sample were 'population' and 'number'.

However, it is not the case that there has been a dramatic downturn in the urban fox's reputation since the early 2000s, as a further comparison with a sample of articles and letters published in *The Guardian* and *The Observer* between 1 January 1912 and 31 December 1998 demonstrates. The earliest reference to urban foxes in this sample dates back to 15 February 1912, with a report in *The Manchester Guardian* of a “fox at large” in Manchester:

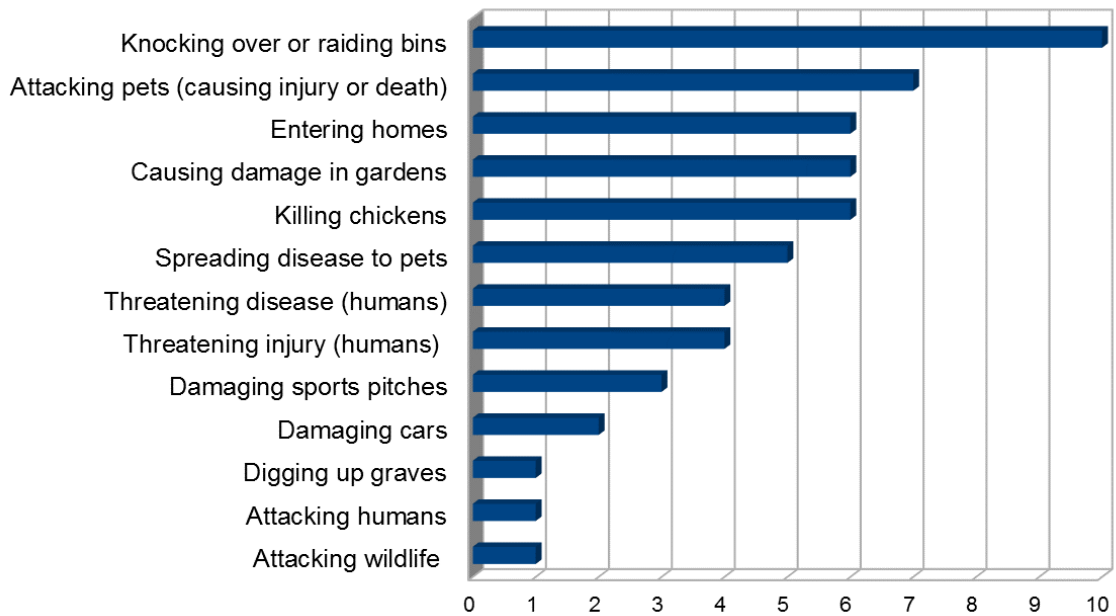
It has been ranging the neighbourhood for a week now – so we are informed on the highest official authority. He has been seen several times by the light of the gas-lamps, presumably setting out on his midnight prowling after prey. Dogs have chased him, but not being experienced in fox-hunting have hitherto failed to run him down. The local poultry amateurs have taken alarm, and the barndoor population at Sedgley Park are in a great state of bewilderment and indignation at unwonted restrictions of the liberty of the subject. But there is no reason why the fox should not make a fair living without drawing on the poultry. There is plenty of park land in the neighbourhood well stocked with rabbits, probably very incautious rabbits, with no experience of foxes. If he can keep out of the way of dogs and motor-cars, he can probably make ends meet in the matter of housekeeping. [...] As the only free urban fox in England he almost deserves to be protected [...]

Very little else was published about urban foxes in *The Guardian* and *The Observer* for the next fifty years, until an article in *The Guardian* (03/10/1978) remarked that urban foxes were being studied by the BBC Natural History Unit in Bristol with the then Dr Stephen Harris as the lead scientist on the project. A few years later, a wildlife documentary narrated by David Attenborough was aired on the BBC. Titled *Twentieth Century Fox* (1981), it was reported in *The Guardian* to have “[redeemed] its unlovely reputation as a cruel, dirty scavenger” (10/06/1981). A synopsis for the documentary (WildFilmHistory 2015) further reveals the urban fox's reputation over thirty years ago: “To most people foxes are dirty, mangy, vicious killers – creeping into our cities at night, attacking cats and raiding dustbins. But the facts suggest that urban foxes are not the villains they are made out to be.” By 1990, *The Guardian* was claiming that “[t]he urban fox population [had] boomed in recent years as foxes abandoned a hard life in the country for suburban comforts where daft housewives put out saucers of milk and bowls of catfood for their nocturnal visitors” (04/05/1990). An environmental health officer from Surrey is cited in *The Guardian* on 7 January 1994, saying that urban foxes are “a growing problem” but that destroying them does not solve the problem. By 1994, the urban fox had become “a minor celebrity” according to “Amateur Countryman” Philip Oakes (*The Guardian*, 06/08/1994). Two years later *The Guardian* received reports that a five-month-old boy had been attacked in his pram in south London. The article (12/11/1996) speaks of “alarm” and “public fears”

over growing fox numbers and statements from a family member who had seen “a pack of seven” foxes in his garden. Animal welfare organisations and fox ecologists came to the urban foxes’ defence, arguing that alarm was ill-founded and expressing doubts over the mother’s insistence that her son’s assailant was a fox. Although many of the sentiments expressed here were already being expressed half a century ago, the report of a fox attack on a baby somewhat altered the tone of subsequent media coverage. *The Guardian* (18/11/1996) wrote of the “newly-demonised urban fox” and readers wrote to the newspaper, stating their concern that foxes’ predatory instincts posed a risk to human children (*The Guardian*, 03/11/1997): “A new baby is not much bigger than a lamb.”

Further examination of the 2000–2001 sample reveals that the most commonly mentioned behaviours of urban foxes are eating from bins (although there are several articles which dispute that this is common behaviour) and attacking or threatening to attack pets and chickens in suburban gardens. During the 2009–2010 sample, behaviours and risks that are mentioned range from common nuisances, including digging and soiling in gardens and knocking over bins, to less frequent damage caused to cars and the digging up of graves (figure 5.5). A handful of articles mentioned foxes entering, or coming close to entering, people’s homes and stalking, injuring or killing pets. Whereas the majority of articles during the 2009–2010 period focused on general nuisance behaviours and risks to pets, only a minority emphasised serious risks to human health, but even fewer talked about fox behaviour outside the context of risk.

Fig.5.5 Number of newspaper items mentioning fox behaviours
01/01/2009–06/06/2010



5.4 Impact

On 6 June 2010 an incident took place that confirmed some of the fears of commentators during the *Warning* phase and achieved exceptionally high coverage in the national print and broadcast media over the following weeks and months. Responding to the cries of their baby daughters, Pauline and Nicolas Koupparis are said to have rushed into the twins' bedroom to find them covered in blood, having apparently been bitten by a fox. The fox was still in the room and had to be chased out of their three-storey home in Hackney, East London. Both girls were taken to hospital with injuries to their arms and one was also treated for facial injuries.

The Times, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express* broke the story on 7 June with the following headlines:

- “Fox attacks twin baby sisters sleeping in bedroom” (*The Times*, Edition 1)
- “Twin girls are mauled by a fox in upstairs bedroom” (*The Times*, Edition 2)
- “Twin babies mauled by a fox; Girls attacked as they slept in bed” (*Daily Mirror*)
- “Baby twins mauled in bedroom by urban fox” (*Daily Express*)

The headlines each cover three elements of the news fact: participants (victims and offenders), process and circumstances. The *Daily Express* was the only newspaper to specifically refer to the offender in the headline as an *urban* fox. The verbs 'maul' and 'attack' appear in active and passive form, although the passive is ultimately more common in the headlines and bodies of the articles. Passivisation and nominalisation, where victims are the grammatical agents, often indicate that the author sought for the victim to take up the thematic position. However, it is not uncommon in newspaper headline syntax for passives and nominalisations to prevail over the active form.

All four articles gave a brief summary of the incident, a description of the sisters' condition ("serious but stable"), a statement from Scotland Yard and a short list of previous fox attacks on humans. *The Times* and *Daily Express* included facts about urban foxes relating to population density in urban areas and the *Daily Express* reminded readers of recent warnings about the risks of "increasingly bold" urban foxes. The *Daily Mirror* also provided information about the victims' family, the father's job, and testimony from a neighbour about the incident, including his assessment of the risk from foxes. Environmental health responded to the incident by laying baited fox traps in the family's garden, all three newspapers reported. The police, acting as primary definers, explained that they "were called to reports of a fox attack" and that they "[believed] that the animal got in through an open window". *The Times* immediately offered its own interpretation of why the attack might have happened: "Although maulings of humans by foxes are very rare, they are known to attack for self-protection, particularly in late spring and early summer when they are rearing cubs." The *Daily Express*, on the other hand, blamed the incident on what it perceived to be a general increase in the boldness of hungry urban foxes. *The Times* stressed that in a previous incident a woman feeding a cat in her garden had been bitten "apparently without provocation".

During the *Impact* phase the process (what happened) is the focus of initial news coverage. The *Crisis* frame is at the centre of news reports and establishes the newsworthiness of the event (see chapter 8). Critcher (2003) and Jenks (1996) demonstrate that crisis is powerfully signified by an injury to

or death of a child. Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987:62) explain the significance of the *Crisis* frame as follows:

[T]he elevation of an event into a crisis provides an opportunity to make explicit and intensive confirmations of reality. The crisis formulation quickly establishes the reality of the 'problem' so that particular 'immediate' solutions can be called for and effected. It frequently inhibits the asking of alternative or critical questions. The news formulation takes on the character of reality, and the preferred solution takes on the character of inevitability.

Over the following days, newspapers provided additional information about the attack, based on the twins' mother's account, as well as initial expert assessments of the cause of the attack and the risk of an attack happening again. As shown in figures 5.6 and 5.7, during the first week following the attack (7–13 June), the voices most frequently cited by the tabloids were those of authorities (the police, hospital, local council and government officials), fox defenders (animal welfarists and charities), and fox killers (pest controllers and foxhunters). Tabloid reporters also interviewed a small number of celebrities, fox ecologists and other scientists. The broadsheets, on the other hand, focused exclusively on authorities, fox killers, the public (including neighbours), the family of the victims and fox defenders. Authorities, the public, and the victims' family were cited to a greater extent in the broadsheets than in the tabloid newspapers, and much less space was given by the broadsheets to the voices of fox defenders. Ecologists and other scientists were not cited at all by the broadsheets in the first week following the attack.

Fig.5.6 Proportion of total voices cited by broadsheet newspapers
07/06/2010–13/06/2010

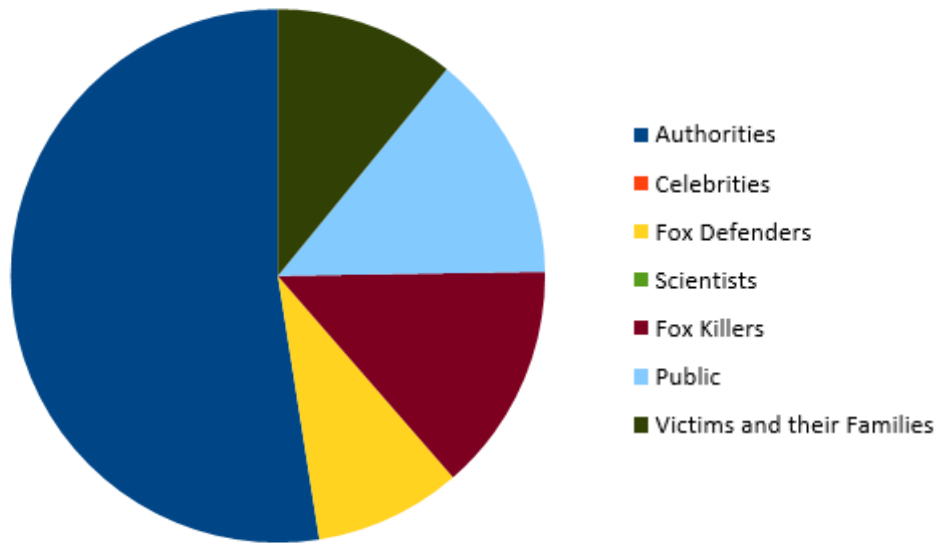
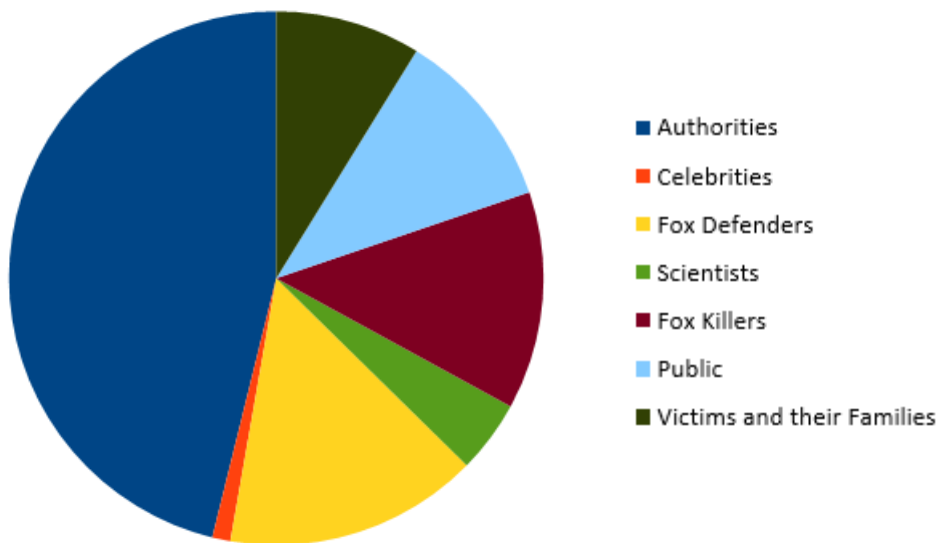


Fig.5.7 Proportion of total voices cited by tabloid newspapers
07/06/2010–13/06/2010



5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the *Warning* period prior to the June 2010 fox attack on twins Isabella and Lola Koupparis, using corpus analysis tools and detailed examinations of a selection of prominent articles published during this period. Further newspaper samples for the decade and century leading up to the incident showed that although the period immediately before the attack featured greater discussion of fox population growth, increased risks of predation and debates about culling, these are not entirely new concerns. Indeed, many of the newspapers' descriptions of urban foxes noted in the following chapters were already evident during the middle of the twentieth century, if not before. The *Warning* phase contained speculation and prediction about the supposed risks posed to humans from a growing, increasingly bold population of urban foxes, fears that appeared to be vindicated in June 2010. During the *Impact* phase the police acted as primary definers, describing the incident as a 'fox attack' and providing descriptions of the twins' injuries, allowing newspapers to fill in the blanks with their chosen vocabulary. Here, moral entrepreneurs including pest controllers, animal welfarists, the family of the twins, and in the case of tabloid newspapers a selection of fox ecologists, were called upon to comment. The following chapter focuses on the *Propagation* stage, including the identification of folk devils, descriptions of the victims and explanations for and evaluations of the incident involving the twins, as well as further incidents that followed.

CHAPTER 6. Propagation

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Description

6.2.1 Unearthing the folk devil

6.2.2 The menace returns

6.2.3 Tarred with a fox's brush: the framing of urban foxes

6.2.4 The devil in the animal rights movement

6.2.5 Innocent victims

6.3 Explanation and Evaluation

6.3.1 Explanation

6.3.2 Evaluation

6.3.3 Evolving news: new and old incidents emerge

6.4 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

As soon as the incident involving the twins Isabella and Lola Koupparis reached the national newspapers, attention focused heavily on the victims and on the alleged culprit, their characteristics and actions. The first part of this chapter examines how the urban fox folk devil was described, in the aftermath of the attacks on the twins, as well as a later attack on toddler Denny Dolan (the second major incident during the sample period), using a combination of corpus and framing analysis methods. It also discusses the appearance and framing of a secondary folk devil and of the victims themselves. The second half of the chapter outlines the frames used in the explanation and evaluation of both incidents, and concludes with an exposition of the ways in which the primary news theme evolved over the sample period. The aim of this chapter is to summarise the claims-making activities of commentators in the aftermath of the fox attacks and to examine how various frames relate to each other.

location. 'Bold', 'brazen' and 'fearless' also occurred in both tabloids and broadsheets, as did the word 'scavenging', although words such as 'prowling', 'skulking' and 'snarling' were reserved for the tabloids. There were also several adjectives that described how humans felt about them; they were 'hated', 'pursued', 'unwanted' but also 'cherished', according to the broadsheets, and 'unpleasant' but also 'desirable', according to the tabloids. The character adjectives were overwhelmingly negative but give some indication of the topics and frames that will be outlined below. Adjectives concerning the number of urban foxes emphasised that they were now 'common' or 'commonplace', that there were 'thousands' or 'loads of' them. Adjectives for change summarised many of the above themes, including that urban foxes were 'bolder' and 'bigger' in both size and population. Most of the themes found here were already in existence during the *Warning* phase (see table 5.1 in chapter 5), although the balance of character adjectives had tipped towards the negative, and there was a greater emphasis on hunger in the health category.

Table 6.1 Adjectival concordances for 'fox*' in the KoupparisBroadsheet and KoupparisTabloid subcorpora

Category	Broadsheet adjectives <i>n</i> = 58 (<i>newspaper items</i>)	Tabloid adjectives <i>n</i> =46 (<i>newspaper items</i>)
Physical appearance	cute ; large ; red ; smaller ; beautiful; bushy-tailed; cuddly; female; graceful; male; scruffy-looking, stinking; typical;	romantic ; beautiful; cuddly; male; pitiful; pretty big; red; (beautiful); (cuddly)
Health	(cuddly) ; (beautiful); (big); (bushy-tailed); (glossy) bin-raiding; hungry; no more or less healthy [than rural foxes]; malnourished; mangy; (well-fed)	dead ; diseased; hungry; mangy; thirsty
Age	young ; adult; new	four-month-old; half-grown; old; three to four months old
Character	cunning ; fearless ; marauding ; unwanted ; scavenging ; very territorial ; wild ; aggressive ; bad-ass; capricious; cheeky; cherished; copulating; curious; determined; distrusted; drive-by; feral; friendly; hated; highly adaptable; loved; mythical; nocturnal; noisy; pursued; sinister; stray;	particularly aggressive; prowling; scavenging; skulking; sly; snarling; stray; unpleasant; very bold;
Number	(fantastic) ; (scared) ; (sweet) ; (aggressive); (lovable); (sweet); (timid)	(cuddly) ; (cowering); (fantastic); (friendly); (shy)
Change	30,000 ; 33,000 ; thousands ; commonplace; 28; 100; 10,000; 23,100; 25,000; 240,000; 258,000	four ; common; 50,000; 40,000; loads of; 100; thousands; 33,000; 27; 225,000; (rare)
Location	bolder ; bigger [population]; increasing [population]; more [population]	bolder ; bigger [size]; braver; increasing [population]
	urban ; local; city; stray; (country) ; (rural)	urban ; stray; (rural)

The Koupparis subcorpus was further inductively coded to draw out the main topics, themes and frames used in the description of urban foxes, as well as the most prominent voices cited. Codes were combined into the following three main topics: population size, change and distribution, health and disease risk, and character and behaviour. Material published after this two-month period was then deductively coded according to these topics, themes and frames, with a focus on how they were developed. Later reporting created a need to establish a fourth category: size.

Population size, change & distribution

In the days and weeks following the Koupparis incident, community members were approached by the media to give a reaction. Many expressed concern over the number of foxes in the area. Some spoke of a “growing number” (*The Sun* 09/06/2010a) of foxes and others described the neighbourhood as “teeming” with them (*The Sun* 08/06/2010). In the *Daily Mirror* (08/06/2010) it was reported that “[m]ost people will swear that the urban fox population has rocketed in recent years” and both *The Daily Telegraph* (08/06/2010) and *The Sun* (09/06/2010a) went so far as to label it a “plague”, *The Sun* adding that foxes were “infesting our city streets like never before”. “Infestation” was a word also chosen by the *Daily Express* (11/06/2010 and later 1/04/2011), which further alleged that the fox, “being an apex-predator, breeds like fury” (11/06/2010). A letter published in *The Daily Telegraph* (11/06/2010) spoke of an “invasion”, a word also used later by *The Observer* (28/10/2012) in an article about an “army of invading wildlife”. The language of invasion is suggestive of imposition and of not belonging. This notion was expressed more decisively in the *Daily Mail* (08/06/2010) and the *Daily Express* (09/06/2010), both of which claimed that foxes belonged in the countryside, not the city. In the countryside they “[roamed] wild across field and dale”, wrote the *Daily Mail*, whereas in the city they “[spread] disease and fear”. The *Daily Express* affirmed that “[f]oxes are born killers that don't belong in cities” and that they represent “nature red in tooth and claw, more suited to the wild than a suburban back garden”. Foxes had only moved into cities when the rabbit population was hit by an outbreak of myxomatosis in the 1950s, some commentators alleged, a claim which *The Sunday Times Magazine* (08/01/2012b) later dismissed as a misconception.

The Observer (13/06/2010) also emphasised the movement over generations from rural into urban areas, framing it not in terms of invasion but “rural exodus”, explained in the following excerpt:

Driving many species out of the countryside has been the rapid industrialisation of farming, with huge monocultures, widespread spraying of chemicals and diminishing hedgerows and other 'wild' spaces for wild flowers and weeds to thrive. As they have disappeared, insects which depended on them have migrated towards towns and cities and they have often been followed in turn by birds and small mammals and eventually bigger, more noticeable species. Pest control, of foxes in particular, has also driven them away from their traditional homes. At the same time, urban areas have continued spreading into the countryside; litter and bin bags offer rich foraging for birds and mammals, and the growing trend to feed birds and other wildlife such as hedgehogs in the garden has encouraged more migrants.

Newspapers cited widely varying population figures. The *Daily Express* (08/06/2010) wrote that “[s]ome experts believe there could be 10,000 in London alone”. The *Daily Star Sunday* (04/07/2010) claimed there were an estimated 50,000 urban foxes in the UK, whereas *The Daily Telegraph* (09/09/2011) asserted that the figure was somewhere between 30,000 and 50,000 and stated that this equated to a possible 16 foxes per square mile in London (18/10/2010), or 28 per square mile according to the *Daily Mail* (08/06/2010). In his *Sunday Telegraph Country Diary* (13/02/2011), television presenter Ben Fogle went so far as to suggest that “there are more foxes in cities than in the countryside”, a claim belied by even the most inflated estimates quoted elsewhere in the newspapers.

Many articles emphasised a changing population size. The *Daily Mail* (18/06/2010) claimed that “the urban fox population has risen dramatically in recent years” and later (23/09/2010) implied that population growth has been unrelenting by stating that “[o]ver the past 70 years, Britain's urban fox population has grown from zero to more than 34,000”. The newspaper (12/06/2010) alleged that, according to experts, “[f]ox numbers in urban areas have quadrupled in the last three years”. However, this figure was derived from

the surge in call-outs experienced by pest controllers, according to Peter Crowden, chairman of the National Pest Technicians' Association, not from any population survey. *The Sun* (09/06/2010b) cited an RSPCA spokesperson, who explained that there was no evidence for a surge in numbers of foxes; "[i]t's just that humans are getting more agitated about them". Nevertheless, the *Daily Express* (24/09/2010) also wrote of a "soaring" population, accompanied by a "plague of disease, scavenging, foul mess and even attacks on humans". The authorities were wrong, alleged Clive Aslet from *The Daily Telegraph* (08/06/2010a):

According to Living with Urban Foxes [Bristol City Council's fox information leaflet], 'the fox population is stable', and has not significantly increased. Pull the other one. When I first lived in London in the late 1970s, urban foxes had an almost mythical status. They were like yeti. You never saw one; you weren't sure they really existed. Now, they are part of the scene.

Whereas most newspapers asserted that the urban fox population must be growing, some cited research from Bristol University's Mammal Research Unit, which claims that the population was likely to be around 33,000 and that this number had remained largely unchanged at a national level and was still only a small fraction of the total UK fox population (*The Independent* 08/06/2010 and the *Daily Mirror* 08/06/2010). The Veterinary Association for Wildlife Management agreed with this estimate (*The Guardian* 08/06/2010a) and stated that urban foxes account for only around 14% of the national population of foxes (*The Guardian* 08/06/2010b). *The Guardian's* nature commentator Patrick Barkham (08/06/2010b) proposed that the urban versus rural population separation was quite artificial, writing that "[i]n fact, they are often the same animals. Researchers found fox cubs born in the middle of Bristol ended up living in rural bliss on top of the Mendip Hills, almost 20 miles away."

The Daily Telegraph (12/06/2010a), on the other hand, claimed that fox numbers may have remained stable for a few decades but "they are undoubtedly becoming bolder". The *Daily Express* (24/09/2010) conceded that "[t]he RSPCA maintains urban fox numbers are little changed since the Eighties but it's clear foxes are either becoming more brazen about entering homes and

gardens or that we ourselves are enticing them in". This gives a clue as to why, in the absence of conclusive data on population change at a local or national level, the population was frequently assumed to have grown dramatically. If not population growth then a change in fox behaviour, which in turn had led to the greater visibility of urban foxes, must account for this perception. Foxes were more often being seen in urban areas than before, according to *The Guardian* (08/06/2010b), *The Sun* (09/06/2010a) and the *Daily Express* (24/09/2010). Bruce Lindsay-Smith, a pest controller specialising in urban foxes, was also cited in the *Daily Express* (24/09/2010), saying that he had never seen so many foxes in Greater London. The *Daily Mail* (23/09/2010) further reported on an RSPB survey, which apparently found that "[f]oxes were the most common wild mammal to visit British homes", based again on reported sightings. It also stated that "[u]rban foxes have become so brazen they are now regularly spotted in more than a third of British gardens". In other words, increased visibility was being attributed either to population growth or a change in the behaviour of urban foxes. It was no longer unusual to see a fox, according to the *Daily Mirror* (08/06/2010), which insisted that "[t]he fox has become just another part of urban life".

Health and disease risk

Fox health and disease risk was a further, albeit less common topic in the description of urban foxes following the incident with the Koupparis twins, and was often linked to the suggestion that foxes do not 'belong' in urban areas, not only from the perspective of human safety but from that of fox welfare itself. *The Times* (08/06/2010b) noted that "London foxes never seem glossy or well-fed but mangy, a chunk missing from an ear or running with a limp. They are vagrants or squatters, blagging their livelihoods at the margins from what others discard." Ricky Clark, of Environ Pest Control, was quoted in *The Independent* (08/06/2010), saying that "[t]hese are feral animals, full of diseases. In some cases their faeces are more dangerous than rat droppings." *The Daily Telegraph* (11/06/2010) also argued that "[u]rban foxes [...] were not designed to walk the streets of London, and in consequence are less healthy than their rural peers who mysteriously thrive in spite of constant culling". *The Independent* (21/11/2011) later reiterated the disease risk from urban foxes with

a quote from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, which spoke of risks from “[u]ncontrolled urban fox populations”.

Others challenged the suggestion that urban foxes were on the whole less healthy than rural foxes, notably Patrick Barkham from *The Guardian* (08/06/2010b). He disagreed with the stereotypes of urban foxes as “mangy” and “malnourished” and rural foxes as “bushy-tailed red beauties”. A feature article, published in *The Sunday Times Magazine* (08/01/2012b) some eighteen months after the incident, reasserted the importance of visibility, stating that “[t]here is no evidence that urban foxes are more prone to [mange] though a sick urban fox is more likely to be noticed. In the country, they simply die unseen.”

Character & behaviour

Are we overrun with a new breed of fearless urban fox?
Are these scruffy-looking, bin-raiding, lawn-wrecking
monsters developing different patterns of behaviour to
their fluffier, warier country cousins? Are they becoming
more aggressive?
(Patrick Barkham, *The Guardian* 08/06/2010b)

These are the questions most newspapers addressed in the weeks following the incident. Many were quick to point out that the alleged attack was a vindication of previous fears and undermined the sentimental views held by many urban residents about foxes. Pest controllers, in particular, were repeatedly cited:

These aren't the cuddly little red furry animals some
people think they are. It's not Basil Brush we're dealing
with here.
(Ricky Clark of Environ Pest Control, *The Independent*
08/06/2010)

People think that foxes are fantastic, beautiful cuddly
animals because of Springwatch and Bill Oddie.
(Peter Crowden, chairman of the National Pest
Technicians Association, *The Daily Telegraph*
08/06/2010b)

Anybody who thinks they're cuddly creatures is living in cloud cuckoo land.
(Bruce Lindsay-Smith, pest controller in Greater London,
Daily Mail 08/06/2010)

The *Daily Express* and *The Daily Telegraph* repeated this theme on a number of occasions, the former claiming that “[m]odern young people, city-raised and telly-educated, have been bombarded for years with saccharine rubbish about wild animals without having actually seen one in its own habitat. As a result some are wrongly demonised and others equally stupidly glamourised” (11/06/2010b). In an article about suburban chicken-keeping, *The Daily Telegraph* (11/06/2010b) highlighted that the incident with the Koupparis twins meant that people would finally have to wake up to the fact that foxes are, in fact, “nasty little buggers”.

Minor nuisance behaviours, though prominent in earlier reporting, were barely mentioned in any of the coverage following the attack. *The Sunday Times Magazine*'s feature, published eighteen months later (08/01/2010b), stated that foxes were often blamed for scavenging from dustbins, although “surveillance revealed that many of the visitors were actually dogs and cats”. Instead, the main suggestion across both tabloids and broadsheets was that foxes had become more brazen. They were fearless, even bordering on insolent. Janice Turner wrote in *The Times* (08/06/2010b) that “[f]oxes have little fear. [...] If you disturbed a vixen outside Sainsbury's at dusk it wouldn't scurry off, but depart at a swaggering jog-trot. [...] No longer feeling a need to hang in the shadows, they seem to have claimed the city.” The *Daily Mirror* (08/06/2010) suggested that “the creatures are becoming more brave. When once they would scurry away if you made a sound, now they simply stand and stare.” Similarly, Clive Aslet reported in *The Daily Telegraph* (08/06/2010a) that he “recently saw one in the middle of the day, sauntering along a street in Pimlico, as insouciant as Burlington Bertie taking a turn down the strand”. *The Sun* (09/06/2010a) pointed out that foxes had become so confident that they were even willing to be hand-fed by humans.

Pauline Koupparis, the mother of the twins, was repeatedly quoted referring to the fox as ‘defiant’. “It wasn't even scared of me. It just looked me directly in the

eye”, she said (*The Sun* 08/06/2010b, *The Guardian* 08/06/2010b, *Daily Express* 08/06/2010a, *The Daily Telegraph* 08/06/2010b). Her husband claimed to have lunged at the fox several times but it only moved a few inches (*The Guardian* 08/06/2010b), and instead of running away it merely stood there, “calmly assessing her” (*Daily Express* 08/06/2010b). Neighbours also noted that “[t]hese foxes are getting very bold. They will be walking down the street, look at you and just ignore you” (*The Sun* 08/06/2010b). Several neighbours reported that foxes had tried to enter their houses as well (*The Sun* 08/06/2010b, *The Guardian* 08/06/2010b, *The Independent* 12/06/2010b). One woman talked about having to chase a fox after it had tipped over her bin, describing the fox as “bold as brass, coming at us to attack rather than run away, which is what we thought he would do” (*The Independent* 12/06/2010b). Foxes, those normally timid creatures, were becoming increasingly confident (*The Independent* 12/06/2010b, *The Guardian* 08/06/2010a, *Daily Express* 08/06/2010a) and were “not scared of humans” (*The Sun* 9/06/2010b).

The Daily Telegraph in particular stressed the “shocking brass neck of the local wildlife” (09/06/2010c). Urban foxes, in contrast to their country cousins, were “bolder than ever” (12/06/2010a) and “scared of absolutely nothing” (11/06/2010b). The *Daily Express* (12/06/2010) asserted that “[i]f any animal can be said to be bold to the point of insolence, it is the modern urban fox”. Adding the caveat, “[w]e must be careful not to anthropomorphise”, the author stated that “if any creature can be said to have a mean streak, it is old Reynard”. The *Daily Mail* published several articles (15/06/2010, 18/06/2010, 21/06/2010) which highlighted the increasing confidence of urban foxes and gave as evidence the observation that foxes were still returning to the street in the days after the incident, despite the fact that several foxes had been trapped and killed in the family's garden since then.

Even a human presence – in the form of a police officer at the front door – doesn't appear to trouble the animal. [...] [T]heir arrival outside the house in Hackney, East London – and the indifference of one of them to the police officer – backs up claims that urban foxes are increasing in number and becoming bolder. (*Daily Mail* 15/06/2010)

The Times (08/06/2010b) suggested that the reason for the change in character and behaviour of urban foxes was that they no longer had anything to fear from humans. They have “no master, no predators, and unlike their country cousins are not, largely, pursued with shotguns or dogs”. The former mayor for Hackney, Joe Lobenstein, was quoted in the *Daily Express* (08/06/2010a) and the *Daily Mail* (08/06/2010), claiming that he had previously warned “that hungry stray foxes are prone to be unpredictable”.

Linked to the prominent claim that urban foxes were becoming brazen, audaciously so, was the assertion that their attacks on humans were predatory in nature; the fox intended to eat the twins. The *Daily Mail* (08/06/2010) argued that it is their omnivory, the potential for them to eat anything, and their territoriality that made them dangerous, and that this had thus been a predatory attack. Pest controllers were repeatedly cited regarding the nature of the attack and the fox's presumed intentions. Pest controller Peter Crowden confirmed in *The Daily Telegraph* (08/06/2010a) that “[t]o the urban fox, a rabbit or a baby is a wriggling piece of meat”.

They are wild and vicious killers. The two babies who were attacked in London had an amazingly lucky escape. Had the mother not come in and startled the fox, her children would have been killed. There is no question about it. The fox didn't know that the things it was attacking were babies. They are carnivorous, wild animals and they have to survive on what they find.
(Bruce Lindsay-Smith, pest controller in Greater London, cited in the *Daily Star Sunday*, 04/07/2010)

The *Daily Express* (09/06/2010d) agreed that “[a] fox is not going to make a moral distinction between savaging baby humans and baby animals” and argued that “[i]t is clear from the disturbing events in Hackney this week that the town fox is now capable of regarding a nursery rather as its country cousin regards a chicken coop, and rather easier to enter” (12/06/2010). However, at the same time the *Daily Express* (11/06/2010b) added that “[h]alf our urban fox population, being now city-raised, cannot hunt any more”. Later (01/04/2011) the newspaper blamed “foolish sentimentalists” for giving them handouts and

claimed that urban foxes dumped in the countryside “would have watched a rabbit hop past and not have a clue what it was, let alone their natural diet”.

Out of all the broadsheets, it was only *The Daily Telegraph* which subscribed to this predominantly tabloid view of the fox's intentions. The claim that the attack was predatory in nature is linked to the suggestion, again most prominent in the popular press, that foxes kill for fun. “[F]oxes will kill just because they can”, wrote the *Daily Express* (09/06/2010d), later describing an incident in which a fox “slaughtered the farm cat's kittens just for the hell of it” (12/06/2010). The *Daily Mirror* (15/06/2010) published a letter that read “[f]oxes don't kill to live, they live to kill”. Patrick Barkham, on the other hand, wrote in *The Guardian* (08/06/2010b) that “[f]oxes do not hunt in packs, nor do they kill for pleasure. If let loose in a hen coop they will kill everything in sight but their intention is to bury their prey for leaner times.” Professor Stephen Harris also later dismissed claims that surplus killing meant that foxes merely killed for fun and stated that this was in fact “typical carnivore behaviour” (*The Sunday Times Magazine* 08/01/2012b).

In line with some of the language used during the *Warning* phase, foxes were also repeatedly referred to as “gangsters” (*The Times* 08/06/2010b) and “shadowy citizens” (*The Daily Telegraph* 08/06/2010b). *The Times's* Janice Turner (08/06/2010b) argued that they were transgressors with “no respect for where the outdoors ends and indoors begins” and posed the rhetorical question, “[i]s there a creature more sinister than the urban fox?” To her, the fox “seems to embody one's darkest fear about dwelling in a city; that living among us, silent, watching and waiting for a lapse in our attention is a malignant, amoral force. If a fox took a human form he'd be the burglar who broke in while you were on holiday [...]” (See also figure 6.3)

Whereas blame for the incident mostly fell on an increasingly large or bold urban fox population, a number of newspapers initially referred to the presence of a “rogue” fox. *The Times* (08/06/2010a), for example, confirmed that the “rogue fox” responsible for the attack on the twins had subsequently been caught and killed in the family's garden. *The Daily Telegraph* (10/06/2010c) also published a picture of a fox “believed to have been the fox that attacked twin

girls as they slept in their cots. It was photographed by a policeman using a mobile phone moments after he arrived at the scene.” *The Sun* (09/06/2010a), however, reported that a fox, presumed to be the attacker, was seen a few nights after the incident trotting past the twins' house.

Several tabloids published close-up pictures of foxes snarling, licking their lips and baring their teeth. The *Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, and the *Daily Express* repeatedly published photographs of yawning foxes, but captions made them appear menacing (figures 6.3–6.6). *The Sun* superimposed a large yawning fox onto a picture of a school entrance, following a subsequent incident involving a child in a school playground. Malamud (2012) explains that animals in photographs often lead to very two-dimensional caricatures, which facilitate their categorisation as either good or bad, hero or villain. Berger (1980) adds that photographs' technology-mediated insight into the animal world fosters alienation and decontextualisation, and obscures the human intervention that took place through the act of photographing. Drawing on Desmond's (2002) critique of taxidermy, one could also argue that these photos depict a deindividuated, decontextualised specimen in a pose that says more about the human perception of the essence of the species than it perhaps says about the species itself.

Fig.6.3 Headline: "15st man mugged by a fox" (The Sun 08/03/2012w)



Fig.6.4 "Not so cute: Fox can be very aggressive"
(Daily Mail 08/06/2010w)



Fig.6.5 *“Exceptions to the rule: Try convincing yourself a fox is timid when one is going berserk in your home” (Daily Mail 17/06/2010w)*



Fig.6.6 *“Vicious... a fox bit the little lad in the playground of school” (The Sun 21/06/2010w)*



Fig.6.7 *“Foxes are either becoming more brazen about entering homes – or we are enticing them in” (Daily Express 24/09/2010w)*



Other common images included blurry photographs of foxes strolling past the twins' house, jumping over the neighbours' wall or looking in through a patio door, all taken in the aftermath of the incident and highlighting the continuation of the threat (figures 6.7–6.9).

Fig.6.8 *“Bold... fox outside the attack house last night” (The Sun 09/06/2010w)*



Fig.6.9 “A fox is spotted climbing over a wall next door to the house where the twins were attacked” (*Daily Mail* 02/07/2010w)



Fig.6.10 No caption (*Sunday Mirror* 13/06/2010w)



The majority of voices speaking in defence of urban foxes also focused on their character more than any other attribute. The humane wildlife deterrence specialist John Bryant explained in *The Guardian* (08/06/2010b) that “[f]oxes are fascinated by children” and “[w]hen they hear the children running around the playground, they will sit in the bushes and watch them, captivated”. This is nothing sinister, readers were assured. He was also quoted in the *Daily Mail* (12/06/2010), insisting that “[t]here's no way a four-month-old fox walked into the house with the purpose of eating a baby”. Martin Hemmington, founder of the National Fox Welfare Society, furthermore stated that “they would never go in with the intention of attacking someone” (*Daily Mirror* 08/06/2010) and proposed that the attack was motivated by fear, rather than predatory instinct (*The Guardian* 08/06/2010b). Fox attacks might be the consequence of vixen having to defend their cubs, he argued in *The Sun* (08/06/2010a). In this particular incident, the fox may have become trapped and panicked, he said: “They will bite if cornered. Perhaps it was injured or had a concussion from a car accident” (*Daily Mirror* 08/06/2010). John Bryant (*Daily Mirror* 08/06/2010, *The Daily Telegraph* 09/06/2010a) and Professor Stephen Harris (*Daily Mail* 09/06/2010) both hypothesised that the culprit might have been an inquisitive fox cub, attracted by the smell of dirty nappies or milk. Mr Bryant told the *Daily Mail* (09/06/2010) that he was receiving many reports from people who were mysteriously finding nappies in their gardens, presumably fished from bins by scavenging foxes. However, *The Guardian* (08/06/2010b) was the only newspaper to explicitly endorse the view that the fox might have acted in self-defence or was merely being inquisitive. Others cited the above sources without judgement, or, in the case of *The Daily Telegraph*, undermined the value of these suggestions by accusing scientists such as Professor Harris of being “foxites” (08/06/2010a). John Bryant was also to be seen as a biased commentator, having been a former executive of the League Against Cruel Sports, an anti-hunt campaigning organisation (10/06/2010c).

The theme of visibility came to the fore again many months after the incident. Television naturalist Chris Packham (*The Sunday Times Magazine* 08/01/2012b) highlighted that while foxes were blamed for all manner of behaviours, from rifling through bins to killing cats, some of these actions were wrongly attributed to foxes when there may have be many other unseen

culprits. Considering that foxes also eat carrion and roadkill, they may “eat many more pets than they actually kill”. The *Daily Mail* (24/04/2012) also ran a story on Chris Packham's views, quoting him as saying that “as for attacks on humans – I'll be necessarily diplomatic – I don't believe it”. He argued that “[t]hey scavenge while our cats murder with genocidal impunity” and concluded that “[f]oxes brilliantly betray a national shame, that we're wasters and I don't suppose we like that, either”. The *Daily Mirror* (25/04/2012) also cited him but shed doubt over the value of his views by prefacing his claims with the statement that he had “previously waded into controversy by saying that pandas should be allowed to die out and calling on parents to have fewer children”.

Size: the monster fox

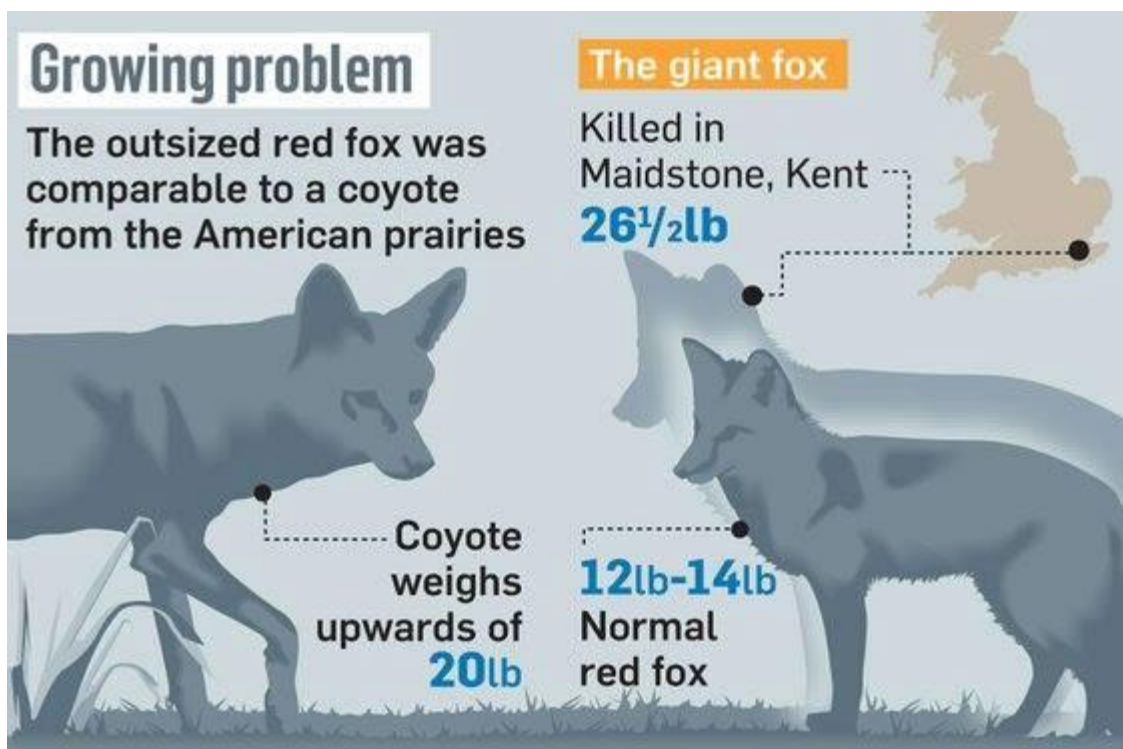
The size of urban foxes was not a prominent focus in initial media reports following the attacks on the twins, with the exception of the following line in *The Daily Telegraph* (08/06/2010a): “Foxes are large animals, as big as many dogs.” Professor Stephen Harris, introduced in *The Guardian* (08/06/2010b) as “the pioneer of urban fox studies”, on the other hand, emphasised that foxes were *not* big creatures, not much bigger than many cats, and the *Daily Mail* (08/06/2010) added that they were certainly no bigger than fifteen years before.

However, six months after the incident, on 2 January 2011, a story broke of the discovery of a monster fox, dubbed the ‘Maidstone giant’, which apparently proved that foxes were not only large animals but were in fact getting bigger. *The Sunday Times* (02/01/2011) ran with the following headline: “Look out – it's the fantastic monster fox; The capture of Britain's largest recorded fox confirms fears that the animals are getting bigger and bolder.” The fox, which had been caught and killed by a vet in Kent, was 4ft long and weighed 26lb. Robert Bucknell, “one of the leading authorities on shooting foxes”, confirmed that he had never seen a fox as big as this. The dead fox was pictured next to a seven-year-old child (figure 6.10), emphasising not only its size but also suggesting the threat the animal could pose to children. The article was also accompanied by an infographic (figure 6.11), which emphasised the difference between a ‘normal’ fox and the giant Maidstone fox, comparing it to the size of an American coyote.

Fig.6.11 “At 1.22m from nose to tail and weighing 26lb, the European red fox found in Maidstone, Kent, had grown to the size of a seven-year-old child”
(The Sunday Times 02/01/2011w)



Fig.6.12 Infographic in *The Sunday Times* (02/01/2011w)



The Sunday Times concluded from this single case that “[u]rban foxes were notably bigger than their country counterparts”. It claimed that “[z]oologists and experts contacted by *The Sunday Times* said they had never come across such a large animal, but it apparently confirmed fears that foxes are getting bigger and bolder as they feast on urban leftovers, some of which are put out by animal lovers”. It was not clear from the wording whether this was a conclusion drawn by the newspaper or by the zoologists and experts, nor in fact was it clear who these experts were. It also notably contradicted earlier reports, including those made in *The Times*, that urban foxes were inferior to rural foxes and less likely to thrive.

The Fieldsports Channel waded in with an offer of £100 for the best story of the largest fox (*The Sunday Times* 02/01/2011). Presenter Charlie Jacoby commented in the newspaper that “[w]e all love monstersized animals but if I lived in suburbs with children, I would think twice about leaving the baby out in the pram on a warm summer night knowing outsize foxes are out there. Bigger foxes take bigger prey.” Roy Lupton, a veteran fox shooter and personal friend of the man who caught the Maidstone giant, agreed that “[w]ith the additional size comes added confidence and it doesn't take a lot for them to start taking on additional quarries”. The *Daily Mail* (03/01/2011) summarised that “[t]he discovery has fuelled fears that urban foxes are hunting new prey”. The newspaper also cited Derek Yalden, president of the Mammal Society, who was in agreement with the statement that foxes were becoming bolder but clarified that he believed the Maidstone giant was “an exception rather than an indication that foxes are getting bigger”.

The Daily Telegraph (03/01/2011) also covered this story and proposed that it “[raised] fears that the animals are growing larger because of an 'easy living' on food scraps”. Having already blamed animal lovers for leaving out food for urban foxes, in turn casting doubt over the value of their contributions to the debate on urban foxes, the article then went on to claim that “animal rights campaigners say that most foxes live on insects and small mammals and pose no harm to humans unless they are frightened”. It did not mention the animal behaviourists and ecologists who elsewhere were repeatedly cited as saying something very similar. *The Daily Telegraph* (08/01/2011) was still reporting on

the story of the giant fox a week later, now with a comparison between urban foxes in England and leopards in India, which had been increasingly finding their way into Indian towns and cities and killing people. This direct comparison was repeatedly made in the article, as it was claimed that “[b]oth foxes and leopards are aggressive, adaptable animals, and both are thriving”. The article then listed a number of reported attacks on pets and humans by foxes and ended abruptly with the question: “Worried?”

On 8 January 2011, the *Daily Mail* reported on a 34lb, 4ft long fox, even bigger than the Maidstone giant, found in *rural* Somerset. Although this fox had been shot and weighed in June 2009, the evolution of the news fact 'foxes are getting bigger' to encompass all foxes seen anywhere at any time meant that some newspapers were prepared to cover old news, including stories no longer pertaining to urban foxes. *The Daily Telegraph* (05/03/2012) also ran a story about a “supersize beast”, which had been found in Aberdeenshire, weighing 38lb and spanning 4ft 9in from head to tail. The newspaper claimed that “[e]xperts believe that the explosion in the fox population in urban areas, where food waste is abundant, could explain the supersize creatures”. Several assumptions were thus made: that the urban fox population was exploding, that food waste in urban areas was abundant and accessible to foxes, and that the purported population explosion was linked to the increase in size of urban foxes. Although *The Daily Telegraph* was repeatedly vague on who its “experts” were, it cited spokespeople for the Shooting Sports Trust and the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, both with a vested interest in the killing of foxes, the former making the confusing claim that “[t]he increase in the urban fox population means that some foxes now have the opportunity to eat much more than they have in the past” and the latter confirming that “[a] 35lb fox would have been unthinkable a few years ago”. *The Sun* (09/03/2012) also covered the story with the headline “21st century fox: They're bigger, bolder and taking over.”

6.2.2 *The menace returns*

Many of the same descriptions (grouped into frames in section 6.1.3) re-emerged in February 2013, after another incident involving an urban fox and a

one-month-old child, Denny Dolan, who was reportedly dragged from his cot by a fox and bitten on his face and hands, resulting in a severed finger that required surgical reattachment. A *SketchEngine* Word Sketch for the lemma ‘fox’ in the subcorpus of newspaper items published during a two-month period following the incident (10 February until 9 April 2013), divided again into tabloids and broadsheets, revealed that ‘fox’ had a narrower spectrum of modifiers in broadsheet articles than in the tabloids (see appendix 6). The adjectival concordances shown in table 6.2 for the whole subcorpus suggest that the size of urban foxes had become more important. Foxes were also no longer just ‘hungry’, but ‘hunger-crazed’ and ‘starving’. Character adjectives exhibited many of the same themes as in the coverage following the attack on the twins, although more disagreement was apparent, with several consenting mentions of the ‘playful’ nature of foxes and claims that they were ‘shy’ and ‘largely harmless’.

Table 6.2 Adjectival concordances for ‘fox*’ in the Denny Dolan subcorpus
n=63 (newspaper items)

Category	Adjectives
Physical appearance	male ; biggest; enormous; fluffy; 4ft; furry; handsome; little; noticeably-large; pathetic; red; small; 35lb; 26lb; (magnificent)
Health	inbred; hunger-crazed; mangy; unhealthy; scrawny; starving; (well-fed)
Age	adult
Character	brazen; playful; wild ; bold; brash; elusive; fearless; feral; largely harmless; relatively destructive; shy; tame; very confused; (cuddly); (playful); (romantic) ; (friendly); (regular); (scared); (shy); (timid)
Number	40,000; loads of; 33,000; 10,000 ; a lot; common; few; thriving; (225,000)
Change	bigger (size); increasingly bold
Location	urban ; resident; town; city-dwelling; suburban; (rural) ; (country); (rustic)

The Daily Telegraph (11/02/2013a) reiterated many of its earlier themes and descriptions, claiming that “[t]he attack revived fears about the growing population of increasingly bold urban foxes”. Neighbours again complained that their neighbourhood was “overrun” with foxes (*The Sun* 11/02/2013b) and that numbers of foxes had “risen significantly in recent years” (*The Daily Telegraph* 11/02/2013b). The *Daily Mirror* (11/02/2013) wrote about a “40,000 plague in towns”, and even *The Independent* (12/02/2013b) joined in with the claim that “there may be as many as 10,000 foxes now living wild in the capital, entering houses and sometimes attacking people, particularly young children”. Pest controller Peter Crowden wrote an editorial for the *Daily Mail* (11/02/2013), in which he drew a direct link between the size of the fox population and the number of call-outs he received, stating that he now answered fox-related calls up to three times a week during the breeding season, compared to none thirty years ago. He wrote, “[t]oday, experts reckon something like 33,000 foxes are running wild in our towns and cities. I can well believe it. In my patch of the Midlands, numbers have roughly doubled in the past five years, particularly in urban areas.” Urban foxes were “very good at one thing: reproducing”, and this, he alleged, was leading to an explosion in their population. “They’re everywhere now, definitely more than there used to be”, pest controller Bruce Lindsay-Smith agreed (*The Guardian* 15/02/2013). *The Daily Telegraph* (12/02/2013a) gave the impression that foxes were ubiquitous and that they were coming dangerously close to humans. It published a photograph of a fox in the garden adjacent to Denny Dolan’s house, as well as a photograph of a notice in Wythenshawe hospital’s maternity ward, which had put hospital staff on “fox alert”. Another article in the same newspaper (12/02/2013b) reiterated that foxes were “[c]rossing boundaries” into cities where they didn’t belong. Professor Harris, cited in *The Sunday Times* (17/02/2013c), disagreed:

It’s not a case of, why would they want to live in cities? I would say, why wouldn’t they? They are found in every habitat from the edge of the Arctic down to the deserts of north Africa. Urban areas are just another habitat.

John Bryant also took issue with the claim that urban foxes were growing in number, stating in *The Daily Telegraph* (12/02/2013) that “[i]f anything, the number of urban foxes has gone down”. Urban fox myths were abundant,

according to *The Guardian* (12/02/2013), which noted that “[t]he consensus among experts is that there has been no significant increase since [the 1980s], largely because populations are still recovering from a mange epidemic”.

Peter Crowden's editorial in the *Daily Mail* (11/02/2013) reiterated the notion that urban foxes were diminished versions of their rural cousins. He claimed that urban foxes were “covered in ticks and fleas” and “riddled with mange” and “in many areas they are interbreeding with close relations, producing ever-more deformed offspring”. He continued, “[c]ompared with their rural cousins, who have lush golden-brown coats, urban foxes are pathetic, unhealthy specimens. Where a country fox has a magnificent brush, town ones tend to grow thin, hairless tails...” The size of the fox population had a direct impact on health, he claimed: “[t]he more fox numbers grow, the less healthy their population becomes [...]”. This also made the town fox “a more dangerous beast”.

The topic of size received a lot less attention in the aftermath of this incident than in the case of the Koupparis twins, although *The Sunday Times* (10/02/2013) reminded readers of the Maidstone giant and cited a spokesperson for the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, who reiterated that foxes were indeed getting bigger. It is worth noting that although adjectives for size were common in the adjectival concordance list shown in table 6.2, closer examination revealed that these adjectives stemmed from a small number of articles. In other words, concordance analysis, though useful in providing initial insights into themes and changes, cannot be relied upon to demonstrate the saliency of particular words and themes across the entire corpus, nor the context in which they appear.

Earlier themes with regard to character and behaviour did resurface strongly. *The Sunday Times* (10/02/2013) labelled urban foxes “fearless” and neighbours reiterated that foxes were becoming increasingly brazen (*The Times* 11/02/2013b). *The Daily Telegraph* (11/02/2013b) claimed that one neighbour “said he recently returned home to discover his path blocked by a large pack of foxes”. “I just saw all these foxes, 20 to 25 of them, in the street”, he reportedly said. “It looked like they were having a convention. They were all standing there barking.” The London mayor Boris Johnson warned “[t]hey may appear cuddly

and romantic, but foxes are a pest and a menace, particularly in cities” (*The Daily Telegraph* 11/02/2013a, *Daily Mirror* 10/02/2013, *Mail on Sunday* 10/02/2013, *The Sun* 10/02/2013). In his *Daily Mail* (11/02/2013) editorial, pest controller Peter Crowden reiterated that “these creatures are built for killing”. This had been a predatory attack, similar to another case in which a fox had tried to “eat” a woman’s ear in her sleep. The *Daily Express* (12/02/2013b) also wrote of the animals’ “newly predatory aggression” and emphasised the difference between rural and urban foxes:

Rustic foxes are indeed timid. They are loners, rarely spotted in daylight, prepared to scamper off at speed if a human being looms at view. Town foxes, on the other hand, are brash and brazen.

The People (17/02/2013b) wrote similarly about “feral foxes”, roaming the streets of Britain’s cities:

[They] are unrecognisable from their country cousins with their shiny coats and bushy tails. Rural foxes are elusive and shy and exist by hunting rabbits and pheasants. They’re terrified of anything that smells of man. Urban foxes are inbred, scrawny and mangy and scavenge leftover food from rubbish bins or litter dumped in the street. They’re astonishingly bold – and getting ever bolder.

Even an editorial in *The Independent* (11/02/2013) asserted that the incident had shown that urban foxes behaved differently to their rural counterparts. *The Daily Telegraph* (12/02/2013b) added that “they have 42 teeth and sharp, non-retractable claws”. The words ‘sneaking’, ‘skulking’ and ‘stalking’ were frequently used by the *Daily Mirror* and in a reminder of earlier coverage of the Koupparis incident, the newspaper (11/02/2013) published pictures (figures 6.12-13) of a fox stalking the scene of the “baby savaging”, writing that “[t]he healthy looking creature clearly had no fear as he skulked behind a car next door”.

Fig.6.13 *“Prowling: A fox at 4.40pm right next to where the attack took place the day before” (Daily Mirror 11/02/2013w)*



Fig.6.14 *“Skulking: The fox strolls off” (Daily Mirror 11/02/2013w)*



6.2.3 *Tarred with a fox's brush: the framing of urban foxes*

The four main topics in the descriptions of urban foxes are connected by several significant themes: visibility, transgression, intention, belonging, and disgust. All of these are explored in greater detail in chapter 9. The descriptions summarised so far have been used to compile a list of key discursive frames (see appendix 8).

Particularly interesting in the portrayal of the urban fox folk devil following the incident involving the twins is the use of the frames of *Invasion* and *Infestation*, which, as mentioned in chapter 5, have much in common with the tabloid discourse of immigration. In a moment of critical reflection on the coverage of urban foxes, *The Guardian* (12/06/2010) itself described this resemblance as follows: “[t]hey come over here, into our cities, they steal our food, they swagger down the street like hoodies, they know no fear, they ignore our way of life and the authorities seem powerless and unwilling to stop them”. The *Invasion* frame is different from the *Rural Exodus* frame, in terms of scale, intensity and also the relative emphasis on push or pull factors. Whereas *Rural Exodus* emphasises that foxes were driven from the countryside through human action, *Invasion* implies a deliberate take-over. The *Infestation* frame is opposed to the *Population Stability* frame, not only on account of factual disagreements over the size of the population, but also because of a disagreement over the need for human intervention in wild animal populations. *Infestation* draws from pest control discourse in its argument that urban fox numbers must be ‘controlled’ in the interests of humans, and from wildlife management discourse, which insists that wildlife lacking a natural predator must be kept in check, not only for humans but also in the interests of wild animals themselves (Decker, Riley and Siemer 2012). The *Population Stability* frame draws on the scientific discourse of ecology, which does not dispute the aforementioned statement *per se*, but which in this particular case yielded evidence to support the claims that fox populations self-regulate and that an absence of predation is made up for by other causes of mortality.

The frames of *Infestation* and *Invasion*, which featured words such as ‘stray’ and ‘feral’, both of which emphasise out-of-placeness, also came up against the

Indigenous frame. The dispute here centres around a disagreement over belonging and what is the natural habitat for foxes. Disease is often used as evidence of not belonging. If urban foxes fail to thrive 'naturally' in cities, without human intervention, then they are ostensibly out of place and it is not in their interest to allow them to remain. What I have labelled the *Diminished* fox frame includes this argument, as well as an emphasis on the difference between rural and urban foxes.

With regard to character and behaviour, the *Brazen* frame was most prominent. Foxes had become brazen to the point of insolence. They had claimed the city, defied human authority, disrespected and transgressed boundaries and arrogantly imposed their will on urban residents. They no longer knew their place, in the physical environment or in the human/animal hierarchy. They were expected to fear humans, but much like bacteria that become resistant to antibiotics, they had stopped responding and were no longer deterred by a human presence. This made them dangerous and unpredictable. However, they were always naturally evil 'serial killers' anyway, killing chickens for fun or a bit of sport. Diminished versions of the rural fox, they were unable to hunt naturally and had resorted to new and easy prey, so the argument went. Their behaviour with regard to children, it was alleged, was predatory (the *Predator* frame); the intention had been to eat the twins. The sly and cunning countryside fox had evolved into a sinister urban *Gangster*, stalking prey and launching carefully-planned assaults, often in packs, others claimed. Alternatively, these were the actions of a *Rogue* individual.

However, several commentators and newspapers, particularly *The Guardian*, adopted the *Resourceful* frame, which instead interpreted the presence of foxes in urban areas as a sign of their adaptability. Surplus killing was a natural predatory behaviour, not a sign of evil, and the attack on the twins was not evidence that foxes were seeking out new prey. Instead, the incident was a sign of the *Inquisitiveness* of the species and the fox had probably acted in *Self-defence*. Television naturalists, outspoken scientists and humane wildlife deterrence specialists also emphasised that foxes were regularly treated as *Scapegoats* with regard to nuisance behaviours, such as fouling and bin-raiding.

The development of the *Monster* frame contributed to the *Predator* frame: bigger foxes could take bigger prey. However, it perhaps unintentionally contradicted the *Diminished* fox frame, relied on by so many newspapers, particularly *The Daily Telegraph*, because it suggested that urban foxes were in fact thriving. However, taken together, most of the frames described here contributed to what *The Guardian* (12/02/2013) later summarised as the “urban myth” about foxes: “Urban foxes are marauding giants that feed on takeaway curries, cats and babies.”

Descriptions of urban foxes featured colourful language, hyperbole and other semantic moves and rhetorical devices. Hyperbole is common in the right-wing press (van Dijk 1991) and was shown by Cohen (1972) to be a tool for creating menace. The tabloid press in particular were responsible for the use of hyperbole, although *The Daily Telegraph* also repeatedly waded in, perpetuating tabloid themes and relying on a limited spectrum of sources. Aside from pest controllers and gamekeepers, who were repeatedly cited for information on population ecology and animal behaviour, vague reference was made to other ‘experts’, whereas what were in fact prominent scientific claims were often misleadingly attributed to ‘animal rights campaigners’. Left-leaning broadsheets, including *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, occasionally came to the urban foxes’ defence or reflected on the origins of claims made about them. Alexander Chancellor, writing in *The Guardian's G2* supplement (11/06/2010a), for example, stated the following and called for perspective:

Townsppeople who find foxes sweet and cuddly are condemned by country people as naïve and ignorant. But country people are just as guilty of endowing foxes with human characteristics. Foxes, they insist, are not sweet at all, but vicious, cunning and malevolent. Yet they are none of these things. They are no more capable of malevolence than they are of kindness. They are just wild animals and, like all wild animals, they endeavour to survive by whatever methods their genes dictate. It does not make them popular with country people that they prey on their pets and poultry, but it is not their fault, any more than it is the kingfisher's fault that it preys on fish or the cat's that it preys on mice.

The frames described here had entered the public imagination to the point where urban foxes featured in similes and metaphors used to talk about a variety of unrelated subjects. The *Daily Mail* (03/11/2010), for instance, described a politician who was “bold as an urban fox”. *The Daily Telegraph* (06/11/2010) wrote about vampires, which were “getting to be a bit like urban foxes: once slightly exotic and exciting, now ubiquitous and rather tiresome”. And *The Guardian* (07/07/2012), in a discussion about the buddleia plant, wrote, “*B. davidii* is like the urban fox [...]. It's nice to have something wild in the city, but it can be annoying, too – keep it under control.” This is part of the process of symbolisation, where a term (urban fox) is used to recall the images, frames, and themes described above. Descriptions also featured elements of amplification, as outlined by Maneri (2013), including the use of statistics, anecdotal evidence from pest controllers, discursive tags that convey urgency and alarm and prominent headlines, which Fowler (1991) interprets as the transcription of oral tone intensity. Pest controllers' claims regarding the surge in call-outs they had experienced about foxes say as much about public risk perception and self-advertisement as they do about fox numbers (if not more), but they were frequently cited by newspapers, with the effect of exaggerating the scientific consensus about fox numbers. Photographs of yawning foxes were also distorted by captions which implied aggression.

6.2.4 The devil in the animal rights movement

Foxes were not the only villains in this story. As we see in the second half of this chapter, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* repeatedly dismissed the claims and ways of life of animal protectionists, and in the weeks following the incident with the Koupparis twins they created a second folk devil. In contrast to their depictions of urban foxes, for which they relied heavily on secondary sources, the media acted as primary definers in this instance.

On 13 June 2010, the *Mail on Sunday* broke a story with ambiguous headline “[f]ox mother threatened”. The article went on to explain that “[t]he parents of the children mauled by a fox are receiving police protection amid concern over threats from animal rights activists. Officers have been assigned to guard the family home and police liaison officers are in contact with Pauline and Nicolas Koupparis.” The *Mail on Sunday*, *Daily Express* (14/06/2010) and *Daily Star*

(14/06/2010) further revealed that anti-foxhunting protesters were behind a Facebook page called “Pauline Koupparis is a lying b****” and that another page called “Urban Fox Defenders” had attracted more than 500 followers. The *Daily Express* (14/06/2010) cited one of the contributors to the Urban Fox Defenders page, who stated that the fox attack story “reeks of a constructed hype”. However, the newspaper alleged that comments on the page went beyond questioning the truth of the family's account of the incident and included threats against them.

All reporting newspapers cited a spokesperson from Scotland Yard, who explained that there was no “tangible threat” to the family but confirmed that there was “concern” over what had been written on the internet (*Mail on Sunday* 13/06/2010, *Daily Express* 14/06/2010, *Daily Star*, 14/06/2010, *The Daily Telegraph* 14/06/2010b, *Daily Mail* 14/06/2010). As a result, a police officer was assigned to guard the family's home. *The Daily Star* (14/06/2010) published an article with the headline “[p]olice guard for the mum of fox twins; Fears grow over animal rights thugs.” “Animal rights extremists” were causing concern for “an outbreak of vigilante violence” directed at the family. The *Daily Star* also cited numerous Facebook comments, which alleged that the family were lying to the public and that there was no evidence that the attacker was indeed a fox. Some suggested that the culprit may have been the family dog. Wildlife expert Terry Nutkins was also reported to have said that he “was very 'doubtful' a fox could have carried out the mauling”. According to *The Daily Telegraph* (14/06/2010b), online commentators had additionally accused the mother of “having an agenda to repeal the ban on foxhunting”. The newspaper cited a comment on the Urban Fox Defenders page which suggested that it wasn't “a coincidence that this comes at a time when the Conservative government is attempting to repeal the ban on foxhunting”. Concerns of animal welfare campaigners that the incident had caused a demonisation of urban foxes and that this could be used in a campaign to repeal the foxhunting ban were dismissed by the *Daily Mail* as the ramblings of “internet gossips” (14/06/2010), “animal rights extremists” (17/06/2010), and “misbegotten lunatics” (14/07/2010).

The Daily Telegraph (16/06/2010) equated online commentators with “activists”, whom it dismissed as “the lunatic fringe”, stating that “activists tend, rather unfairly, to side with the fur-and-teeth brigade”. The newspaper clarified that “[l]egitimate animal welfare groups have spoken out against the extremists, nonetheless their reputation becomes tarnished by association”. The *Daily Express* (19/06/2010) also condemned “the animal rights brigade” and wrote of their “menacing, shadowy existence” on online forums. Writing about speciesism, it suggested that “[t]he arguments that babies’ lives are, when it comes to the crunch, worth more than foxes’ lives would fall on the deafest of ears. Animal rights activists do not see a moral differential between humans and animals, under any circumstances at all.” Although this is an inaccurate summary of the critique of the concept of speciesism (see Singer 1975), the *Daily Express* made similar claims and proposed that these “extremists” were “by definition intransigent, closed to argument or entreaty, once locked into their rigid belief systems their minds become trapped in inescapable prisons of their own design”.

Finally, the *Daily Mail* (02/07/2010) published a long feature article with the headline “Who are the real animals?” The article began with the following lead: “[a] Mail investigation identifies the animal rights fanatics (and, oh yes, they’re almost all on benefits) who left the fox attack family needing police protection”. It dismissed those who, with the “mentality of [a] lynch mob”, had attacked Pauline Koupparis in online forums and claimed that “[e]veryone, including detectives and the doctors who treated nine-month-olds Isabella and Lola, accepted Mrs Koupparis’s account because it was the truth, plain and simple”. It said that “animal rights militants” were waging a hate campaign against the mother and promised to reveal “what sick individuals could be behind such a campaign”. The newspaper alleged that the tactics used against the family, particularly online harassment, were once reserved for employees of animal testing laboratories but that now “it seems that anyone is fair game for the animal rights movement” and the Koupparis’s story was “the most shocking illustration of the chasm that separates normal animal-lovers and the zealots from the animal rights movement”. The *Daily Mail* took it upon itself to identify the “worst offenders” and revealed that “[d]isturbingly, many are young women; one is a mother herself. All are on benefits which means that taxpayers are, in

one way or another, subsidising their vile activities.” One contributor was described as “heavily tattooed mother-of-four”, who, together with her husband, was unemployed and claiming state benefits. Another contributor was described as follows:

She came to the door of her Midlands terrace in pink pyjamas earlier this week. It was 6pm. She explained: “I’ve just woken up. I like to have a lie-in when my husband is at work.” He is the only member of the household who works – part-time as a cleaner.

Online contributors were variously compared to a selection of the tabloid press's favourite villains, including ‘militants’, ‘extremists’, ‘benefits scroungers’ and even ‘religious fanatics’. The frames that surrounded this second folk devil are *Extremist*, relating to character and ideology, and *Scrounger*, relating to employment and lifestyle. The value of contributions from animal protectionists to the debate on urban foxes was thus called into question, as all those who had come to the defence of foxes were tarred with the same brush. It is also notable that the language used to describe these activists has much in common with the language used to describe urban foxes, who were variously called ‘city scroungers’, ‘scavengers’ and even ‘feral chavs’. An editorial in *The Daily Telegraph* (06/11/2010) commented that “suddenly it dawned on the urban population of Britain that Basil Brush had a beastly side. He was, indeed, nothing more than a feral chav, squabbling, breeding indiscriminately and feeding off discarded buckets of KFC.” Much like the tabloid stereotype of a ‘benefits scrounger’, urban foxes were slobs, dependent on human handouts, breeding incessantly, and blighting otherwise respectable neighbourhoods.

6.2.5 *Innocent victims*

In the immediate aftermath of the fox attack on Isabella and Lola Koupparis, newspapers wrote about the injuries the girls had sustained, quoting hospital sources and various relatives of the twins. *The Sun* (08/06/2010b) repeatedly cited Pauline Koupparis, the mother, who spoke about finding her children “splattered in blood” and explained that they were now in intensive care. Regarding Isabella's injuries she said, “[o]ne side of her face is beautiful. The

other side is like something from a horror movie” (*The Sun* 08/06/2010b, *The Guardian* 08/06/2010a, the *Daily Express* 08/06/2010a and 09/06/2010c). The *Daily Express* (08/06/2010a) wrote about the family's “horrific plight” and described how the mother was “tearful and clearly beside herself with worry”.

By 9 June, most articles proceeded on the assumption that readers were aware of the basic facts of the story, giving a daily update on the twins' condition until on 17 June Isabella was allowed to return home. Several newspapers commented on the value of the family home and the parents' successful careers. The *Daily Express* (08/06/2010a) wrote that “TV executive husband Nick was forced to chase the animal down the stairs of their £800,000 three-storey home in Victoria Park, east London”. *The Sun* (09/06/2010b) also included numerous references to the parents' occupations, which played no significant role in the narrative, other than, it seemed, to lend legitimacy to their claims. The *Daily Express* (09/06/2010c) explained that the fox had entered through a patio door that had been left open because of the heat, not by accident, exonerating the parents from any possible charges of carelessness.

The first pictures of the twins and their injuries emerged in the *Daily Express* (14/06/2010), *Daily Star* (14/06/2010) and *The Daily Telegraph* (14/06/2010b) a full week after the incident, followed by pictures of Lola (*Daily Mail* 17/06/2010) and Isabella (*Daily Mail* 18/06/2010) when they were released from hospital and several follow-up pictures in the weeks and months after (figures 6.14 and 6.15). In the first week, *The Sun* (08/06/2010b), *The Independent* (08/06/2010), *Daily Express* (08/06/2010a and 09/06/2010c) and *Daily Mail* (08/06/2010) published pictures of the twins' mother wearing sunglasses and looking tearful (figures 6.16 and 6.17), in addition to holiday snaps that showed the girls looking happy.

Fig.6.15 *“Pauline Koupparis returns home with baby Lola, who was released from hospital” (Daily Mail 18/06/2010w)*



Fig.6.16 *“Getting better every day: Lola, right, with her sister Isabella, displays puncture marks on her arm as well as some facial injuries” (Daily Mail 02/07/2010w)*



Fig.6.17 *“Pauline Koupparis leaves her home on her way to hospital where her twin daughters are recovering after they were attacked by a fox”*
(The Daily Telegraph 09/06/2010w)



Fig.6.18 *“Pauline Koupparis was visibly upset as she left her home, saying one of her twins was 'not doing so well”* (Daily Mail 08/06/2010w)



Denny Dolan was described as “a perfect baby” by his aunt, who was cited in the *Mail on Sunday* (10/02/2013). Newspapers emphasised that he was just four weeks old (*The Sunday Times* 10/02/2013) and that in addition to the severed finger his face had also been badly bitten (*The Sun* 10/02/2013). Pictures published on the first day of coverage were mostly of previous victims, with *The Sunday Times* (10/02/2013) picturing the Maidstone fox side-by-side next to Lola Koupparis. On 11 February, *The Daily Telegraph* (11/02/2013a) printed a picture of Denny on its front page, followed by a further picture on page 7, which showed Denny's bandaged hand and facial injuries (figure 6.18), an image that was also used by several other newspapers.

Fig.6.19 “*The baby, named by his aunt as Denny, was soaked in blood and required surgery to reattach a severed finger.*”
(*The Daily Telegraph* 11/02/2013w)



In an emotive description of Denny before and after the attack, *The Daily Telegraph* (12/02/2013b) wrote that he was “[s]itting in a turquoise baby bouncer, a grin across his podgy pink cheeks, his twinkling eyes are transfixed on something in the distance”. Afterwards, the newspaper wrote the following:

Reaching towards the camera, his left hand is wrapped in a thick bandage. There is no smile on his face, instead, red scratches and bumps cover his tiny head. His eyes are closed, the left lid swollen by a purple bruise.

The coverage of the Koupparis twins' and Denny Dolan's ordeals focused largely on the victims in the first few days after the incidents. Readers were drawn into their world and given a lot of detail about the children and their families, whereas the culprit remained an anonymous, generalised figure lurking in the shadows. The single most important frame with regard to the victims was that of *Innocence*, both in terms of the innocence and purity of the child victims and the lack of blame on the part of the parents. However, unlike the Koupparis twins, Denny Dolan's family lived in council-owned accommodation, and although newspapers had come to the defence of the Koupparis when the suggestion was made that the parents were in the end to blame, Denny's parents were openly accused by the *Daily Mail* (17/02/2013a) of being careless. The newspaper claimed that “[t]he family say it [the fox] gained access to their home through a back door with a faulty lock, which they were apparently unable to get the council to fix. Perhaps they should have fixed it themselves.” The article also criticised the “slobs” who attracted foxes into their neighbourhoods by leaving food waste unsecured and implied that the Dolan family was not entirely innocent.

6.3 Explanation and Evaluation

6.3.1 Explanation

By 8 June 2010, two days after the incident involving the twins, newspapers were busy theorising about the causes, with various sources being called upon to provide explanations. Urban foxes were said to be growing in number and brazenness, and later also in size. These factors were regarded as the ultimate

causes of the incident and the fox was seen as the clear culprit. However, the most frequent explanations offered by commentators centred on the consequences of human action (or inaction). Although urban foxes would ultimately bear the brunt of any response measures, the topics and frames described below were part of the media's quest to attribute blame and find a solution. After the attack on Denny Dolan in February 2013, newspapers dedicated less space to exploring causes and instead focused on the search for solutions, which implicitly repeated the explanatory frames listed here.

Human behaviour

Very quickly, the human propensity to feed urban foxes was brought into question. Pest controller Will Moore was cited in *The Times* (08/06/2010a), explaining that “[i]f they are being fed they have no fear, and that's why you get instances such as the one last weekend”. The Countryside Alliance also waded in and “blamed the feeding of foxes for putting people in danger by helping the animals overcome their instinctive fear of humans” (*Daily Express* 09/06/2010c). The organisation's animal welfare spokesman, Jim Barrington, was also quoted:

Some people are treating foxes as extended pets. They try to feed them out of their hands and invite them into their homes. You cannot treat them like pets. We need people who feed foxes to realise they are making them tame.

The fact that foxes had become habituated to humans and started entering homes should come as no surprise, according to Professor Stephen Harris (*Daily Mail* 09/06/2010). Handfeeding, in particular, was to blame for this (*Sunday Times* 08/01/2012b). Animal behaviourist Dr Roger Mugford was cited in the *Daily Express* (08/06/2010), explaining that humans had changed the ecology of foxes through feeding:

They used to be solitary. Now they hunt in packs. They used to fear us. Now they don't. They are a form of wildlife, not cute Beatrix Potter creatures to be fed and petted.

Marina Pacheco, chief executive of the Mammal Society, further suggested in the *Daily Express* (24/09/2010) that urban residents failed to comprehend “wildness”:

They'll put food out, foxes will eat the scraps and people think they are friendly – but they aren't. They're not tame. I'd compare them to cats that have gone feral and you wouldn't want to approach a feral cat.

In the coverage of the incident involving Denny Dolan, *Direct Feeding* was a more salient frame in the broadsheets than the tabloids, with a saliency score of 11.04 as opposed to 9.27 for the verb ‘feed’ (see appendix 6). Although the *Daily Mail* (12/02/2013) blamed the RSPCA, which it called an “increasingly political organisation”, for offering advice on how to feed hungry foxes, *The Independent* (11/02/2013) cited an RSPCA spokesperson, who claimed that feeding had indeed become a problem and that people shouldn't be surprised if one thing led to another and foxes started entering homes as a result. Pest controllers were quoted in the *The Independent* (12/02/2013a) saying similar things and warning urban residents to remember that foxes were wild animals. Terry Woods, co-founder of the humane pest control company Fox-A-Gon, agreed that foxes would instinctively stay away from humans but they were being made “more human-friendly” (*The Daily Telegraph* 12/02/2013b). Problems would arise if the feeder went on holiday and the fox went next door expecting similar treatment. Professor Stephen Harris also spoke out in *The People* (17/02/2013a), warning that people who were trying to make foxes tame were “being incredibly selfish because all they are doing is making these animals less wary of humans”.

Indirect Feeding through the careless discarding of waste was considered another causative factor. In the case of the Koupparis twins, pest controller Peter Crowden explained that “people are the problem” (*Daily Mail* 12/06/2010) and attributed the increase in callouts his company had received to the greater availability of food waste (*The Daily Telegraph* 11/06/2010d). The *Daily Express* (10/06/2010) wrote the following:

Before a vengeful nation declares a pogrom on urban foxes, let's remember why they're urban. It's not because they relish the glitz of city life. It's because of the easy pickings we so casually strew around us. The villain of this piece is the oaf who chucks his half-eaten burger over a fence, not the fox that picks it up.

The author of a feature article in *The Guardian's* G2 supplement (11/06/2010a) agreed that the attack “should be blamed above all on the fox-loving people of London”. He added:

In the country foxes are hated and pursued. This is because food is scarce, so they kill ducks and chickens whenever they get the chance. In towns, on the other hand, dustbins groan with food and foxes are cherished.

The advent of fortnightly bin collections had also acted as a pull factor for urban foxes, according to *The Daily Telegraph* (11/06/2010a, 12/06/2010a, 18/06/2010). After the Denny Dolan incident, *The Sun* reiterated that “if refuse collections were more regular, urban foxes might move out to more rural areas and hunt their own food rather than scavenge. With bins overflowing it's no wonder foxes hang around houses and, if the opportunity arises, sneak in through doors.” Overflowing bins had also led to an increase in the breeding rate of urban vixens, wrote the *Daily Mail* (13/02/2013). In his *Daily Mail* editorial, pest controller Peter Crowden (11/02/2013) argued that “the rise of the urban fox unheard of before the Sixties has occurred alongside the never-ending explosion of the fast-food industry”. An editorial in *The Independent* (11/02/2013) agreed that foxes were only living in towns because of the careless actions of humans, “far filthier than any so-called vermin”. The language of the *Indirect Feeding* frame thus connects to the arguments made earlier about human slovenliness.

In direct contrast to the *Indirect Feeding* frame, *The Sun* (09/06/2010a) proposed that the real problem was depriving foxes of a steady food supply, and that this may have led them to look for alternative sources of food. Billy Elliot of the Worthing and District Animal Rescue Service was later quoted in the *Daily Mail* (14/01/2011) in agreement with this statement:

The more scarce their food is the more desperate they'll be for food. If it sees a cat going through a flap, it thinks why can't I? It doesn't know what's on the other side but when it enters a home it can be more traumatising for the fox than the owner.

The Sun (09/03/2012) explained some twenty-three months later that the introduction of wheelie bins had made scavenging harder and had pushed some foxes to enter homes in a desperate search for food. "Feeding could fix urban fox issue", read a headline in the *Sunday Times* (17/02/2013b) following the incident involving Denny Dolan. The introduction of wheelie bins in some cities had coincided with the greater visibility of urban foxes and "an increased threat from starving beasts". The *Daily Mail* (12/02/2013a) also explained that "[w]hen food supplies dry up they will seek sustenance wherever they can find it even if that means entering a home and attacking a baby or small child". The *Food Deprivation* frame had a lot in common with the *Diminished* fox frame, which emphasised the inability of foxes to thrive in urban environments without human intervention, and the *Predator* frame, which regarded the incident as a predatory attack. This was not helped by Dr Roger Mugford's insistence that "a one-month-old baby is a source of food" (*The Sun* 11/02/2013a), although Professor Harris disputed this claim, arguing that it was not in a fox's nature to eat humans (*The Daily Telegraph* 12/02/2013b) and that this was most likely just "inquisitive behaviour" (*The Sunday Times* 17/02/2013c).

Human attitude

Human attitude was another common topic featuring in explanations offered after the Koupparis twins' incident, particularly in the tabloid and right-wing broadsheet press. Janice Turner wrote in *The Times* (08/06/2010b) that "their [urban foxes'] ascent is thanks to human sentimentality". Clive Aslet also commented in *The Daily Telegraph* (08/06/2010a) that urban residents in particular had an "undifferentiated affection for wildlife" and the *Daily Mail* (08/06/2010) wrote of the "soft-hearted attitude to these predators". The *Daily Express* (09/06/2010d) added that "[i]n the urban imagination the fox is always the hunted and never the hunter" and as a result city-dwellers treated them as

pets and ignored the reality that foxes could 'eat' humans. The result, these newspapers argued, was that urban foxes had lost their fear of humans.

Pest controllers Peter Crowden (*The Daily Telegraph* 08/06/2010b, *Daily Express* 09/06/2010c) and Bruce Lindsay-Smith (*The Daily Telegraph* 18/010/2010) argued that television programmes and books were responsible for giving people the wrong image of foxes. The *Daily Mail* (08/06/2010) criticised "animal rights champions" and the "so-called animal rights brigade", and a letter published in the *Daily Express* (09/06/2010e) observed that "the animal welfare lobby is out in force again following calls for urban foxes to be culled" and warned that "[t]here can be no room for sentiment when dealing with predatory foxes". "The foxites even include animal scientists, who would seem to have persuaded Bristol City Council (whose advisory Living with Urban Foxes has been adopted by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health) that foxes never attack humans", wrote *The Daily Telegraph* (08/06/2010a). The article continued:

But then they also deny that country foxes target lambs, when every hill farmer I know would tell them differently. A lamb is much the same size as a baby. It is no more difficult to get into a house than into a hen coop.

Following the Denny Dolan incident, the *Daily Express* (12/02/2013b) concluded that "this is the hour to call time on our sentimental foxy love affair". For too long people had been seduced by their beauty. The "swelling tribes of urban and suburban foxes" were not the "bold and handsome" foxes portrayed in stories and poems, added the *Mail on Sunday* (10/02/2013). The headline for pest controller Peter Crowden's editorial in the *Daily Mail* (11/02/2013) read "[i]f these disease ridden vermin kill a child next time, blame the fools who think they're cuddly". He wrote of the outrage he had faced from sentimentalists over what they considered the "brutal extermination" of "cuddly creatures". Books and films had caused humans to both sentimentalise and demonise foxes, according to an editorial in *The Independent* (11/02/2013). This was the species that had got us "foxed" but in reality foxes were neither cuddly victims, nor cruel demons. The newspaper also criticised the RSPCA for subscribing to the

“Cuddly Fox” attitude; “[t]heir default position of presenting animals as victims is in its way as silly as those who see them as source of fear and lurking danger”.

The *Sentimentalism* frame included arguments about the differences in knowledge between urban and countryside residents and assertions of urban ignorance also featured in discussions about foxhunting, providing cause to link to this long-standing debate. If urban residents weren't so hopelessly sentimental about foxes then they would see no problem with hunting foxes, an activity that taught foxes a healthy fear of humans, so the argument went. “Labour's ban on fox-hunting encouraged a mawkish eagerness to romanticise this aggressive creature – a pathetic instinct that was symbolised when Labour MP Mike Foster held up a furry toy fox outside Parliament to celebrate the passing of the legislation”, the *Daily Mail* wrote just two days after the incident with the twins (08/06/2010). This was the great irony of the story, *The Sunday Times* (08/06/2010b) said:

Until recently it was a town versus country thing. In 2004 the Labour government, bowing to urban sentiment, banned country people from hunting with dogs. Now many of those same animal-lovers want foxes cleared from the city streets.

A letter published in *The Daily Telegraph* (09/06/2010b) also argued that “[i]t is this sentimental attitude that precipitated the ridiculous hunting ban and, unless people revise their feelings about these seductively beautiful animals, we are going to see more accidents of this type”. The tide was turning against foxes, argued *The Daily Telegraph* (12/06/2010a); “about time – too, for those many rural dwellers frustrated by New Labour's metropolitan, anthropomorphic misunderstanding of fox-hunting”. The Countryside Alliance, a hunting lobby group, would be feeling schadenfreude, according to *The Sunday Times* (13/06/2010):

Yes, they say to themselves, we told you this. They eat our chickens and they eat our lambs, and we are not so stupid as to feed these goodies up to them on silver platters, with a nice glass of chablis. That's what foxes are: they are the equivalent, for us, of your rats and pigeons. Vermin – albeit pretty vermin.

Jim Barrington of the Countryside Alliance was also quoted in the *Daily Express* (24/09/2010), claiming that “the balance has tipped too much” since the hunting ban and that this legislation was to blame for perpetuating sentimental attitudes and “[feeding] this general misunderstanding of what a fox is”. An editorial published later in *The Daily Telegraph* (06/11/2010) sympathised with countryside people, especially those who had demonstrated against the ban on foxhunting, for feeling *schadenfreude* towards “townies” in the wake of the incident. The article argued that countryside residents had always treated foxes with suspicion but that the species had received an image makeover at the start of the twentieth century which made it “a victim of oppression”. “Urbanites lapped it up”, the newspaper claimed, and “[t]he makeover coincided with the rise and rise of the urban fox”. By the time the Hunting Act was being debated in parliament, “[h]e was viewed as lovable as Basil Brush, as cute as a Disney character. He was protected by an army (the Animal Liberation Front), fawned over by animal charities and bunny-huggers, and finally saved from further persecution by the law.” The newspaper concluded that “if the sentimentalists among them cry foul and wish to return Mr Fox to his former status, then there is only one group of experts that can help: the hunt”.

The same newspapers also reiterated the link to the hunting ban in the days following the incident with Denny Dolan. “Thanks to quarrels over hunting, and also thanks to romantic stories and poems portraying Reynard as a brave and noble beast, we have tended to be sentimental about this bold and handsome creature”, wrote the *Mail on Sunday* (10/02/2013). *The People* (17/02/2013b) mocked the RSPCA for their anti-hunt position, writing that they were surprised that the charity hadn't prosecuted another fox attack victim “for kicking and punching poor, defenceless little foxy-woxy”. For most of these newspapers the link between the two issues was the sentimentalism and naivety of urban residents. However, some commentators drew a causal link between the hunting ban and urban fox attacks. Su Smith, a horse-racing champion, was quoted in *The Guardian* (15/02/2013), saying, “[t]hey banned foxhunting and what's happened in the cities? The urban foxes are creeping into people's houses and babies in their beds are getting attacked.”

Very few newspapers or commentators explicitly countered the *Sentimentalism* frame, with the exception of an author of a *Daily Mail* article (16/02/2013), who insisted that not everyone who liked foxes was sentimental about them:

No, I am not one of those city folk who believes the fox is some kind of cuddly, stuffed toy. [...] The fox is wild. That's what I like about him – the sight of a wild animal so close to home. [...] And what a miserable, antiseptic, sterile world this would be if it had no place for the wild fox.

Conduct of authorities

Sentimentalism was also frequently attributed to local authorities, who were accused of ignoring residents' complaints. A neighbour of the Koupparis family claimed was quoted in the *Daily Express* (08/06/2010a):

They [foxes] are a danger. There are dens of foxes everywhere. I've complained to the council. They don't seem to do anything.

Writing about problems with foxes chewing brake cables, the *Daily Mail* (08/06/2010) complained that “[w]hen residents demanded a cull, the council refused, saying that the foxes were 'part of our wildlife'. Once more, sentimentality had triumphed over reason.” Instead of acting on residents' requests, councils would send out “vulpine propaganda” which included a “touchy-feely call to exist in harmony with the foxes” (*The Times* 08/06/2010b). Councils were simply not doing enough to limit fox numbers, according to pest controller Bruce Lindsay-Smith (*Daily Star Sunday* 04/07/2010). The *Daily Express* (01/04/2011) agreed that “without population control they multiply into infestation numbers”. *The Sun* (09/03/2012) later noted that “[r]ight up until the Eighties authorities in London shot and trapped foxes to try to keep the numbers down. But wildlife programmes about urban foxes put them in another light – and they have gone from strength to strength.” To inexplicitly link the councils' decision to cease the urban fox cull to the purportedly growing sentimentalism surrounding the animals, however, neglects the councils' own stated reasons, namely escalating costs and doubts over the effectiveness of lethal control. In the aftermath of the Denny Dolan incident, pest controller Peter

Crowden made a similar claim in his *Daily Mail* editorial (11/02/2013), stating that “while some councils spend hundreds of thousands of pounds attempting to do so [control fox numbers], others refuse to do anything to reduce their numbers, on animal welfare grounds”. *The Daily Telegraph* (12/02/2013a) wrote that Lewisham council had been “derided” for claiming that “[f]oxes are 'playful' and 'not in any way a problem’”.

6.3.2 Evaluation

Aside from offering explanations and attributing blame, newspapers and their sources also variously evaluated the significance of the threat and the risk of a fox attack happening again.

Vindication

Many newspapers were keen to point out that previous warnings had been vindicated and that such an attack was bound to happen. Joe Lobenstein, former mayor of Hackney, reminded the *Daily Express* (08/06/2010a) that he had warned the council about the dangers of foxes multiple times over the preceding decades. Dorothy Grace-Elder, whose editorial during the *Warning* phase was discussed in chapter 5, wrote the following update in the *Daily Express* (09/06/2010a):

What most alarmed me when I wrote that article back on March 20 was that government, councils and wildlife groups I contacted in Scotland and England all dismissed there being a fox problem, though our readers sent a torrent of examples, including the killing of pets. The same 'not usually a problem' wally excuses are being used after the maiming of the babies. Wake up!

The Daily Telegraph (12/06/2010a) carried on with its dismissive attitude towards fox ecologists, writing that “[v]arious fox experts (although aren't we all experts now?) have been wheeled out to reassure worried urbanites that mankind – and not foxes – are still, ultimately, in control of the world's nuclear arsenals”. The *Daily Mail* (12/60/2010) also pitted experts against public perception, summarising that “[w]ildlife experts claimed it was unheard of for a

fox to attack a human inside a house, but neighbours in the fashionable Victoria Park area of Hackney said the animals were becoming ever bolder”.

Warning

More significant than the vindication of previous attack fears were repeated claims by pest controllers, politicians and newspaper commentators that a similar attack would happen again if action wasn't taken. Ricky Clark of the London-based company Environ Pest Control, warned in *The Independent* (08/06/2010) that “[y]es, it's unusual, but it will happen again. We have 25,000-30,000 foxes in London alone, and they are losing their fear of humans.” Peter Crowden also repeatedly asserted that “[t]he situation is out of control” (*The Daily Telegraph* 08/06/2010b and 09/06/2010a, *The Sun* 09/06/2010b) and London-based pest controller Bruce Lindsay-Smith “believes it is only a matter of time before a child is killed by an urban fox” (*Daily Star Sunday* 04/07/2010). The *Daily Star Sunday* published his prophecy in full:

My biggest fear is that I'll turn on the news one day and hear about a baby being killed by a fox. I fear that a mother will leave a baby unattended in a pram in the garden and a vixen will drag the baby into the undergrowth and kill it. And I believe it will happen sooner rather than later.

The *Daily Mail* (17/06/2010) argued that “the closer we get to urban foxes the more incidents we will see”. The only reason why fox attacks were so rare, the *Daily Express* (09/06/2010d) explained, was that “we don't leave infants unguarded in fields as we do lambs, piglets and other farm animals”. However, foxes were an ever-present threat and, given the chance, would not distinguish between lambs and human babies.

This claim was also made by the *Daily Mail* (12/02/2013), following the Denny Dolan incident. Fox attacks would become more frequent if people heeded the advice of the RSPCA on how to feed hungry foxes. “[T]op animal psychologist” Dr Roger Mugford was cited by *The Sun* (11/02/2013a) in an article with the headline “[c]reature will return to house”. “It's a certainty” that the fox would

return to Denny Dolan's home, he told the newspaper. Even Pauline Koupparis, the mother of the twins, was quoted in the *Daily Mirror* (11/02/2013), alleging that the number of attacks would increase if fox numbers weren't controlled. Denny had had a "very lucky escape" and "sooner or later, a real tragedy seems inevitable", Peter Crowden emphasised in his *Daily Mail* editorial (11/02/2013). TV reports, he argued, were treating the attack as a "freak occurrence" but "[i]f we're going to be sensible, then we should treat this attack as a warning". A fatality was only a matter of time, *The Daily Telegraph* (12/02/2013b) added. The *Daily Mirror* (14/02/2013b) also published its readers' letters on the subject, one of which asked "are we waiting for someone to die?" Another warned that "[s]ooner or later a baby will die after being savaged by one of these wild animals and then the councils will be forced to act".

Growing Threat

Pest controllers spoke of receiving an increasing number of call-outs from the public regarding urban foxes. Peter Crowden claimed that the number of calls had quadrupled in three years (*The Daily Telegraph* 11/06/2010a). *The Daily Telegraph* (11/06/2010d) also ran with the headline "[c]all-outs surge as urban foxes lose fear of humans". In other words, an increase in complaints from members of the public was being directly attributed to a change in fox numbers or behaviour rather than heightened human sensitivity to the presence of foxes. Bruce Lindsay-Smith (*Daily Star Sunday* 04/07/2010) also reported a surge in calls, particularly from schools and mothers who feared their children could be at risk. "My business has been boosted by at least 25%", he was quoted as saying in the newspaper. "I've had countless calls from families with small children who want me to get rid of their foxes", he added. He later explained that foxes were clearly a growing threat and that "[w]e're always hearing of these cases but they don't always appear in the headlines" (*Daily Express* 24/09/2010).

The *Growing Threat* frame was also expressed in the coverage following Denny Dolan's ordeal. *The Times* (11/02/2013b) and *The Daily Telegraph*

(12/02/2013b) explicitly stated that urban foxes were a growing threat and that fox attacks on humans, particularly children, were a relatively recent occurrence.

Rarity

On the one hand, the London Wildlife Trust (*The Times* 08/06/2010a), The Fox Project (*The Guardian* 08/06/2010a), the RSPCA (*Daily Express* 08/07/2010) and the National Fox Welfare Society (*The Guardian* 08/06/2010b) unequivocally stated that attacks were extremely rare and the risk was negligible. Indeed, Steve Bachelor from the League Against Cruel Sports explained in *The Independent* (12/06/2010b) that the attack on the twins “is a terrible, awful story, but the fact that it has had so much coverage is because it's so rare”. John Bryant called it a “freakish event” (*The Independent* 08/06/2010) and told the *Daily Mirror* (08/06/2010) that he had never come across a confirmed attack by a fox on a human himself. The *Daily Mail* twice (09/06/2010, 12/06/2010) reported Bryant's assurances that something like this would not happen again. Other experts were reportedly “baffled” by the incident (*The Guardian* 08/06/2010b, *Daily Mail* 09/06/2010). A spokesperson from Hackney Council was cited in *The Sun* (08/06/2010b) and *The Guardian* (08/06/2010a), claiming that the council had never had reports of foxes attacking residents and confirming that “[a]ll the expert advice [they] have had suggest that shocking incidents like this are incredibly rare”.

Following the Denny Dolan incident, the RSPCA maintained that “[i]t's extremely unusual” (*The Sunday Times* 10/02/2013, *Daily Mirror* 10/02/2013), and even London mayor Boris Johnson agreed that “[t]his sort of attack, though terrible, is rare” (*The Sun* 10/02/2013, *Mail on Sunday* 10/02/2013, *Daily Mirror* 10/02/2013). In a unique reversal of its usual position, *The Daily Telegraph* (16/02/2013) published an article which insisted that “[t]he rare incidents where they cause a problem receive so much publicity it's easy to believe that there is a serious risk when this is just not the case”. *The Times* (11/02/2013a) acknowledged that despite the rarity of fox attacks, “they send out shockwaves” when they do happen. John Bryant later wrote the following in the conference booklet for an Urban Fox Conference (Williams 2013):

[i]nvariably, because of the demonisation deliberately generated by the tabloids like the Daily Mail, and broadsheets like the Daily Telegraph (both committed to helping the Tories bring back hunting foxes for sport) there will be the occasional publicised incident when one of London's 10,000 adults or 20,000 cubs goes into a house where people leave a back door open after dark.

Perspective

John Bryant's comments allude to the final evaluative frame: *Perspective*. Patrick Barkham, writing in *The Guardian* (08/06/2010b), was the first to point out that “[f]or every exceptional incident of a fox attacking a child, we should recall another statistic; in 2008/9, 5,221 people, including 1,250 children, were treated in hospital in England after being mauled by man's best friend, the dog”. “[A] child is much more likely to be attacked by a family dog”, the newspaper reiterated a few days later (11/06/2010a). Readers' letters published in *The Daily Telegraph* (11/06/2010a, 11/06/2010c) and *Daily Mirror* (11/06/2010) agreed with this statement. Despite the much greater risk from dogs, “there is no crusade to eradicate man's best friend”, one reader noted (*The Daily Telegraph* 11/06/2010c). Five readers' letters published in the *Daily Mirror* (11/06/2010) called for perspective and urged people to recognise that this case could otherwise be used by the hunting lobby to argue for an end to the hunting ban. The Queen guitarist and animal protectionist Brian May (*The Daily Telegraph* 11/06/2010a) and television personality Joanna Lumley (*The Sunday Telegraph* 13/06/2010) also waded in with comments calling for this isolated incident to be put into perspective. If dog attacks “made the headlines that foxes do, then newspapers would have space for little else”, *The Sunday Times* (08/01/2012b) concluded many months later.

The *Perspective* frame also appeared regularly in articles following the Denny Dolan incident. An opinion piece published in the *Daily Mirror* (16/02/2013) asked the following questions:

How many deaths does the fox population have on its paws? Er – none. When did we become a nation of total hysterics? [...] [l]et's struggle to keep a little perspective [...] [t]he fact remains that the fox population is not kicking down our doors to eat our children. [...] Calm down, Britain – you are losing your grip. Dogs are more likely to hunt babies than foxes. And horrible human beings do more harm to children than dogs.

The Daily Telegraph (24/02/2013), however, published a reader's letter, which turned the frame on its head, arguing that urban foxes were being treated unduly leniently: “How would the public react if there were widespread urban populations of breeding stray dogs, carrying fleas and mange and bold enough to invade domestic spaces? Such a scenario currently exists with urban foxes.”

6.3.3 *Evolving news: new and old incidents emerge*

In the weeks and months following the incident involving the twins, more cases came to light. *The Daily Telegraph* (10/06/2010d) had explicitly asked its readers to contact them with their fox attack stories and just a day later (11/06/2010a) commented that “[m]ore incidents of foxes attacking children have come to light”. *The Independent* (12/06/2010a) similarly undermined the assurances made by “the friends of the fox” regarding the rarity of fox attacks by describing another story of an attack on a child. *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*, in particular, were adamant that these incidents could not be reconciled with the popular image of the fox as a harmless, bushy-tailed creature.

The next big attack on a child involved a young boy who was ‘savaged’ after tugging on the tail of a fox he had seen poking out from beneath a raised classroom. *The Sun* (21/06/2010) reminded readers that this “new attack horror” came just two weeks after the attack on the twins. The *Daily Mail* (03/07/2010) also reported on the story, albeit citing a slightly different version of events, claiming that the boy “was bitten by a fox when he went to retrieve a ball from under his playgroup building”.

A year later, the *Daily Express* (28/10/2011) ran a story about a young boy who was “just seconds from fox horror in bedroom”. The fox was “poised to attack” the five-year-old after entering the house through a broken window. The newspaper wrote that the fox had been “skulking in the shadows” and had to be dragged from the house by the police using a noose. The *Daily Express* concluded that “[t]he latest shocking incident has prompted fresh calls for urgent action to combat the growing menace of urban foxes”.

In its coverage of the incident involving Denny Dolan, *The Sun* (10/02/2013) also wrote that there had been a “spate of recent fox attacks on children” and the *Daily Express* (12/02/2013a) insisted that “[t]he list of attacks on young children and babies by urban foxes grows ever longer and more harrowing”. A few days later, *The Daily Telegraph* (15/02/2013a) reported on the story of a teenage jogger who claimed to have fought off a fox that had bitten her leg in a park and *The Sun* (21/04/2013) revealed that a story had emerged of a fox entering a house and being found just inches away from a toddler.

Previous fox attacks on children were also written about again. *The Daily Telegraph* (08/06/2010a), for example, reminded readers of an incident from 2002 involving a boy named Louis Day. It made the following claims:

The last government preferred to ignore the episode; it was, after all, trying to ban foxhunting at the time. It could see that some folk – likely to be Labour voters – love urban foxes, perhaps having the same undifferentiated affection for wildlife as the people [...] in London parks feeding rats along with squirrels and ducks.

Many newspapers reported on a variety of previous incidents dating back several decades, some of which had not been covered in the national press at the time (*The Sun* 08/06/2010b, *The Independent* 08/06/2010, *The Guardian* 08/06/2010b, *Daily Express* 08/06/2010a, 09/06/2010d and 12/06/2010, *The Daily Telegraph* 08/06/2010a, 10/06/2010d, 12/06/2010a and 12/06/2010d, *Daily Mail* 08/06/2010).

Many new stories involved fox attacks on adults, as opposed to children. The *Daily Mail* took the lead in reporting on them. Ben Douglas, the author of a *Daily Mail* article (17/06/2010), wrote of being attacked by a fox in his home. He claimed it took him two full hours to remove the “terrifyingly bold male” from his house and that the experience was so “unsettling” that he was forced to move home “to escape the memories”. What struck him the most was that this “cocky intruder” was not afraid of him: “Surely he should be scared of me, not the other way round.” The *Daily Mail* (03/07/2010) also told the story of Natasha David, who claimed she had been bitten by a fox on her foot while she slept in bed on two separate occasions. The newspaper reiterated that the attack “came just after baby girls were mauled by a fox”. Lawyer Annie Bradwell was the next human victim, “the latest in a number of recent cases in which foxes have entered homes and bitten residents”, wrote *The Daily Telegraph* (11/09/2010). She told the newspaper that the fox had sank its teeth into her ear as she was asleep, and complained about the “huge explosion in the population of foxes”. Foxes “don't belong in cities if it has got to the stage where they have no fear of humans”, she said. The *Daily Mail* (11/09/2010) ran a very similar story, quoting several other local residents, who confirmed that foxes had lost their fear of them. When Annie Bradwell told her neighbours about the attack, “one told her about finding a carcass of a cat, believed to have been killed by a fox. Others have told of packs of foxes roaming through Fulham in daylight, seemingly unafraid of people.” The local council had refused to take action because foxes were not officially classed as vermin.

Several adults reported that they were attacked while defending their pets. Tammy Page, a 29-year-old woman from Worthing, West Sussex, claimed that she was bitten while trying to protect her cat from a fox in her kitchen. *The Sun* (14/01/2011) ran with the headline “[f]ox bit my finger off; beast got in through cat flap”, while the *Daily Mail* (14/01/2011) headline simply read “[s]avaged”. Although the newspapers stated that the woman's finger had been bitten off, she had still managed to grab the fox by the neck and throw it out into the garden afterwards. The *Daily Mail* explained that “[e]xperts believe the animal had become desperately hungry after wheelie bins were introduced in Miss Page's street, removing an easy source of food for urban foxes”. Seven months after the attack on the twins, television personality Ben Fogle appeared in an

article in *The Daily Telegraph* (05/02/2011), claiming to have “rugbytackled” a fox to stop it attacking his arthritic dog. “The presenter was out walking his dog Inca in London this week when the feral animal pounced”, according to *The Sun* (05/02/2011), which reiterated that this was the latest in a “spate of fox attacks in and around the capital”. Several other newspapers, including the *Daily Star* (05/02/2011), *The People* (06/02/2011) and *The Sunday Telegraph* (19/02/2011) also covered the story. A few months after the Denny Dolan incident, the *Daily Mail* (11/07/2013) reported that a “crazed fox” had attacked a couple who were fighting to save their cat from the “mangy” fox’s jaws. The animal had “managed to sneak into their home” and “ferociously” attacked the cat.

Humans were not the only victims of fox attacks and as newspapers grew ever more desperate for new material on the fox attack theme, page length articles were published about fox attacks on family pets. One month after the attack on the twins, for example, a chihuahua “was savagely killed in another frightening illustration of the increasingly fearless attitude of the urban predator”, according to the *Daily Mail* (06/07/2010). The family commented that “[t]he fox is obviously getting braver”, after the dog was snatched in their garden. Another family’s kitten was killed by a “prowling fox” which had squeezed through an open bedroom window, according to the *Daily Express* (27/08/2010). The newspaper went into graphic detail, describing the actions of the “snarling” predator. Following the incident, a letter published in the *Daily Mirror* (31/08/2010) read that “[n]ow a fox has sneaked into a house and mauled a kitten [...], it’s time that councils culled urban foxes”. A few months later, *The People* (17/10/2010) wrote about an incident in which a fox had “broken into” a zoo and killed a number of penguins.

After the incident involving Denny Dolan, the *Daily Mail* (28/05/2013) published an editorial with the headline, “[d]oes the RSPCA care more about foxes than the family pets they savage?” The article centred on the fox attack on Chico the chihuahua, who was almost killed by a fox in the family’s garden. The incident had left the dog physically scarred and the daughter traumatised. However, the RSPCA’s attitude to the incident had allegedly made everything worse. “[T]he staff seemed more concerned with the welfare of foxes than their pet”, the *Daily Mail* claimed, and “[i]ncredibly, the very same centre that looked after Chico was

also caring for an injured fox". Asked what would happen if the father decided to use an air rifle to kill the fox, the RSPCA responded that they would prosecute him for animal cruelty. Pest controller Bruce Lindsay-Smith commented that the RSPCA had a tendency to care more for the welfare of the urban fox "pest" than the welfare of pets. He was cited as saying the following:

That is the way things are going. It's so ridiculous. They've got a 'live and let live' approach. But we need to remove foxes if they're causing a problem to people's pets.

This was the crux of the argument: the RSPCA were confusing pests for pets. The RSPCA's policy was that it didn't want to be speciesist, to which the *Daily Mail* responded, "shouldn't it care more about our pets than about the animals which prey on them?" The RSPCA had lost its way, the newspaper concluded; it was refusing to do anything "to curb the menace", instead providing advice on what to feed foxes.

As time went on, the nature, severity and geographical location of incidents changed. It was no longer necessary for the victim to be a child, to have sustained any physical injury or even to be a human. Neither was it necessary for new attacks to occur in urban areas. In an excellent illustration of this progression, *The Sun* (09/03/2013) and *The Times* (17/03/2012) both wrote about a man who had become the victim of a "vulpine mugging", reporting that a fox had grabbed the man's shopping bag and made off with his garlic bread. Each of these stories prompted a reminder of the previous attack on the twins, and when included in a long list of attacks (see *The Sunday Times* 08/01/2012b) created the impression of an escalation in the number of incidents. *The Sun* (09/03/2012) created one such list, ending with "[t]he most horrifying case of all [...] when nine-month-old twins Isabella and Lola Koupparis were attacked at their home in Hackney". However, there was no clarity on the order in which these incidents had occurred. The order in which they were described gave the misleading impression that the attack on the twins happened most recently or was the culmination of an escalation in the number and severity of incidents, when in fact the opposite was the case. Following the Denny Dolan incident, numerous newspapers continued the trend of publishing

lists and timelines of negative human/fox encounters, broadly conceived and not limited to attacks on children (*The Sunday Times* 10/02/2013, *Mail on Sunday* 10/02/2013, *Daily Mirror* 10/02/2013 and 11/02/2013, *The Daily Telegraph* 11/02/2013a).

As I explain in chapter 8, many of the incidents that occurred since the attack on the twins might never have received national news coverage if the twins' attack hadn't happened in the first place. What *The Sun* (09/03/2012) described as the "rise of the red menace" therefore may be the consequence of the evolution of the news theme, which no longer centred exclusively on urban fox attacks on babies in their homes, but on fox attacks on humans and other animals anywhere at any time, including stories about foxes simply entering homes or 'threatening' to attack. Various frames, pertaining in particular to the changing behaviour and size of the urban fox population and the inaction from councils and other bodies, remained central to all of these stories and provided the thread that linked them all together. Timelines of fox attacks and mentions of the Koupparis twins appeared in many newspapers for several years. Newspapers had become 'sensitised' to stories involving urban foxes. This also led to a form of confirmation bias, where stories were selected that confirmed previously-established frames. Chapter 8 returns to these phenomena in the context of news values and thresholds of newsworthiness.

6.4 Conclusion

The fox attacks on the Koupparis twins and Denny Dolan provided rich ground for *Propagation*. As urban foxes were becoming increasingly desensitised to humans (so the argument went), newspapers were becoming sensitised to stories about them and the news theme became a news value itself (see chapter 8). New victims and indeed new folk devils emerged. Events that would have otherwise been considered minor were reported by national newspapers, which gave the impression that they were all connected and part of an ongoing, escalating crisis, and confirmed or developed earlier frames.

The prototype set by the attack on the Koupparis twins had provided the media frames for the reporting of subsequent (and previous) incidents, although as we

have seen, the repertoire of frames was already in existence to a large extent before this incident (chapter 5). New events, such as the ‘vulpine mugging’ were distorted to become a part of the fox attack narrative. A broad spectrum of newspapers endorsed the *Direct Feeding* frame, whereas a much narrower selection of newspapers, notably the conservative *The Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*, brought the debate on foxhunting into the discussion. The *Daily Mail* also repeatedly criticised human ‘slobs’, not only in regard to *Indirect Feeding*, but also in its elaborate investigation into the activists who had threatened the Koupparis family.

The language of the tabloids on the whole was more striking and emotive than that of the broadsheets, but the most significant differences in the portrayal of urban foxes and their defenders were between newspapers that have a conservative political orientation and those that are more left-leaning (see appendix 1). Where conservative newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* emphasised the evil nature and predatory intentions of urban foxes, more left-leaning newspapers such as *The Guardian* rolled out well-rehearsed counter-arguments which had already been used around the time of the hunting ban to criticise the demonisation of foxes. The above-mentioned three conservative newspapers dismissed the claims of animal rights activists by portraying them as members of the underclass, using the same class-based references (‘degenerates’ and ‘scroungers’) to refer to both urban foxes and those who defended them. Where the character and integrity of fox defenders was undermined through the use of heavily class-based language, class also played a role in the conservative press’s portrayal of the twins’ family. Although the career success and wealth of the twins’ father at first appears entirely irrelevant to the story, it appeals to the readership’s preconceptions about class and respectability and is used by the conservative press to exonerate the parents from blame. It is particularly noteworthy that it is almost exclusively these conservative newspapers which carried on the fox attack narrative many months after the incidents occurred.

For many of the frames identified in this chapter there were direct counter-frames, such as *Invasion* versus *Rural Exodus* and *Indigenous*, *Infestation* versus *Population Stability*, *Predator* versus *Self-defence*, *Brazen* versus

Inquisitive and Resourceful, Diminished versus Monster, Direct and Indirect Feeding versus Food Deprivation, and Growing Threat versus Rarity and Perspective. However, the first of each of these groups tended to be the dominant frame, with the exception of the *Diminished* and *Monster* fox frames, which often existed side-by-side within the same articles, despite the apparent contradiction. Many additional themes bound these frames together and tapped into wider discourses. They included themes of urban ignorance, human slovenliness, decay, decadence and dependency, most of which are familiar tabloid themes and moralising features of the British class discourse (Jones 2012). The themes of belonging, transgression, and disgust are also features of the tabloid discourse of immigration (Gedalof 2007).

Newspapers acted as primary and secondary definers and amplifiers, giving voice to various claims-makers and moral entrepreneurs but also taking the lead and introducing their own frames, such as in the stories about the threats made against the Koupparis family. The newspapers provided emotional and rational orientations to the problem of urban foxes in the form of descriptions, explanations, evaluations and predictions. Experts were variously accredited as such by the newspapers, with *The Daily Telegraph* and the right-wing tabloid press in particular endorsing the views of pest controllers but questioning the reliability of scientific voices. In some cases, *The Daily Telegraph* was vague about its sources, with frequent use of agentless passives. In striking contrast, however, it always emphasised the agency of foxes. The headline of an editorial (06/11/2010) published several months after the attack on the twins, for example, read “[t]he rise and fall of Mr Fox; Once he had it all; good looks, fame and the affection of millions. [...] [W]here did it all go wrong?” Having long held the affections of the urban masses, that summer the fox (repeatedly referred to with the singular pronoun “he”) had “chucked away his burnished image”.

Hounding the urban fox: a Critical Discourse Analysis
of a moral panic with an animal folk devil

Volume 2 of 2

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CHAPTER 7. Reaction

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7.4 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Over the weeks and months following the incident involving the Koupparis twins, many voices from the pest control industry, neighbours of the family, as well as politicians and public figures called for action on what was ostensibly a problem of animal behaviour and/or a problematic growth in the urban fox population. Others, notably scientists and animal protectionists, appealed for calm and suggested that human behaviour itself had to change to make coexistence with urban foxes a reality. The first part of this chapter outlines the recommendations made by and through the national newspapers and the actions taken as a result. It critically examines textual evidence of public panic and follows-up several intertextual references made in newspaper articles to a number of television documentaries and internet films. Finally, it compares the reaction to the Koupparis attack with that to the attack on Denny Dolan, based not only on newspaper articles and television documentaries but also on attendance at a pest industry conference and analysis of pest industry publications, as well as local authority and environmental health guidance documents.

7.2 The Koupparis twins

7.2.1 'Something must be done'

In the wake of the incident in Hackney, the mother of the twins repeatedly urged local councils to “take action” (*The Sun* 08/06/2010b, *The Daily Telegraph* 9/06/2010a, *The Sunday Telegraph* 13/06/2010), and neighbours agreed that “[s]omething should be done” (*The Guardian* 08/06/2010b). In a perpetuation of the narrative of attack and the frame of *Invasion*, *The Daily Telegraph* (12/06/2010a) wrote, “[w]ell, should we take this kind of provocation lying down?”

Cull

The incident was immediately followed by widespread calls for a cull of urban foxes in London and beyond. Pest controllers already reported an increase in calls from parents desperate to eliminate foxes from their gardens (*The Guardian* 08/06/2010b, *The Daily Telegraph* 11/06/2010d). Ricky Clark from Environ Pest Control insisted that “[t]hey need to be controlled” (*The Independent* 08/06/2010) and Peter Crowden, chairman of the National Pest Technicians Association, agreed that a cull was needed “to reduce the chances of another child being injured” (*The Daily Telegraph* 08/06/2010b). *The Sun* (09/06/2010b) reported that pest controllers, whom it labelled “wildlife experts”, had issued a united call for a cull of urban foxes, and *The Daily Telegraph* (08/06/2010b), also continuing with its vague references to “nature experts”, stated that “[t]he urban fox population is out of control and should be culled, pest controllers and nature experts said yesterday [...]”. In addition to pest controllers, London mayor Boris Johnson was frequently cited, calling on London borough councils to “control the pests” (*The Sun* 09/06/2010b, *Daily Mail* 09/06/2010, *Daily Express* 09/06/2010c, *The Daily Telegraph* 09/06/2010a and 11/06/2010b, *The Sunday Times* 13/06/2010, *The Sunday Telegraph* 13/06/2010). More so than any other newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph* made demands for a cull in the first headlines it published after the incident:

It's time to clear foxes from our streets; The horrific mauling of two babies must herald an all-out offensive against these predators (08/06/2010a)

Cull foxes now before they attack again, say experts (08/06/2010b)

Deal with fox menace now, says mother of mauled twins; Family fears baby girls could be scarred for life as mayor backs calls to cull the urban scavengers (09/06/2010a)

Clive Aslet, the author of the first article, advocated the use of anaesthetic darts to catch foxes and subsequently dispose of them. “Surely, if foxes are now harming babies, it is time for something to be done about them”, he wrote. He predicted that one of the biggest obstacles to a successful cull would be opposition from sentimentalists:

While country dwellers refer to foxes as vermin, that is not how they are officially classified; this means that local authorities do not have a statutory obligation to control them. It would be an easy thing for the Government to change the legislation. Hilary ‘Veggie’ Benn may not have wanted to distress Labour-supporting sentimentalists by doing so, but Defra is now led by ministers with rural experience, likely to understand that an animal without any natural predator must be culled by Man.

Urban residents and politicians from the Labour party, assumed to be lacking the experience of country-dwellers, were accused of ignorance regarding the need for human intervention in wildlife populations. Without a concerted, centralised human effort to kill urban foxes, their numbers would grow exponentially, so the argument went. The newspaper made no mention of the importance of territoriality, food availability and other causes of urban fox mortality, including disease and traffic. *The Daily Mail* (08/06/2010) stated that “[w]hat this all adds up to is the inescapable conclusion that the urban fox is a pest that needs to be controlled” and the *Daily Express* (09/06/2010d) concluded that “[t]he question now is how to control the urban fox population”.

‘Control’, ‘management’ and ‘culling’ are common euphemisms for killing animals with the aim of reducing their numbers to a level perceived appropriate by those doing the killing (Dunayer 2001:52). The killing may be for environmental reasons or to limit predation on other animals including ‘livestock’ and ‘game’. Use of the word ‘cull’ promotes the idea that the killing is responsible and sensible, even scientific. Although deriving from the Latin *colligere*, which means ‘to choose’ or ‘to select’ (Oxford Dictionary 2015), culling in most contexts implies killing of a more indiscriminate nature. What the newspapers which endorsed the *Cull* frame (particularly *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*) meant by culling was a centrally-organised strategy of population reduction by killing. The *Daily Express* (09/06/2010d), for example, recommended that “[u]rban councils should take responsibility, catch foxes and have them put down. Simple as that.” Citing the position of the Countryside Alliance, it stated that what was needed was a “well-thought out management policy”. Traps were to be brought in and “the threat” was to be removed. “No more room for sentiment. Babies before foxes”, the newspaper insisted (12/06/2010).

Calls for population control or culling were frequently cloaked in the language of order and belonging. An editorial published in *The Times* (10/06/2010) summarised the tone of media reporting as follows: “[t]he wrong things and people are in the wrong place, was the message; ancient and valuable distinctions have been blurred and we should sort them out. There is something to be got away from and something to be got back to.”

Overcome Sentimentalism

Several commentators, particularly in *The Daily Telegraph* (10/06/2010a) and *Daily Mail* (08/06/2010), demanded the “banning” of literature and film which overly sentimentalised foxes. The *Daily Mail* article argued the following:

Previous generations never sentimentalised the fox, instead holding him to be an enemy of mankind. One 16th century chronicler wrote that 'his nature is deceitful, malicious, crafty, covetous, rapacious, perfect in all villainy'. We should learn from this. In reality, there is nothing fantastic about Mr Fox.

Some commentators called for anthropomorphism or 'humanisation' to be resisted altogether, whereas others appeared to tolerate anthropomorphisms which imbued foxes with negative moral character. The excerpt above exhibits both superficial and explanatory anthropomorphisms (Lockwood 1989) by attributing human intentions and malicious motivations to foxes. A detailed understanding of animal cognition is not necessary to evaluate the role of anthropomorphism in relating to the experiences of other species. However, Fawcett (1989:14) explains that "[t]he way in which people conceive of anthropomorphism is intimately connected to the way in which they perceive their relationship to nature". Individuals and cultures that consider humans separate or distinct in essence from the rest of nature are more likely to view anthropomorphism as unscientific or heretical. Anthropomorphism can engender sympathy (Herda-Rapp and Marotz 2005). Unsurprisingly, therefore, the critique of the ostensibly 'urban' tendency to sentimentalise and anthropomorphise foxes usually came from commentators whose own view was that humans are fundamentally different to other animals, in attributes and particularly in moral worth. City residents were derided for even entertaining the thought that human/fox coexistence was an option. "Oi, townies – stop treating Mr Fox as a cuddlesome pet", read a headline in *The Sunday Times* (13/06/2010). "Townsppeople [must] learn to distrust foxes as much as country people do", wrote *The Guardian* (11/06/2010a).

Bring Back Hunting

A common theme in readers' comments and letters published by the *Daily Express* (09/06/2010b), *The Guardian* (11/06/2010b) and *The Sun* (24/06/2010) was a call to legalise foxhunting, exemplified by a *Daily Express* reader who wrote, "bring back fox hunting and drive all the foxes back into the woods where they belong". *The Guardian* highlighted a number of comments on its website,

one of which blamed the “anti-fox hunt lot” for having created an environment for this incident to occur and wrote that “they have a lot of blood on their hands today”. *The Daily Telegraph* (16/06/2010) also observed the following:

[A]s a repeal of the hunting ban moves further up the political agenda, I fear more acrimony lies ahead. Any move to reintroduce hunting with hounds will be met with huge resistance from townies and tremendous support from country dwellers.

The “vulpine defence league” would have to wake up to the truth about foxes, it claimed. Although comments were made with varying degrees of seriousness, and the link between the predominantly rural practice of foxhunting and the urban fox problem appeared to be more symbolic than based on any obvious causal mechanism, this was nevertheless a prominent frame, both in newspapers that have a history of supporting the campaign to repeal the Hunting Act, such as *The Daily Telegraph*, and in newspapers that have tended to oppose hunting, such as *The Guardian*. John Bryant warned (*Daily Mail* 12/06/2010) that “[s]ome people are desperate to bring back fox hunting and something like this is the perfect excuse. I've already spoken to people this week who are saying we need to bring back the killing of foxes because children are being injured.”

Humane Deterrence and Coexistence

Animal protectionists and scientists countered calls for a cull, and several celebrities also voiced their disapproval. Television personality Joanna Lumley spoke out in *The Sunday Telegraph* (13/06/2010), branding cull proposals a “tragedy”, and Brian May called for a full inquiry into the incident involving the twins, after warning that it was being used to unfairly demonise foxes (*The Daily Telegraph* 11/06/2010a). Others dismissed proposals for a cull on the grounds that it would not work and could even make matters worse. Will Moore of Fox Solutions was cited in *The Guardian* (08/06/2010b), reminding readers that fox populations were self-regulating and didn't require human intervention. The Bristol University Mammal Research Unit was listed as the source in the *Daily Mirror* (08/06/2010) for the following statement: “It is a misconception that

numbers can be controlled. To reduce fox numbers, at least 70% need to be killed each year and every year for a long time.” John Bryant advocated humane deterrence in place of culling, and argued that the best solution was to leave foxes in their territory to deter other foxes, whilst educating resident foxes about human boundaries (*Daily Mirror* 08/06/2010). Pest controllers, he argued, “don't understand the species” (*Daily Mail* 12/06/2010) and don't appreciate that foxes are territorial animals. “If you empty that territory it will fill up with foxes from neighbouring areas within a few days”, he explained. This argument was repeated by many others, including a spokesperson for the RSPCA (*The Daily Telegraph* 18/10/2010) and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, which added that “[t]he moment you increase the mortality rate, the foxes compensate by increasing the number of vixens that breed” and “controlling urban foxes is difficult, expensive and never successful” (*The Times* 08/06/2010a). Widespread, centrally-organised culling had been tried between the 1940s and 1970s, with local authorities trapping and shooting foxes across London in an attempt to reduce the population. However, according to *The Independent* (08/06/2010) and *The Guardian* (08/06/2010b), these culls had failed and were subsequently abandoned because they were expensive and ineffectual.

An editorial in *The Daily Telegraph* (08/06/2010a) dismissed these arguments as the ignorant claims of the “pro-fox lobby”. Having already labelled scientists “foxites”, the author reiterated his doubt over the veracity of their assertions. An article published in the same newspaper a few days later (12/06/2010a), on the other hand, conceded that “[i]f you want your local one killed, you can have it done, legally and relatively cleanly, and live fox-free until another one takes its place. Yet to make a significant inroad, someone would have to pay for a foxmageddon of 23,100 urban foxes (70 per cent) every year for the next few years.” The RSPCA came under fire in the *Sunday Mirror* (13/06/2010) for allegedly “defending” urban foxes and suggesting that humans could find a way to live peacefully alongside them:

You would think, at a time like this, the RSPCA would offer sympathy or at least handle this terrible incident with the sensitivity it deserves. But no, all it has done is defend the urban fox. He was just playing! He didn't mean it! [...] The RSPCA needs a reality check. Maybe it should try offering a solution to the urban fox problem rather than insulting every concerned parent in the country.

Deterrence was, according to the RSPCA (*The Daily Telegraph* 18/10/2010) and John Bryant (*Daily Mirror* 08/06/2010, *The Daily Telegraph* 12/06/2010a) preferable to lethal control. *The Daily Telegraph* (12/06/2010a), which had repeatedly taken the testimony of pest controllers at face value, ignoring how the industry stood to profit from the hysteria surrounding urban foxes, noted disparagingly that “[a]n entire 'educative' industry has grown up around non-lethal fox control”. The newspaper cited Paul Inglis of Power Pest Control, who pleaded with the public not to buy non-lethal deterrence products and repellents. For commentators in *The Daily Telegraph*, the only apparent reasons why councils were resisting the use of lethal measures were misplaced sentimentalism and a concern for the welfare of wildlife over that of human children. Solutions that required human behavioural change rather than providing an instant cure via lethal control caused much frustration. *The Daily Telegraph* (18/10/2010) cited a spokeswoman for the Countryside Alliance, who alleged that “[t]he animal rights lobby believes you should never kill anything but then you get a population explosion and when that causes disease, mess and environmental problems it's just not practical”. Failing to take seriously the various arguments against a cull of urban foxes, and furthermore lumping them together under the umbrella of “the animal rights lobby”, had the effect of rendering culling the apparently more sensible option. Many perceived the calls for non-lethal deterrence as an ineffective distraction from the tough measures warranted by the problem. The author of an article in *The Sunday Times* (18/07/2010) described her attempts to prompt the council to act as follows:

Eventually they directed me to a fox helpline, where a recorded voice suggested I keep a pen and paper ready. It was all becoming a bit tiring. The pen was upstairs, needless to say, so I can't remember what they actually said, but I was offered lots of helpful and humane fox-repelling advice, all of which seemed to require unimaginable levels of effort on my part. So I hung up.

The main piece of advice offered to residents by Hackney Council was to stop feeding foxes, both deliberately or unintentionally (*The Independent* 08/06/2010). This was also the advice given by Will Moore of Fox Solutions (*The Times* 08/06/2010a, *The Sun* 09/06/2010a) and Steve Bachelor from the League Against Cruel Sports, who argued that “[b]y our actions we have invited them to live among us, and by our actions we should work out a proper solution for dealing with the problem it causes” (*The Independent* 12/06/2010b). Marina Pacheco, chief executive of the Mammal Society, told the *Daily Express* (24/09/2010) that not feeding foxes and preventing them from raiding dustbins “will decrease their numbers or at least focus them towards rats, which they kill as prey”. In a statement that emphasised the dependence of urban foxes on human waste and generosity animal behaviourist Dr Roger Mugford insisted that “[t]hey must be deprived of food in Britain's towns and allowed to die” (*Daily Express* 08/06/2010a).

Hackney Council's response in the immediate wake of the incident was to task pest controllers with the trapping and shooting of several foxes in the family's garden. The day after the incident, *The Independent* (8/06/2010) confirmed that a fox had been caught and had been “humanely put down”, “but they do not know whether it was the same animal which attacked the twin girls”. The *Daily Express* (08/06/2010a, 09/06/2010c, 11/06/2010a) and *Daily Mail* (12/06/2010, 21/06/2010) provided updates on the number of foxes that were killed over the coming weeks. Six foxes, including several cubs, were caught in less than a fortnight. However, it became apparent that this was to be just a one-off trapping exercise to appease local residents and demonstrate that something was being done. Hackney Council, along with several other London borough councils, had endorsed the London Wildlife Trust's Fox Code. The *Daily Express* (09/06/2010d) summarised that “[t]his code states that foxes are a desirable part of London's wildlife heritage and control is 'unnecessary'” and argued that “[t]his seems irresponsible towards residents and also cruel to foxes whose populations will grow until they die of hunger or disease”. *The Sunday Times* (08/06/2010b) also noted that the council's calls for people to live in harmony with their local wildlife were falling on deaf ears and that residents were taking matters into their own hands: “Guntoting pest-controllers, available for hire, became tabloid heroes. One man was famed for killing 28 in a single night.”

Pest controllers were responding to more call-outs and sales of non-lethal repellents also rose by up to 60 per cent, according to *The Daily Telegraph* (26/06/2010). The newspaper later (18/10/2010, 4/06/2011) reported that its warnings about reprisals from animal rights campaigners (see 12/06/2010a) were also gradually being realised. On several occasions when marksmen had been called to kill a neighbourhood's foxes because they were fouling or digging holes in residents' gardens, neighbours and campaigners had staged protests, demanding that the killing be cancelled.

The Daily Telegraph (11/06/2010d) reported the government had “signalled that it would consider forcing councils to act”. The newspaper cited Kate Hoey, a London Labour MP and an outspoken supporter of foxhunting, who insisted that “all local authorities in inner London should be asked to have a proper strategy on dealing with foxes”. As a result of discussions in Parliament, the *Daily Mail* (11/06/2010) claimed that “[t]ighter fox-control laws may be introduced”. A debate was eventually held in the House of Commons on 17th March 2011, in which the farming minister was asked about “exterminating the creatures” or reclassifying foxes as vermin so that councils would be forced to act (*The Guardian* 18/03/2011). However, he declined.

In early 2011 a further controversy emerged, centring on the suspicion that foxes were being taken from urban areas and dumped in the countryside. An editorial in the *Daily Express* (09/06/2010d) had previously mentioned a statement from Croydon Council dating back to 1996, which announced that the council would be adopting a policy of returning healthy foxes “to the wild”. “That made them sound very caring and sharing”, the newspaper conceded. It continued:

[B]ut returning foxes to the wild is merely a nice way of saying they will be dumped in the countryside. Those in the early stages of mange, which is difficult to detect, infect the rural foxes while the rest, having never learnt how to hunt, die of hunger. Now that really is cruel.

Paul Inglis of Power Pest Control was also cited on this issue in *The Daily Telegraph* (12/06/2010a), claiming that “[i]f you put an urban fox, 90 per cent of

which have mange, in a rural area, it's going to die anyway". Although there was no suggestion at the time that Hackney Council was considering such action, it was brought up again during the Commons debate in March 2011 (*The Guardian* 18/03/2011, *The Daily Telegraph* 18/03/2011a and 18/03/2011b). *The Daily Telegraph* (18/03/2011b) reported ministers had complained that "[u]rban foxes are being rounded up and dumped in the countryside in a 'dazed' condition". Although it was not clear whether councils, animal protection groups or residents were to blame, the newspaper claimed that farmers had seen "lorries arriving in the early morning or late evening and depositing several dozen foxes at a time". Six months later, *The Daily Telegraph* (09/09/2011) published an update on the story with the headline "[h]elpless town foxes shot after being left in countryside". According to the Union of Country Sports Workers, this practice was now widespread and must be stopped.

The reaction to the attack on the twins had been strong but not unidirectional. The most prominent frame (*Cull*) was based on many of the arguments set up in the *Propagation* frames described in chapter 5, particularly regarding population growth. Calls for the destruction of urban foxes had featured at the centre of several striking headlines following the incident with the twins. Nevertheless, the immediate reaction of the council to trap and kill several foxes in the family's garden was undoubtedly more symbolic than strategic. The council remained of the firm opinion that humane deterrence, on the whole, was preferable to lethal control. Over the course of the next three years, what appeared to be a consensus among pest controllers and several aforementioned newspapers regarding the need for centrally-organised killing with the aim of population reduction or the wholesale removal of foxes from urban areas gradually broke down. After the immediate media hysteria had subsided, voices internal and external to the newspapers increasingly began to ask whether widespread lethal control was a proportionate, effective and reasonable means of tackling what had to be acknowledged was a problem not only of fox behaviour but also of human behaviour and risk perception. A further notable feature of the recommendations made after the incident with the twins was that there were very few explicit suggestions about not feeding from those who advocated lethal measures, despite the prominence of the *Direct* and *Indirect Feeding* frames in explanations of the incident (see chapter 5). Only a small selection of animal

protectionists, scientists and a spokesperson from the council specifically discouraged feeding.

7.2.2 *Public panic or media rhetoric?*

The fact that there were widespread calls for drastic action and confirmation from the pest control industry of an increase in panicky calls from parents, points to a heightened level of concern among the public. The urban fox (by which is meant the species) had become “Public Enemy No. 1” (*The Times* 03/07/2010a), “almost as unpopular as the CEO of BP” (*The Times* 03/07/2010b).

A few days after the incident, *The Sun* (09/06/2010b) reported on the results of a *YouGov* poll it had commissioned in its wake, stating that “42 per cent [of respondents] said they had become more concerned after reading about the attack on the twins” and “[t]hat figure rose to half among people in London”. However, the poll, which was based on a survey of 920 British adults, had also shown that the majority of respondents believed that there was no need for greater action to control urban foxes, with only 35% stating that more should be done (*YouGov* 2010). Women were slightly more concerned about urban foxes than men and people above the age of 55 were vastly more concerned (49%) than those in the age group 18-34 (25%). In answer to the question “[d]o you agree or disagree that more should be done to control the number of foxes in URBAN areas”, 47% of respondents who had voted Conservative in the 2010 General Election chose the answer “[a]gree, foxes in urban areas are a dangerous pest that should be controlled”, compared to only 29% of Liberal Democrat voters and 32% of Labour voters. This trend corresponds with the rhetoric of public concern in *The Daily Telegraph*.

The Guardian (11/06/2010a), on the other hand, cited claims from The Fox Project, whose telephone advice line reportedly received around 36,000 calls annually from members of the public. The charity confirmed that the vast majority of calls came from people who enjoyed seeing foxes in their gardens and wanted to receive advice on how to make them feel more welcome. Only 6,000 of its calls were from residents wanting to deter foxes. Citing a previous

survey of 4,000 British households, *The Independent* (08/06/2010) also concluded that “[k]illing foxes is unpopular”, with almost two-thirds of respondents saying they liked urban foxes and only one in twelve (8.5%) openly disliking them. However, commenting on the same survey, *The Daily Telegraph* (12/06/2010a) suggested that these figures would look very different if the poll was conducted in the aftermath of the incident in Hackney and that now “it seems there is no one left who doesn't hold an extremely strong opinion about just how fantastic Mr Urban Fox actually is”. Rod Liddle from *The Sunday Times* (13/06/2010) agreed that “public opinion seemed to turn; suddenly there were calls for 'control' of the foxes, that these creatures were a potentially savage menace”. Another author in *The Sunday Times* (18/07/2010) wrote about a conversation she'd had with a friend about a fox that was making himself at home in her back garden. “How sweet”, the friend said, to which she replied the following:

“How sweet?” [...] “Have you been reading the papers recently? It's not sweet, it's bloody serious! Last week he followed me down the street. Literally. Followed. It can only be a matter of time before he attacks us [...]”

Over the following year, *The Sunday Telegraph* (20/06/2010) and *The Daily Telegraph* (18/03/2011b) reiterated claims about “mounting concern” or “panic”. Politicians continued to find political mileage in the alleged public concern about urban foxes. When London mayoral candidate Siobhan Benita talked to her neighbours, “their number one worry is urban foxes”, wrote *The Daily Telegraph* (14/04/2012). *The Times* (7/04/2012) confirmed that “she would even be willing to take on animal welfare campaigners by dealing with urban foxes”. Labour leader Ed Miliband's “pavement politics” also championed the concerns of voters, “whether it is road bypasses or heart bypasses, urban foxes or dog mess” (*The Times* 22/05/2012).

The left-wing press were vastly more critical of what was increasingly seen as the media's exaggeration of events. *The Guardian's* Patrick Barkham (08/06/2010b) early on had warned that coverage of the incident would trigger a panic about urban foxes and the newspaper later criticised the “sensationalist reporting” and “avalanche of scare stories” that followed (07/08/2010). A year

after the incident (18/06/2011), the newspaper stated that the result of reporting was that “[u]rban fox panic” was still “militarising the British garden”. *The Independent* (05/03/2011) also acknowledged that there had been “a moment of urban fox demonisation” in the media. *The Sunday Times* (02/01/2011) cited the League Against Cruel Sports, who complained that “[t]he fox is being demonised with scaremongering”. Even *The Sunday Telegraph* (23/01/2011) eventually conceded that urban foxes had become the victims of “[s]care-mongering journalism”, with “some newspapers [spinning] the story out for three weeks, feeding a 'killer fox' prejudice”. Although some newspapers were critical of the role of the press in stoking up hysteria, and survey data appeared to contradict the claim that there was genuine and widespread public panic, the rhetoric of panic was pervasive. The desperate efforts of campaigners and wildlife scientists to debunk what they regarded as myths and to assuage fears only underlined this fact.

7.2.3 Documentary – *Urban Fox Attack*

Less than a month after the incident, the television channel More4 aired a documentary called *Urban Fox Attack* (03/07/2010), which reused footage of urban foxes in Hackney from a previous documentary and re-examined how humans felt about urban foxes in light of the attack on the twins. *The Independent* (03/07/2010) wrote that the documentary would examine “whether the urban *vulpes vulpes* [sic] is a welcome reminder of the countryside or simply a dangerous and over-indulged pest”. Filmmaker Riete Oord narrated the documentary and began by stating that urban foxes were clearly a “growing problem”. “Hackney has a history of welcoming immigrants”, she noted, “but the community has become increasingly divided over whether these bushy-tailed refugees are friend or foe”.

The film followed the lives of various London residents, who each had a different relationship to urban foxes and had either resorted to killing or developed ways of living alongside them, beginning with a family attempting to live the country life in the city by keeping chickens in their garden. The opening scene showed a young fox catching a chicken at night. It may have shocked were it not for the arguably more shocking fact that the chicken was roaming

around the garden completely unprotected. Although the family was distraught, a neighbour was grateful to the fox for putting an end to the noise from clucking chickens. Humane wildlife deterrence specialist John Bryant was called to the property, on the recommendation of Hackney Council, and told the family that as long as the chickens were there, foxes would always look for any opportunity to catch them. A failed attempt to deter them using lion dung, followed by what the daughter referred to as a “completely unnecessary” killing spree in which a fox broke into the chicken pen and killed every chicken, led Howard, the father, to seek some “country wisdom” from a farming friend. Pest controller Bruce Lindsay-Smith was subsequently hired to shoot several foxes from the family's bathroom window. He explained that it was “probably kinder for the fox to be humanely dispatched” than to be trapped and relocated. For a week prior to the shooting, food was put out to bait foxes into the garden and subsequently a vixen was shot, followed by her mate.

Another family complained of problems with foxes fouling in their garden. “We see them all over the street. They're breeding”, the father said. Bruce Lindsay-Smith and his assistant Jamie were also called to this property. They confirmed that there were more foxes around than ever before and more pets and people were being bitten by them. “Not all these attacks come to light”, Jamie said, “but it does happen quite frequently. Every day.” A baited trap, which Jamie lightheartedly referred to as “the last dinner”, was set in the garden. The children went into the garden the next morning to look at the trapped fox and upon telling their father that they felt sorry for the animal, he replied with that the fox would be released unharmed in a forest, a claim that turned out to be untrue.

Elsewhere, Jamie was asked to trap another nuisance fox but not kill it. He reluctantly agreed to do so, provided the fox was in good condition. A mangy fox was caught in the trap and the property owner pleaded with Jamie to have the fox treated for the disease, but Jamie insisted that it wasn't advisable to “humanise” foxes and that it was in the fox's interest to be shot.

Alan and June, an elderly couple whose retirement hobby was to feed their local foxes, spoke of the thrill of watching footage from their hidden cameras every morning and seeing wild animals so close to their home. “It's the closest thing to a safari”, Alan said. However, the narrator explained that the feeding of foxes

had led to them losing their fear of humans. There was a brief period after Alan and June returned from a holiday when the foxes no longer visited their garden and the couple spoke of their concern for the animals, who were like pets to them. Bruno, a local allotment gardener commented that “there's really nothing natural about foxes in cities” but that cities have a “strong contingent of the bunny-hugging tendency”. The documentary also accompanied Reg and Colin from the National Fox Welfare Society on an emergency call-out to rescue an injured vixen from underneath someone's patio decking. The fox was taken to the vet and was later shown convalescing at Reg's fox sanctuary before being released back into the neighbourhood where she had been found. While stroking a fox, Reg expressed his disbelief at the fact that people feared these animals.

The documentary repeatedly emphasised the “tough life” of foxes in city environments, where the average life expectancy is much lower and the risk of disease greater than elsewhere. Moving between the various storylines and narratives of fox control and coexistence had the effect of emphasising just how polarised urban residents were in their views. Even experts were divided, the narrator alleged. The film concluded with a number of plot twists. Despite having spent a lot of money to have their neighbourhood foxes killed, and even putting out poison, a practice which remains illegal, Howard's family's chickens were once again being threatened by foxes. The family would have to come to terms with the fact that the foxes had returned and were there to stay. Alan and June were also interviewed in the wake of the incident with the Koupparis twins and explained that they had decided to stop feeding foxes, in the interest of protecting the children in their neighbourhood. The narrator concluded with the advice that humans cannot expect foxes to change if they are not willing to change their own behaviour.

7.2.4 Urban foxhunting

Vigilantes hunt foxes to avenge mauled babies
(*The Times* 04/08/2010)

In early August 2010 a video emerged on the website YouTube, sparking a controversy that reached the national news and eventually brought about a self-critical reflection on the part of the mainstream media with regard to its coverage of the 'attack' on the Koupparis twins. A headline in the *Daily Mirror* (03/08/2010) read "[t]he sick urban foxhunters; Thugs boast how they kill in internet film". According to the newspaper, the video showed a "group of masked thugs" chasing and beating a fox to death in Victoria Park, East London, just a short distance from the home of the twins. "The men, who call themselves Urban Foxhunters, claim they killed a fox with a cricket bat in revenge for the recent attacks on children", the *Daily Mirror* revealed.

The 'hunters' catch a fox at the third attempt by using dog food laced with the powerful sedative Xanax as bait. After the fox has eaten the food the group chase it, laughing as the drugged-up animal ricochets off cars. When they catch the animal they beat it to death with cricket bats.
(*Daily Mirror* 03/08/2010)

A spokesperson for the group, calling himself the Lone Horseman (figure 7.1), told *The Times* (04/08/2010) that his group would not stop "until this vermin has been exterminated":

That beast nearly killed those kids and police and whatever aren't doing anything about it. We all live near there and the foxes are everywhere spreading their diseases. So we have taken things into our own hands.

The group created a Facebook page, where they explained that they were "performing a public service" by ridding London's streets of "diseased vermin scum" (*The Guardian* 04/08/2010). The *Daily Mirror* (03/08/2010) cited the page for further detail on their actions:

So we cornered Mr Fox in a dark alley and we pummelled the s*** out of him. And boy do these vermin stink. It was f***ing awesome to get a kill – one down, several hundred to go!

Fig.7.1 Still image from the video showing the Lone Horseman, published in the *Daily Mirror* (03/08/2010w)



A counter-group called “Clubbing Urban Fox Hunters” was immediately set up on Facebook. The video was also condemned by Mr Koupparis (*Daily Star* 06/08/2010) and prompted an investigation from the RSPCA, which warned that those responsible could face prosecution (*The Times* 04/08/2010). MPs also backed the decision by the Metropolitan police's wildlife crime unit to launch an investigation (*The Guardian* 07/08/2010). In Hackney, residents began distributing leaflets in an effort to identify the culprits (*The Guardian* 07/08/2010). John Bryant and The Fox Project each offered a £1000 reward to catch the Lone Horseman and The League Against Cruel Sports stated in the *Daily Mirror* (03/08/2010) that “[w]e are outraged but not surprised. The hype surrounding the apparent fox attacks is precisely because of how rare such attacks really are.” The organisation blamed “hysterical media coverage” and pointed out that “[p]eople in Hackney are at far greater risk from people wielding cricket bats than they are from urban foxes” (*The Guardian* 04/08/2010). With the exception of *The Times* (the Establishment newspaper), the conservative press did not comment.

On 7 August 2010, *The Times* revealed that the video was in fact a stunt, designed to highlight the media's disproportionate portrayal of risks from urban foxes. *The Guardian* (07/08/2010) published a longer piece with the headline “[l]ess shaggy dog story and more a furry tail: urban foxhunters' video was all a hoax”. It clarified that the video had been made by filmmakers Chris Atkins and Johnny Howorth and “was intended as a satirical swipe at 'media hysteria' over the danger of urban foxes”. The dead fox was played by a stuffed animal, while a bushy tail was strapped to the back of a dog used to play the part of the live fox. Filmmaker Atkins explained that he “hoped public revulsion over the notion of urban fox-baiting would discourage the coalition government from repealing the hunting ban”. He explained his motivation:

We wanted to create something that would be so ridiculous that in any other area it would be immediately dismissed as a spoof, but that news outlets desperate to continue the media narrative against foxes would leap on without any thought as to its authenticity.

7.2.5 Documentary – *Foxes Live: Wild in the City*

To further ascertain, among other things, whether the rhetoric of heightened concern or panic expressed by many elements of the mainstream media was indicative of genuine public opinion or really a figment of media representation, Channel 4 produced a four-part live television series called *Foxes Live: Wild in the City*. The series, which ran on 30 April and 7, 8 and 9 May 2012, was billed as a live interactive natural history event, aiming to gather data on public opinion, fox behaviour and fox population dynamics. Presenter and television vet Mark Evans told the *Daily Mail* (19/04/2012) that “[f]oxes are an enigma. We know very little about what they get up to and few wild animals trigger such heated debate.” The show promised to look at life from the foxes' point of view, using data collected from den cameras, CCTV and GPS tracking devices, some of it recorded prior to the show. The programme also relied on user-generated content via an online survey of fox sightings, accompanied by an attitudes questionnaire compiled and evaluated by biologists from Brighton and Reading universities.

In the run-up to the show, *The Daily Telegraph* (20/04/2012) publicised the survey, encouraging readers to send in their fox sightings and promising that “[t]he count will also examine how foxes are becoming bolder”. Nine days later, the newspaper published an article with the headline “[f]oxcam: Secret life of urban pest”, which stated that Channel 4's decision to produce such a show “reflects the rise of urban foxes”. *The Sunday Times* (29/04/2012a) highlighted that the series had elsewhere been described as a “campaign”, which sought not only to gather data on urban foxes but to educate the public about them.

The first episode gave an overview of the topics to be covered in the series and promised to give an insight into why foxes divide public opinion more than any other wild animals in the UK. “Love them or loathe them”, a presenter said, “they are wild in the city”. Viewers were introduced to Chico the urban fox, who had been caught red-handed after a killing spree in a chicken coop in Manchester. He was subsequently trapped, treated for mange, fitted with a radio-tracking device and then released back into the neighbourhood. Viewers were asked to write in with their opinion on whether setting Chico free “so close to the scene of the original crime” was a “compassionate act” or “complete craziness”. The chicken keeper was also interviewed:

I can't blame him for doing what he's supposed to do. It's the way he goes about his hunt that's so aggravating to people. He will kill the whole lot, and as a result it all looks a bit savage.

Asked whether there was a risk of foxes attacking people, a spokesperson for the RSPCA responded that humans were encouraging foxes and that the resulting behaviour was inquisitive, not predatory. Furthermore, attacks of any kind are such rare events, they should not rule how people deal with all foxes. Next, viewers were treated to footage of a vixen raising three cubs underneath a garden shed. All cubs died and the presenter pointed out that this illustrated how tough life was for foxes in general. Dr Phil Baker from the University of Reading explained that mortality in foxes was exceedingly high. A new fox family moved into the den and subsequent episodes provided updates on their progress. Finally, the show introduced Roxy, a tame rescued fox whose diet consists of cooked chicken and whose ‘owner’ regularly drives her into town to

meet the public and raise funds for his animal sanctuary. The first *Foxes Live* episode was watched by 1.8 million people and the online audience had even beaten *Big Brother*, according to *The Independent* (04/05/2012). Some of the featured foxes received their own Facebook fan pages. Each subsequent episode was accompanied by a half-hour discussion programme on More4 called *More Foxes Live*.

The second episode aired more than two weeks later and covered topics including fox diet, hearing, scent, territoriality, population dynamics, infanticide and other causes of mortality, and humane deterrents. The cameras followed pest controller Danny Thatcher, who had been called to a property where a fox was causing distress to a group of birds in an aviary. "We've got to dispatch this animal", he explained before shooting the trapped fox. However, fox populations are naturally self-regulating, viewers were told by the scientists on the programme. It would be only a matter of time before another fox arrived to fill the niche. Another myth to be addressed was the claim that foxes frequently attacked pets. Initial survey findings indicated that reports of dogs chasing and sometimes killing foxes were more common than foxes chasing dogs, and there were no reports of dog fatalities.

In the third episode, scientists were brought in to talk about social structure, anatomy, communication and behaviour. Dr Phil Baker was asked whether foxes were becoming less scared of humans and he responded that foxes had adapted to their urban environment and humans had indeed contributed to a change in their tolerance of human proximity. Foxes had successfully conquered most parts of the globe and were well suited to living in urban areas. Viewers were also shown how agile and athletic the animals are. Asked whether feeding foxes was contributing to population growth in urban areas, Dr Baker responded that there simply wasn't the data to answer the question.

During the *More Foxes Live* discussion that followed, various contributors were asked to debate the topic of feeding. Dr Dawn Scott from the University of Brighton reiterated that it was theoretically possible that feeding could increase the carrying capacity of an area or the survivorship of the animals within it but that there was insufficient data. Dr Phil Baker stated that it was their inquisitive

nature which had governed the species' success, but whether feeding was a driver of population growth was a more complex question. The musician and campaigner Brian May added that feeding was an important means of administering mange treatment to sick foxes. He also argued that it was wrong to classify the behaviour of urban foxes as aggressive and furthermore that the focus on populations as opposed to individuals was detrimental to human coexistence with foxes. Charlie Jakobe, the presenter of the online Fieldsports Channel, challenged Brian May and claimed “the rural point of view” was that foxes were vermin and the role of farmers with regards to wildlife was to manage the species to ensure a healthy population, whereas their responsibility to livestock animals was to look after the individual. He also criticised the presenters of the programme for their portrayal of foxes, which allegedly treated them more as pets than as wildlife, and which overemphasised problematic human behaviour but did not explicitly condemn the behaviour of foxes. Jakobe in turn came under staunch criticism from the presenter, as well as Brian May and Dr Baker, for a video the Fieldsports Channel had circulated online, which apparently showed a fox sniffing at and then dragging a baby out of a pushchair in a suburban garden (figure 7.2).

Fig.7.2 Still image from “Fox takes crying ‘baby’ from pram”
(Fieldsports Channel 2012)



It was revealed that the 'baby' was actually a dead piglet dressed in a babygrow. Jakobe defended the video, stating that “we're making the point that if you are going to feed foxes, they are going to bite you. They are not going to reward you with love.” Brian May dismissed it as “a piece of propaganda” and Dr Baker clarified that “this doesn't agree with any of the evidence we have” and that “the fox does know the difference”. Jakobe intervened, “yes, but it's pulled it out of a human pram. The fox is ignoring it's a human pram.” Similar to the repeated portrayal of critics, including scientists, as ‘foxites’ by *The Daily Telegraph*, Jakobe added in frustration that he “did expect to be torn apart by angry fox lovers on this programme”. The presenter interjected that the point of the programme was to emphasise that “whether you love them or loathe them, you need to respect them and understand them”. “Videos can do damage”, he explained, to which Jakobe replied “damage to what?” The presenter answered, “damage to the reputation, the truth about foxes”, and Jakobe said in an exasperated voice, “the fox has got a rap sheet as long as your arm!” Dr Dawn Scott pointed out that human conflict with carnivores was common worldwide but that conflict could be turned into coexistence if humans were willing to change their behaviour and move away from an “us versus them” position. Finally, Brian May suggested that there was a hidden agenda behind negative portrayals of urban foxes, which centred around making foxhunting more acceptable to the public. Despite representing a fieldsports organisation, Charlie Jakobe dismissed this allegation but emphasised that people had to realise that their responsibility to wildlife was towards the species, whereas their responsibility to pets and livestock was to look after the individual:

If I run over a dog – horror – I'm going to take it to the vet.
If I run over a fox, there are lots of them. I will knock it on the head.

The final episode in this four-part series included a timeline illustrating the colonisation of urban areas by foxes (with the conclusion that foxes were now a natural element of most British cities), information on the 1990s mange outbreak, and the differences between rural foxes (‘country bumpkins’) and urban foxes (‘city slickers’). The episode also reviewed some of the 15,000 fox sightings that had been logged by viewers and summarised the preliminary

findings of the survey. 70% of respondents from London had reported seeing foxes more than once a week. 90% of women who answered the survey stated that they liked foxes, although this figure decreased with age. 1.5% of respondents said foxes had entered their homes on at least one occasion. Based on the data, the scientists calculated that there could be around 2.7 animals per km² and that the population may have grown by up to 20% in urban areas over the last twenty years. However, this was in line with the growth and sprawl of our cities, Dr Scott explained.

Finally, viewers were introduced to Mrs Snooks, a fox kept as a pet by a Bristol-based pet shop owner. The ensuing debate about whether it was right to keep foxes as pets also touched on whether rehabilitation of orphaned or injured foxes was a good idea. 40% of orphaned cubs that are hand-reared and then released don't survive, the scientists explained. However, this figure had to be considered in the context of the high mortality of wild-living cubs and could be reduced by adopting a form of 'soft release', in which animals are allowed to acclimatise to their new surroundings before being set free. Coexistence was possible, the programme concluded, if an effort was made to understand this much-maligned species.

Ten days after the show had finished, *The Guardian* (19/05/2012) produced an urban wildlife guide booklet with advice on the best places for viewing urban wildlife. *The Sunday Times* (20/05/2012) responded more disparagingly to the apparently burgeoning interest in urban wildlife following the programme, claiming that *Foxes Live* had featured only a narrow spectrum of “enthusiasts who were a cross between Blue Peter presenters and Animal Liberation Front guerillas”. It continued:

Both *Foxes Live* and *Planet Earth Live* worked on the Attenborough assumption that all outdoors is innately good, that there is only one sort of nature and it is blameless and wonderful. This is the great orthodoxy of life on the box: there is no natural selection, it's all sentimentally lovely. Actually, outside, most nature isn't welcome to us, it's dangerous and competitive with us. Urban foxes, for most of us who live near them, are messy, destructive, stinking and cunningly menacing. Nature is bliss on television, because televisions exist in habitats from which nature has been exorcised. The only animals allowed in have been specially bred for the purpose; all the flora has been cut off at the roots and left to die slowly in vases.

The Independent on Sunday (03/06/2012) reported on the *Foxes Live* survey findings, highlighting that “89% of city dwellers [say] they like foxes and are in favour of them sharing their streets”. 80% agreed that foxes “enriched” their lives, only one in ten wanted them removed from cities and a third admitted to feeding them. The newspaper quoted David Dugan, the programme's executive producer, who added that “[t]here is a definite school of thought that foxes are vermin and spread diseases, but what I wasn't expecting was how many people love the idea of wild animals running around a city”. Only 3% of respondents claimed that they were scared that foxes would attack humans (Dr Dawn Scott, pers. comm.), a figure which rather undermined the rhetoric of panic. However, Dr Scott (pers. comm.) was cautious about drawing conclusions from this survey alone, due to the methodological limitations of non-randomised surveys.

Pest Magazine (2012) published a feature article in the wake of *Foxes Live*, which complained that “[f]or four hours we were treated to endless footage of sweet and cuddly fox cubs romping around urban gardens” (p.11) and suggested that many of its readers would have been throwing things at their televisions in frustration. The article stated that killing foxes “is the most humane way of dealing with this pest” (p.11) and claimed that one of the pest controllers on the programme had since received death threats. Terry Fricker, pest controller for Rentakeeper Environmental Services was cited as saying “[s]o the 'tree-hugger' world of Beatrix Potter has taken over the presenters, researchers and pretty much everyone featured on this series of programmes!” (p.11) The article also noted that the percentage of respondents to the survey who stated

that they liked foxes rose by 7% from the start until the end of the series, “[y]et the more people actually see foxes, rather than view them on TV, the less keen they are on them” (p.12). Readers were told that the company Urban Wildlife Solutions had vowed to set up an Urban Fox Seminar “to bring some sense to the urban fox debate” (p.11).

The live, interactive nature documentary model of *Foxes Live* has also often been used by the BBC, whose *Autumn Watch* series in 2013 followed the movements of a group of radio-collared foxes to further learn about their behaviours and examine whether suburban foxes had an easier life than those living in the inner city. Explaining the importance of the series, presenter Chris Packham told *The Sun* (26/10/2013a) that he hoped people could learn “how to be better neighbours” to foxes.

7.3 Denny Dolan

7.3.1 From centralised to localised culling

No sooner had the balance swung in favour of calm and perspective than the attack on toddler Denny Dolan happened in February 2013. Several other incidents had been reported in the intervening years (see chapter 6), but none received the level of media attention that the attack on the twins and on Denny Dolan received. ‘Action’ was the demand repeated by several newspapers in the immediate wake of the incident. “Something” had to be done, said Christabel Moseley, a vet cited in *The Times* (11/02/2013b). London mayor Boris Johnson reiterated his view that the actions of foxes (notably not the actions of humans) needed addressing and that this warranted some form of pest control:

This must serve as a wake-up to London's borough leaders, who are responsible for pest control. They must come together, study the data, try to understand why this is becoming such a problem and act quickly to sort it out. (*Mail on Sunday* 10/02/2013, *Daily Mirror* 10/02/2013)

Mr Johnson put all London borough leaders on notice “that serious anti-fox action was now required, including the possibility of a cull”, wrote *The Independent* (12/02/2013a). Councillor Tim Stevens agreed that there may be grounds for a “limited cull” (*The Sun* 11/02/2013b) but that this would only work “if foxes were slaughtered across London in a co-ordinated programme” (*The Independent* 11/02/2013). *The Daily Telegraph* (12/02/2013a) cited the former farming minister, James Paice, who said that there were “obviously too many” urban foxes. He explained that “[a]ll wildlife needs managing full stop [...]. As human beings, we have to recognise that the environment in which wildlife lives is managed by people and that means that when populations of any wildlife get excessive, then they have to be controlled.” The main obstacle would be public squeamishness, he said. Politicians weren't the only ones perpetuating the view that population size was the problem and that killing was the necessary solution. “Fearful residents living near little Denny are demanding a cull of urban foxes”, *The Sun* (11/02/2013b) wrote. Many letters were also published over the following week in *The Daily Telegraph* (13/02/2013), *Daily Mirror* (14/02/2013b), and *The Sun* (18/02/2013a), arguing that urban foxes should be officially classed as vermin and culled. Pest controller Peter Crowden wrote an editorial for the *Daily Mail* (11/02/2013) in which he called for a “co-ordinated nationwide cull”, warning that otherwise “this highly efficient killer will continue to menace children”. Coexistence was not an option. “The more we live alongside foxes, the more likely it is they will attack our children and invade our homes”, he wrote.

However, *The Guardian* (15/02/2013) countered that it had found “little support from animal welfare charities – or a pest control expert – for Boris Johnson's suggestion of a mass kill”. It cited animal welfare groups, pest controllers, shooters, scientists and politicians who disagreed with calls for a cull and argued that it would be impractical, pointless and unethical. Even the infamous fox shooter Bruce Lindsay-Smith was said to have turned “sceptical”, particularly regarding the feasibility of killing large numbers quickly in a residential area. Trevor Williams from The Fox Project charity asked how a cull would be paid for, and the Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA) stated that they would take direct action to intervene in any proposed cull. The latter also accused the hunting community of stoking up hysteria in a bid to legalise

hunting and suggested that “people must accept responsibility for interfering with the natural habitat of foxes and other wildlife and forcing them into urban areas in search of food”. In line with the *Rural Exodus* frame, the HSA stated that urban areas had been forced to act as refuges for foxes fleeing from the countryside. The newspaper also cited the League Against Cruel Sports, which reiterated its appeal for people to “not respond hysterically to this tragic incident” and warned that it was “deeply cynical that the pro-hunt lobby try to use incidences like this to argue in favour of their own case of legalising the barbaric practice of hunting wild animals with packs of dogs for fun”. Culling would be “a massive overreaction”, said Simon Cowell, founder of the Wildlife Aid foundation, and even Richard Moseley, technical manager for the British Pest Control Association dismissed talk of a cull as “a kneejerk reaction”. *The Guardian* also cited John Bryant, who elaborated that “[t]he only way to exterminate foxes in London would be to put a 12ft fence round the city to stop rural foxes coming in. It's totally pointless because within days (of clearing an area) other foxes will move in.” Elsewhere, he branded the idea of a cull “ridiculous” and “unaffordable” (*The Daily Telegraph* 12/02/2013b).

Over the course of several articles, *The Guardian* (11/02/2013a, 12/02/2013, 15/02/2013) explained that the problem was not a growing fox population and that culling did not work. It concluded that human behaviour change and better management of urban environments was needed to make them less suitable to foxes. The *Daily Mail* (16/02/2013) agreed, reiterating its earlier argument that what was needed was “a cull on human slovenliness” in an article with the headline “[s]ave the fox – cull the slob!” Having earlier criticised the RSPCA's advice on feeding foxes, the *Daily Mail* (12/02/2013) now expressed a hope that “this increasingly political organisation will back the Mail's campaign to keep vermin at bay – by restoring weekly bin collections”. Feeding, deliberate or unintentional, was discouraged by the RSPCA and London Fox Control, both of which were cited in *The Sun* (10/02/2013, 11/02/2013a).

The Daily Telegraph (12/02/2013b) continued with calls for a cull, pointing out that Bromley, the borough where the incident had occurred, was the last council to abandon a fox cull in the 1980s. It also highlighted the action that was being taken by neighbours and friends of the Dolan family, who were “scouring the

streets for the fox that savaged Denny. The offending creature, a noticeably large fox, has reportedly been spotted skulking behind a car and one neighbour claims to have seen 20 of the animals prowling nearby streets.” For several months after the incident *The Daily Telegraph* continued with its coverage of urban fox issues. It reported on the actions of a school, which had spent £2,000 on trying to keep a fox away from the school grounds, unsuccessfully (07/03/2010). It also published an editorial by former England cricketer David Gower (18/07/2013), who argued that “townies” should be taught about “rural matters” at school and be forced to take an exam. Failure to pass should result in a ban from voting. Lamenting the influence of urban residents on countryside issues such as foxhunting, he said that he wanted to “ask city dwellers what they think when confronted by urban foxes, which have proliferated”. Following a statement by television naturalist Chris Packham about the possibility of urban foxes and humans living “harmoniously” alongside each other, in which he called foxes “beautiful” and encouraged people to feed them, *The Daily Telegraph* (07/10/2013a) wrote that “[m]ost city-dwellers think urban foxes are a nuisance they could live without”. *The Times* (9/10/2013) also reported on Packham’s views, undermining them with the caveat that “[h]e also thinks the giant panda is too expensive to save from extinction”.

The same reactive frames were present following the incident with Denny Dolan as before. What had changed was the consensus surrounding centralised culling. Whereas many still regarded killing as the necessary solution, a division had become apparent between those who wanted a widespread cull and those who advocated more localised killing, either with the aim of reducing the population locally or removing ‘rogue’ or ‘problem’ foxes. Different presuppositions underlie the centralised and localised culling proposals. The former is based on the assumption that population size is the deciding factor in causing problem fox behaviour. The latter disagrees with the former not only in terms of the feasibility of conducting large-scale killing in an urban environment, but also on the grounds that individual neighbourhoods and households have a different tolerance of risk and should be left to decide for themselves what density of foxes they can live with. The former endorses the *Infestation* and *Growing Threat* frames discussed in chapter 6, whereas the latter does not necessarily do so. The second subcategory of localised culling (removing

'problem foxes') proceeds on the assumption that it is not the species as a whole but rather individual foxes that are causing a problem and that the removal of individuals will remove the problem, a strategy which Howard's family in the *Urban Fox Attack* documentary (section 7.2.3) found not to have worked.

7.3.2 *The Urban Fox Conference*

In response to renewed concerns about urban foxes and divisions within the pest control industry, pest controllers from the company Urban Wildlife organised the Urban Fox Conference. The event took place on 12 July 2013 in a hotel in Harlow, Essex. The venue was changed at the last minute as campaigners had threatened to picket the event in protest over the pest control industry's involvement in the killing of urban foxes and the original venue had decided to cancel. The room the conference was eventually held in featured foxhunting memorabilia on the walls. As a consequence of the venue change one of the key speakers, a wildlife crime officer, was unable to attend. The conference followed a similar but smaller event in November 2012.

One of the speakers was a wildlife management specialist from Natural England, the government's advisory body on the natural environment, who spoke about the legal aspects of fox management and the implications of animal welfare legislation. He noted the constant media interest surrounding urban foxes and warned that the public would believe what they saw printed in newspapers. It was his perception that there had been a lot of hype and a lack of objectivity in reporting, resulting in public confusion and misunderstanding on a range of issues and factors, both legal and practical. Natural England's role is to assess risk, offer advice and handle reports of illegal activity. Reports of illegal fox poisoning through the misuse of pesticides had increased, apparently due to a lack of clarity from the media regarding the legalities of fox control and the decision from many members of the public to take matters into their own hands. Illegal trapping and drowning were also being reported. Culls, on the other hand, would be difficult to justify, sustain and afford, and the real issues, he said, were to do with poor food waste management, artificial feeding and habitat availability. Unfortunately, preventative measures such as reducing food

availability, eliminating harbourage, protecting pets and excluding foxes from vulnerable areas, were not hitting the headlines, he noted in line with the findings presented in this chapter. Removing individual foxes also could create all sorts of problems. He summarised the available chemical, physical and mechanical deterrents and repellents and the legislation surrounding them. There was a need for a more unified approach, with wildlife management, pest control and associated organisations “all singing from the same hymn-sheet”, he said. Wildlife management specialists needed to lead the way. Foxes, however, should not be reclassified as ‘vermin’ because this did not reflect the public's general appreciation of the species.

Gary Williams, one of the conference organisers, whose company's motto is “working in partnership with mother nature” (Urban Wildlife 2015), was advertised to speak about coexisting with urban foxes. However, he began by criticising the *Foxes Live* documentary series for providing the public with misinformation that made them believe they could live safely alongside urban foxes. Translocation of foxes (trap and release) was inhumane in his opinion, due to the stress caused to the animal by transportation. Relocation was considered by most pest controllers at the conference a way to wash one's hands of the problem. It became clear that “taking responsibility” in their eyes equated to lethal control, usually in the form of removing “problem individuals”. In its conference summary, *Pest Magazine* (2013:8) agreed that:

[T]he pest management professional's job boils down to either excluding the animals from areas where they are causing a nuisance, or dealing with problem individuals by cage trapping and humane despatch or, if circumstances allow, shooting in the open.

Culling large numbers was not feasible, “given that to have any significant impact on urban fox populations would require a cull of at least 70% year-on-year”. However, Gary Williams dismissed exclusion methods as “the green bandwagon”. The apparent contradiction between his use of the word “coexistence” and the methods he went on to advocate was addressed by John Bryant, who didn't attend in person but contributed through the conference booklet (Williams 2013) instead. In it he wrote the following:

At the 1st Fox Conference last November, it seemed that everyone agreed that a 'cull' of urban foxes was not necessary, but some delegates suggested that killing should be reserved for foxes behaving 'abnormally'. I challenged this at the time. There is nothing 'abnormal' about a member of a species which for countless generations has been breeding in urban conurbations (in the case of foxes, since the 1930s), not only failing to run away from people, but even approaching them without fear. This 'boldness' should not be interpreted as 'aggression'. When a cub comes out of an 'earth' under a garden shed at a month old, for the rest of its short life it will see humans everywhere, in just the same way as a rural fox is likely to see cows, horses, and sheep everywhere. The problem comes when people try to turn foxes into pets, particularly if they are hand-fed on the doorstep.

In response to various proposals from contributors for a more united approach to urban foxes, the Association of Urban Wildlife Professionals was launched at the conference. Co-founded by pest controllers Gary Williams, Bruce Lindsay-Smith and Steve Barron, the AUWP's stated aim is to stand up for professional wildlife management. "In a society where urban wildlife is increasingly co-habiting with man, we professionals have an obligation to provide the best available information and advice to local councils, wildlife crime officers and the public at large", *Pest Magazine* (2013:8) wrote about the AUWP. The conference booklet listed several of the association's key principles, which included a commitment to using lethal control only where alternatives are unavailable, providing food and water in cage traps, checking traps twice a day, not using air rifles or captive bolt guns and not transporting live foxes. The AUWP also forbids trapping and relocation and demands that members adhere to a code of practice and a code of membership. In the conference booklet (Williams 2013), John Bryant insisted that:

[i]t is, however, absolutely essential that any debate about a Code of Conduct must be science-based and that anyone who is contacted for advice or assistance about urban fox problems must provide the true facts, even at the risk of losing a potential client.

Pest controllers stood to gain from the public's concern about urban foxes, particularly with regard to lethal control, and therefore it was important that any formalisation or institutionalisation of the industry's methods was “based on decades of sound scientific evidence, and not the black propaganda and mischievous demonization of the *Daily Mail*”. Outwardly, the AUWP's website (2015) says very little about lethal control but claims that “[o]ur aims are wildlife welfare” and that the focus is “solely on urban wildlife and habitat conservation with the safeguarding of biodiversity”.

The AUWP attracted support and interest from wildlife crime officers as well as the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health's (CIEH) National Pest Advisory Panel (NPAP). The CIEH's own guidance on urban foxes is published in the “Urban Foxes: Guidelines on their management” booklet (2013), which promises advice and practical recommendations based on sound science. The introduction clarifies that “[i]t is not anticipated that the guidelines will enter into the contentious debate as to whether urban foxes should be considered as invasive pests or welcome additions to urban wildlife” (p.3). However, it confirms that “[i]n the opinion of many, urban foxes have become a significant pest problem in cities and towns in the UK” (p.3). Others actively feed foxes and appreciate their presence in urban areas, making control a sensitive issue. The booklet includes information about disease risks and also acknowledges that there have been several stories in the newspapers about fox attacks “and it is inevitable that because of this media interest, further stories will appear in the future” (p.3). It explains that local authorities do not have a statutory duty to remove foxes as they do for rats and mice but gives advice on preventing and reducing attraction to properties, the use of proofing and exclusion methods, and options for lethal despatch and controlled shooting. Feeding is to be avoided at all costs and “[r]elocate and release is not recommended due to the stress imposed on the animal through transportation and relocation into an unfamiliar environment” (p.10).

In contrast to the CIEH booklet, Bristol City Council's “Living with urban foxes” guidance document, originally published in 2002 and most recently updated in 2011, directly addresses the efficacy of killing foxes and advises against it, based largely on information provided by Professor Stephen Harris and his

team at Bristol University. Whereas the cover picture of the CIEH booklet is of an urban fox scavenging from a bin, the Bristol City Council booklet cover is a more decontextualised photograph of a fox's face, which along with the emphasis on 'living with' as opposed to 'managing' urban foxes gives an indication of the council's stance on urban foxes (see figure 7.3).

Fig.7.3 Left: Chartered Institute of Environmental Health booklet cover (2013).
Right: Bristol City Council booklet cover (2011)



The booklet aims (p.1) “to explain the types of problems that can be caused by urban foxes, put the extent of the problem into perspective and give some practical advice on how to alleviate or possibly eliminate any such problems. You can then decide on how much time and energy you wish to invest relative to the scale of the problem.”

The wording of the introduction and the emphasis on perspective and relative risk is in line with the myth-busting content that follows. The booklet states that contrary to popular belief, the fox population is stable and the carrying capacity of most British cities has been reached. It also stresses that urban and rural foxes are not different; their territory may span both urban and rural areas. Venturing where the CIEH refused to go, the booklet states that it is also a

“misconception that foxes belong in the countryside but not in urban areas” (p.3). It goes on to emphasise (p.3) that “[t]he English countryside is no more its 'proper' habitat than any other; urban areas are just one more habitat colonised by this very adaptable species, and they 'belong' there just as much as anywhere else”.

The document claims that foxes only attack when cornered and may approach young children, but only to play with them. The disease risk to humans is remote and the risk to pets must also be considered in the context of the risk of a pet being run over, straying or dying from other causes. Lethal control is considered ineffectual and “[t]he council therefore believes that the policy of positive deterrents will best serve to limit the fox population” (p.3). The booklet also offers extensive practical advice for deterring foxes. With regard to feeding, it states that “we do not recommend the feeding of foxes intentionally or unintentionally” (p.8).

The “Living with urban foxes” booklet also gives an indication of how media-generated panic may have contributed to deviance amplification with regard to urban fox behaviour. Having concluded that “[c]ontrolling urban foxes is difficult, expensive and never successful” (p.3), it goes on to explain that “[t]he moment you increase the mortality rate, foxes compensate by increasing the number of vixens that breed” (p.3). Furthermore, attempts at population control, or even simply taking out individual foxes, has the effect of disrupting their social groups. New foxes move into the abandoned territory and “[i]nvariably more than one fox moves in, there are fights over the territory and hence more noise and fouling of gardens” (p.3). Foxes lay claim to their territory by scent-marking and “having more itinerant foxes in an area is likely to lead to more killings of pets and more general nuisance” (p.3). In other words, pest control is blamed for causing rather than alleviating problem fox behaviour by increasing the breeding rate and causing general instability. Media reports of nuisance behaviour and indeed fox attacks on humans rose during the breeding season (spring to early summer). Returning to the points made in chapter 3 regarding deviance amplification, it is clear that foxes need not be aware of the ways in which they are classified by humans and the media hype surrounding them to be affected by the consequences of their construction as a dangerous pest.

Another way in which the reaction to the urban fox panic amplifies problem behaviour relates to the regularity of bin collections and the changes to waste food management demanded by many commentators. While some argued that cleaner cities had caused foxes to starve and subsequently resulted in them entering homes and attacking children in search for food, others maintained that poor waste disposal had caused an explosion in the urban fox population due to the ready availability of food. Whether one of these scenarios is true or not (both may be true in different cities), it is plausible that a change in human behaviour with regards to waste disposal, prompted by fox attack stories in the media, may have a knock-on effect on fox behaviour and population dynamics.

Lastly, a further way in which the media's portrayal of urban foxes and the rhetoric of panic could be said to have contributed to deviance amplification relates to the human interpretation of fox behaviour. Previously benign encounters with foxes in urban streets and gardens were increasingly perceived as threatening acts of transgression. It is plausible that the behaviour of foxes following the attacks on the twins and on Denny Dolan was little changed but that the framing of their behaviour as predatory, for example, caused the appearance of a change.

7.3.3 Documentary – Fox Wars

On 22 October 2013, a documentary called *Fox Wars* was shown on BBC One. The filmmaker, Leon Dean, had spent many months examining the human relationship with urban foxes by accompanying “the haters, shooters and huggers of the ginger beasts” (*Daily Star* 19/10/2013), including attending the Urban Fox Conference, to gain an insight into their world. The result was a film that according to both *The Guardian* (23/10/2013) and *The Times* (23/10/2013) was more about humans and suburban loneliness than about foxes. Similar to the *Urban Fox Attack* documentary, the film illustrated how humans were living in close proximity not only to foxes but also to neighbours with different opinions about them. The film followed pest controllers Tim and Lee, angry urban resident Janet, fox enthusiast and feeder Nobby, chicken keeper Sofia, humane fox deterrence specialists Terry and Graham, and farmers David and Tony.

Curtain pole-wielding Janet had come to the end of her tether. "It's a war between the fox and me", she said, as she complained that foxes were regularly fouling on her lawn. If she were able to knock a fox unconscious, she explained, she would put it in a dustbin and drive it to the nearest tip. To get to the bottom of how the sly fox was entering her garden, the documentary team offered to install secret cameras but to Janet's great surprise, the real culprit was revealed as her neighbours' ginger cat. Fox feeder Nobby was shown feeding foxes in the garden of his suburban terraced house. Asked what he thought of his neighbours' protestations he responded that people who didn't like living near nature should live in a flat and that those who were unable to adequately protect their pets deserved to have something happen to them. Other fox enthusiasts were shown feeding and watching their local foxes via secret garden cameras.

Farmer Tony, on the other hand, hated foxes after one had killed 36 chickens the previous night. The fox was "a pure killer" who killed "just for a bit of fun", "for sport", he said. "This isn't killing, it's murder." Tony would be waiting for the fox to come back for his bounty. "He'll pay", he said. However, having waited unsuccessfully for the fox's return, Tony decided instead to burn his oppressor's food. Fox control wasn't about making foxes extinct but about "keeping a balance", pest controller Lee explained. In the city, people were doing "unnatural" things, like keeping chickens and feeding foxes, whereas "you'd never get that happen in the countryside". Lee had been called out to help farmer David by shooting the "problem fox" that had killed one of his lambs. "What deceives people is that they are red and fluffy, cute and cuddly, but what people don't see is the destruction they can cause", Lee explained. The fox he had shot on Tony's farm was placed on top of the lamb it was deemed to have killed, in a ritual that brought "closure" to the farmer. Given that predation on lambs and chickens is not abnormal behaviour for rural foxes, Tony and David's actions appeared retributive and somewhat at odds with Lee's self-proclaimed rational approach.

Another fox shooter, Tim, told cameras that despite being an animal lover, he thought it necessary to kill foxes because they carried diseases. While waiting to shoot a fox in a suburban garden, he explained how he had already managed to shoot dozens of foxes there, but "it's just one of those places where they just

keep coming". This unsatisfactory and expensive resolution (each fox kill can cost up to £200) was questioned by Terry and Graham from the humane fox deterrence company Fox-A-Gon. They had been called to evict a fox cub from underneath a garden shed. "Although it hurts me to evict foxes, it is the lesser of evils", said Graham. The fox cub had been abandoned by the vixen and was riddled with fleas. Terry and Graham administered a dose of flea treatment, fox-proofed the garden shed and released the cub into a quiet corner of the garden in the hope that the vixen would return to move the cub to a new den. When she did not return the cub was taken by Terry to The Fox Project, where Terry also works as a volunteer, to be rehabilitated and released. All a pest controller would have done is trap and shoot without proofing the shed, meaning that a new fox would be likely to move in, Graham explained.

Before the documentary aired, *The Daily Telegraph* (19/10/2013) wrote the following:

When Tony Blair's Labour government passed the Hunting Act in 2004, banning the hunting of foxes with dogs, there was outcry in the countryside. Nine years later and the clamour has transferred to Britain's towns and cities, where some 33,000 urban foxes roam. This documentary asks what can be done.

However, in its subsequent review, *The Daily Telegraph* (23/10/2013a) criticised the filmmaker for "playing down reports of the animals attacking children". Following an interview with the BBC's *Breakfast* programme, in which he argued that foxes were beneficial to humans by killing other "pests" such as rats and rabbits and that they rarely attack humans, the newspaper alleged that "[p]est control workers have called his comments 'irresponsible'". *The Daily Telegraph* cited a number of pest controllers and other commentators who described their relationship with foxes as "a war". Those at the opposite end of the spectrum were, in a reminder of the frames discussed in chapter 6, dismissed as overly sentimental, including Terry from Fox-A-Gon, who was described as a "[s]ensitive soul". *Fox Wars* had allegedly confirmed suspicions that attitudes towards foxes run along class lines, wrote *The Daily Telegraph* (23/10/2013b),

which went on to explain that “the upper classes hunt them, the middle classes romanticise them and the working classes see them as pests”. The programme was “typical of the lunacy that foxes inspire in otherwise level-headed members of the community”, the *Daily Mirror* (22/10/2013) wrote, warning that “[a]fter all the fuss about banning fox hunting in the countryside, it seems only a matter of time before we've got horses and hounds clattering down our streets under the banner of pest control”.

7.4 Conclusion

The four most prominent frames in reaction to the fox attack on the twins were *Cull*, *Overcome Sentimentalism*, *Bring Back Hunting*, and *Humane Deterrence and Coexistence*. The *Cull* frame featured the language of order and belonging and argued that killing urban foxes was the only way to address a population explosion. Proponents included vocal pest controllers, London mayor Boris Johnson, and family, friends and neighbours of the twins. It was particularly prominent in *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*, alongside criticisms of urban ignorance and ‘sentimentalists’. The latter were called upon to resist anthropomorphism and learn a healthy distrust of urban foxes (*Overcome Sentimentalism*). Curiously however, this frame itself featured moralistic language; many of those who cautioned against anthropomorphism themselves imbued foxes’ actions with moral character. The *Bring Back Hunting* frame was evident in most newspapers, usually in the form of comments offered by pro-hunt campaigners, but also featured strongly in the editorial voice of newspapers like *The Daily Telegraph*. The *Humane Deterrence and Coexistence* frame was more frequently found in newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, which cited scientists, humane deterrence specialists and animal protectionists in an effort to ‘debunk myths’ and highlight the pitfalls of lethal control. Humane deterrence was the preferred option for most local councils, much to the frustration of journalists writing for *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*, which featured several articles criticising humane deterrence as the ‘soft option’ and a distraction.

The media coverage following the attack on the twins prompted a debate in parliament, sparked rumours about urban foxes being dumped in the

countryside, appears to have contributed to a rise in lethal measures (both legal and illegal) taken by urban residents, and generated conflict within neighbourhoods. It also gave rise to several prominent television documentaries and a pest industry conference on the topic of urban foxes. Politicians found political mileage in the urban fox moral panic, pest controllers used the rhetoric of widespread alarm to elicit support for their business, and several newspapers expressed indignation at attempts by animal welfarists, scientists and prominent television personalities to 'downplay' the risk. *The Guardian*, and to a lesser extent *The Independent*, criticised media scaremongering and the Urban Foxhunters hoax drew further attention to the media's role in exaggerating the severity of the risk, as well as highlighting the vested interests of those moral entrepreneurs that stood to benefit from the 'pestification' of urban foxes, such as pest controllers and campaigners in favour of repealing the foxhunting ban. Although there was a strong rhetoric of mounting concern and panic in many national newspapers, particularly *The Daily Telegraph*, reaction to the fox attacks in public opinion polls and television surveys was more muted than might have been expected.

Had it not been for the attack on Denny Dolan, which reignited latent media interest, the moral panic may have stagnated. The main difference in the reaction following this incident was a change in the terms of the *Cull* frame, with many of those who had previously campaigned for a centrally-organised cull now calling for localised fox control to either reduce fox numbers or remove 'problem individuals', and some entertaining calls for human behavioural change as a deterrent. Nevertheless, the voices of the hunting lobby also grew stronger and more explicit, reigniting conflict with animal protectionists. Facing increasing calls to substantiate their claims and to base these on science as opposed to personal anecdote, the pest control industry formalised its position via the newly-formed Association of Urban Wildlife Professionals and sought official endorsement from Natural England and other local and national government bodies. However, there remains disagreement between these bodies on the appropriate way to respond to this divisive issue, particularly regarding whether the focus should be on managing human behaviour or the urban fox population.

Finally, this chapter has demonstrated that the increase in lethal measures taken as a result of the urban fox moral panic may have contributed to deviance amplification. Increasing the mortality rate of urban foxes is believed to have led to increased breeding rates and disruption of social groups at a local level, causing territorial disputes, nuisance behaviours and greater visibility of urban foxes, as well as a change in some human perceptions of otherwise benign encounters with urban foxes.

CHAPTER 8. Discourse Practice

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Newsworthiness

8.3 The British press

8.4 Media influence and framing

8.5 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

Discourse practice is the second dimension of Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of discourse. It provides a bridge between the textual element of discourse analysis and the analysis of sociocultural factors by demonstrating how texts simultaneously shape and are shaped by the practices of production, distribution and consumption. In other words, the discourse practice dimension is concerned both with the way in which news itself comes about and how in turn it affects those who consume it. Hall et al. (1978:53, emphasis in original) summarise that “[t]he media do not simply and transparently report events which are 'naturally' newsworthy *in themselves*. 'News' is the end-product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories.” This chapter examines the roles that news values, thresholds and attention cycles play in the generation and evolution of news in general, and in the British print media context in particular, and describes the implications of various features of news production and distribution for media frame-building in the urban fox moral panic. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ways in which newspapers influence their audiences through frame-building.

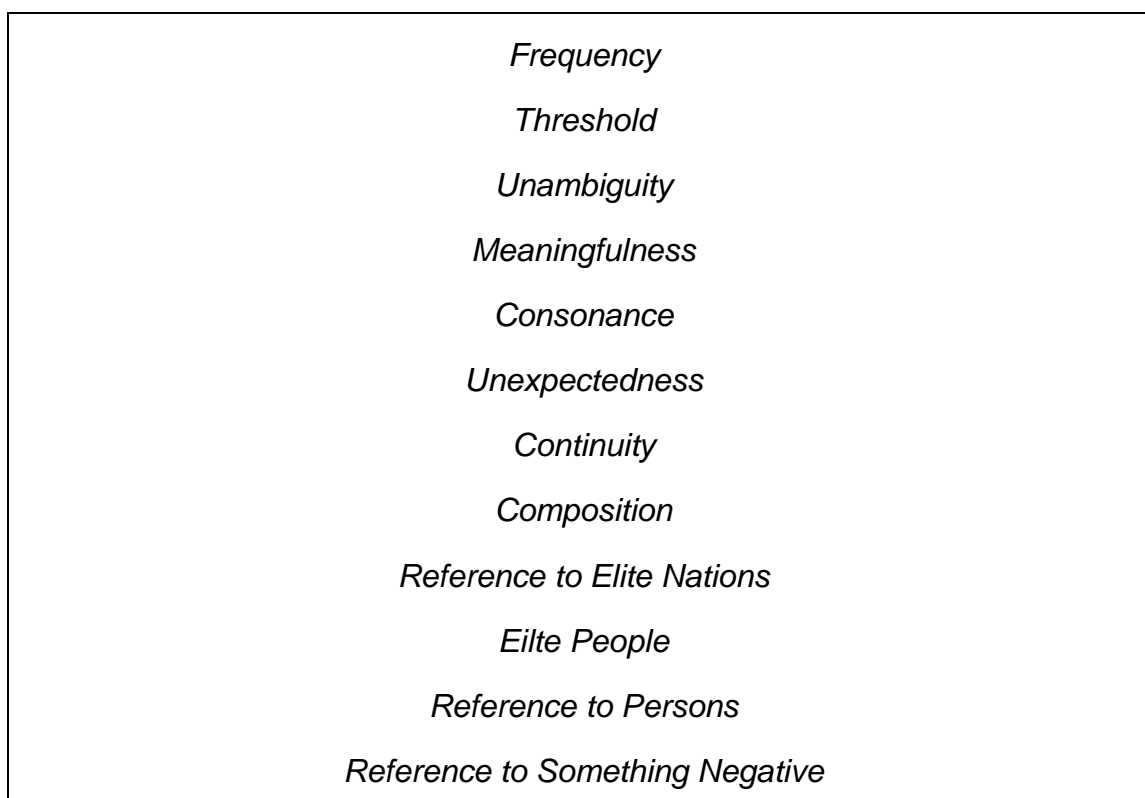
8.2 Newsworthiness

Features of the processes of production and distribution of news are heavily implicated not only in the way in which an issue is represented by the media but also in the likelihood of generating a moral panic. However, Lashmar (2013:57)

notes that moral panic theorists cling to the Gramscian turn in cultural theory and “do not seem to take into account the fundamentals of newsroom practice at the micro level, and the production of the news is seen very much as a top-down editorial process”. Questions regarding relative journalistic freedoms, editorial powers, the cultural capital at stake in news reporting and the influence of political allegiances, hiring patterns, newsroom practices and advertising pressures are all relevant to how issues are represented by the media.

Fowler's (1991) categorisation of news values (figure 8.1) sheds light on the main criteria that predict the newsworthiness of a story, determining which issues and perspectives are most likely to be selected by journalists, editors and news agencies. Fowler explains that production schedules have an effect on the coverage of certain issues and events and the omission of others. Events whose duration matches the publication frequency of newspapers, for instance, are more likely to receive attention than problems of a chronic nature. Newsworthiness is also related to the size of an event. There may be a size threshold, such as the number of people killed in a terrorist attack in an Egyptian village, below which an event is less likely to be reported by the Western media. Meaningfulness is often defined as cultural proximity, rendering the terrorist attack on the Egyptian village less newsworthy for a British audience than an attack on an Australian village. Continuity refers to the precedent set by earlier reporting. Issues or events that continue or develop an existing narrative may be more likely to be covered. Conflict is more newsworthy than harmony (Wiegold 2001) and celebrity or elite involvement is also likely to increase media interest (Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan and Listhaug. 2005).

Fig.8.1 Fowler's categorisation of news values (1991)



Crime and deviance are frequently reported in the media because they meet many of the above-mentioned criteria. Media coverage of crime often fails to adequately address the social and structural factors that have contributed to crime, instead attributing blame to the individual perpetrator. Violent crimes receive disproportionate attention, giving the impression that they are more commonplace than they actually are (Altheide 2003). Reporting of crime thus shapes the conceptual boundaries as well as our perception of the volume of crime, and potentially encourages crime itself (Ericson et al. 1987). Fear of crime, according to Ditton and Farrall (2000) and Hope and Sparks (2000), is often more significant than crime itself, because of the scope of measures that may be adopted in response. Ericson et al. (1989) demonstrate that the media have the power to prompt the authorities to address a perceived threat, even when the existence of the threat itself is in dispute.

Non-criminal deviance, according to Ericson et al. (1989) is usually even more newsworthy than crime and coverage often features elements of titillation, novelty and dramatisation. The worthiness and innocence of the victim is another determining factor of newsworthiness and of the success of folk devil

demonisation. Jenkins' (1992) examination of victimhood, an ascribed social category, revealed that the most prominent moral panics in the previous two decades had revolved around particular threats to children. Childhood is defined and maintained by our perception of the risks children need to be protected from (Jackson and Scott 1999). "Morality as a process involves the use of evaluative dualisms (e.g. good-evil, brave-timid, free-enslaved) to assess objects", according to Ericson et al. (1987:7). The theme of childhood innocence protects the child victim from any suggestion of blame and facilitates the framing of the issue in terms of a contest between good and evil. "Moral panics are irresistible when they present threats to children", Critcher (2003:55) explains, and the death or injury of children acts as a potent signifier of crisis. Jenks (1996:99) adds that "children have become our principal concern, we have become their protectors and nurturers and they have become our primary love objects, our human capital and our future". His analysis of the social construction of childhood identified innocence and vulnerable dependence as two of four primary themes.

This explains why fox attacks on children were initially more newsworthy than those on adults. Whereas it remains socially acceptable in a contest between adult humans and animals to question the innocence of the human and infer that animal behaviour may have been the result of human provocation, this is not acceptable where the human victim is an infant or a child. This may also be why calls for coexistence were met with such hostility from some commentators. Where coexistence was proposed by some as a means of *reducing risk* (refraining from lethal measures reduces problem behaviours by maintaining social stability), it was seen by others as an intolerable risk, particularly where children were concerned. Foxes were 'predictably unpredictable'. They would inevitably attack children, given the chance, but they could strike at any time, in any place, even inside the home.

The threshold above which something becomes newsworthy is fluid and accompanies the evolution of a news theme, as we saw in chapter 6. The original 'fox attack' theme had become a news value itself, giving rise to an increase in reporting of incidents that might otherwise have been unlikely to reach the news. Over time new stories about urban foxes were made to fit the

original news theme and were framed accordingly. This had the effect of entrenching earlier frames by way of confirmation bias and potentially distorting readers' perceptions of the fox attack threat. Figure 5.1 (chapter 5) shows the number of newspaper items coded as 'about' and 'mentioning' urban foxes published over the entire sample period. It demonstrates the impact that the incident involving the Koupparis twins, shown as a large blue spike on the timeline in June 2010, had on the subsequent coverage of urban foxes, with a much greater number of articles about urban foxes in the following weeks and months than prior to the incident.

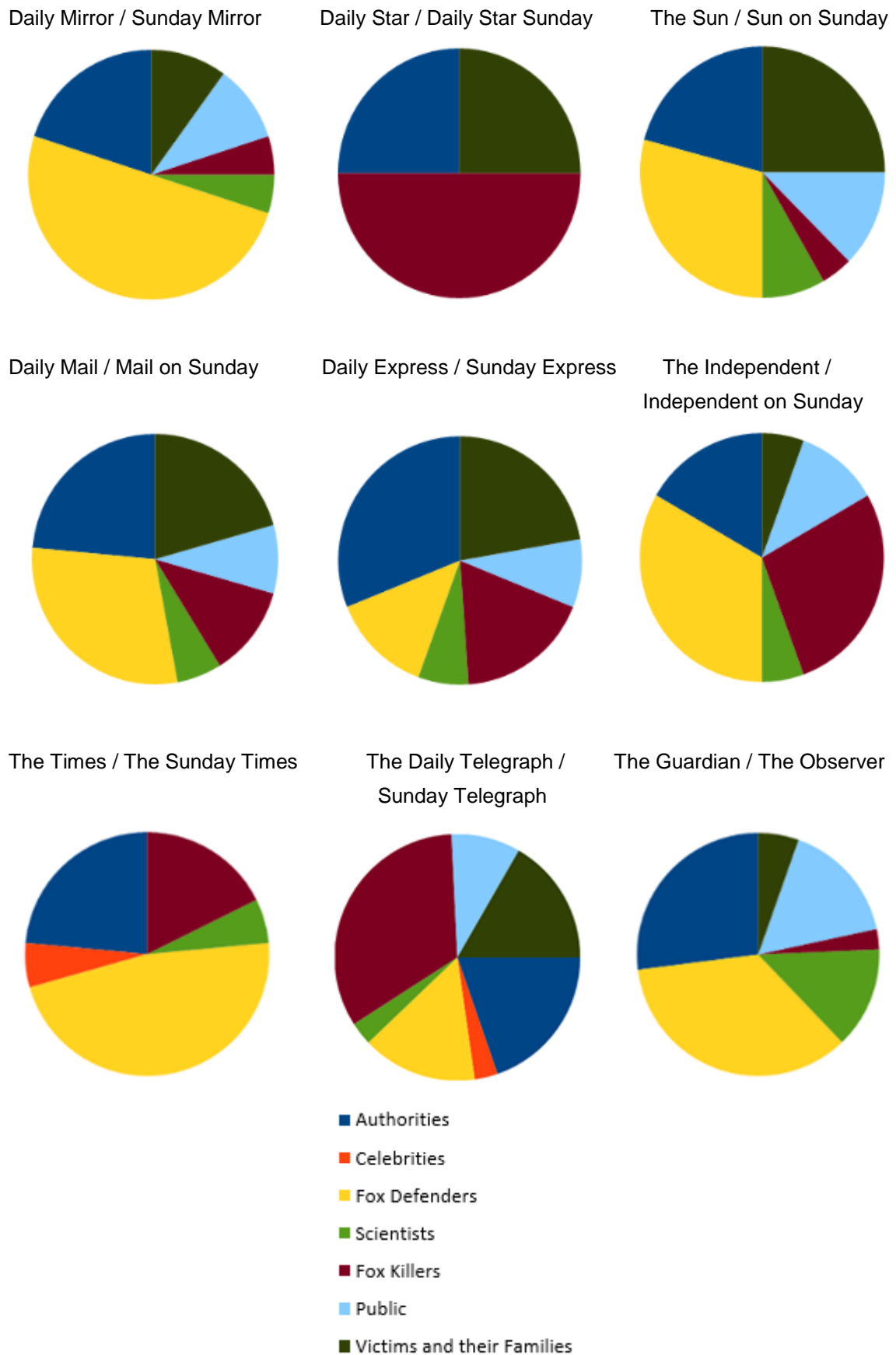
Edwards and Cromwell (2006) list a number of additional biases built into the mainstream news media system. The first is the assumption, also noted by Hall et al. (1978), that official sources of information, such as government, police or military, are 'neutral', objective and representative of the public interest. Becker (1967:240) labelled this the "hierarchy of credibility". Hall et al. (1978) argued that the result of this structured preference for the voices of authorities and elites is that they often become primary definers in a moral panic. Related to this, they argued, is the fact that the dramatic event, or news 'hook', which usually prompts and justifies the scale of media coverage, more often than not favours establishment interests. However, the connection between media, state and elite interests mustn't be overstated. As we saw in chapters 5, 6 and 7, while individual political figures were frequently quoted in favour of urgent action on urban foxes, local authorities more often appealed for calm and insisted that concerted authority-led action was unnecessary. A lack of political consensus on any issue is hardly surprising, particularly where the folk devil is a protagonist in another party-political issue (see chapter 2 on foxhunting). Indeed, Jenkins (1992) argues that moral panics require the existence of rival groups which the media can pit against each other. In the urban fox moral panic, these rival groups are not only humans and foxes, but also animal protectionists and pest controllers, rural and urban residents and Conservatives and Labour voters.

Figure 8.2 gives an overview of the types of voices cited by each newspaper and its Sunday edition²³ in its coverage of urban foxes during the two-month

²³ *The People* and *i* are excluded because they did not feature in the sample during this period.

period following the incident involving the Koupparis twins. Each chart represents the proportion of total external voices (i.e. not the authors of the articles) accounted for by each category (see appendix 7 for a list of voices and their assigned categories). The charts do not show the amount of space given to each category of voices per article, nor is it possible from this quantification to determine the saliency of what was said or whether these voices are cited approvingly or disapprovingly. However, what they do show is that on average a quarter of voices cited in the papers overall were public authorities. On the whole, the *Telegraph* cited fox defenders a lot less frequently than the other quality newspapers did. Only the *Express* cited even fewer. As we saw in earlier chapters, when the *Telegraph* and *Express* did cite the views of animal protectionists, they often did so dismissively. Instead, most external voices cited in the *Telegraph* were those invested in the killing of foxes. Although the *Independent* cited a similar proportion of fox killers, it tended to counterbalance this with a greater proportion of fox defenders. An overwhelming trend is the small number of scientific voices cited across the board, except in *The Guardian*. Scientists quoted in *The Guardian* more often than not spoke out in defence of foxes, whereas the *Telegraph* usually dismissed their claims. Furthermore, the *Telegraph* frequently referred to pest controllers as ‘experts’, ‘nature experts’ and ‘wildlife experts’ and their comparatively infrequent use of scientific voices is particularly striking. Victims and their families were cited more frequently by the *Telegraph*, *Sun*, *Daily Star*, *Daily Mail* and *Express* than the *Independent*, *Guardian*, and *Mirror*. Taking into account the ways in which all of these voices were cited, as described in earlier chapters, the political allegiances of newspapers appeared to be more significant than their market segment in determining the use of broadly pro- and anti-fox voices. Right-wing populist tabloids and centre-right broadsheets were more likely to endorse the views of moral entrepreneurs who spoke out in favour of killing foxes than socially liberal newspapers such as *The Guardian*.

Fig.8.2 Proportion of total external voices cited in sampled news items for 07/06/2010–06/08/2010 for each newspaper and its Sunday edition



In addition to political allegiances, in a media world that is heavily reliant on advertising revenue, corporate interests play a large role in editorial decisions, influencing the ways in which certain voices are represented and often leading to censorship by omission. According to Young (1971b), the media have a commercial interest in generating moral panics. Garland (2008:15) argues that the media are still “the prime beneficiaries of these episodes, since the sensation they create – a kind of collective effervescence – sells papers, entertains readers, and generates further news and commentary as the story unfolds, the spokesmen take sides, and the deviant phenomenon develops”. Selection mechanisms and competition in the media thus create a bias towards sensationalism, titillating scandal, 'infotainment' and fear-mongering. Young (1974:243) has argued that it is possible for the media “rapidly to engineer a moral panic about a certain type of deviancy. Indeed, because of the phenomenon of overexposure – the glut of information over a short space on a topic so that it becomes uninteresting – there is institutionalised into the media the need to create moral panics and issues which will seize the imagination of the public.”

Altheide argues that fear is characteristic of modern western societies and has become more pervasive because of the advent in media formatting of the “problem frame, [...] part of a format organized around a narrative that begins with a general conclusion that something is wrong, and the media know what it is” (2002:49). The characteristics of the problem frame “include narrative structure, universal moral meanings, specific time and place, and an unambiguous focus on disorder that is culturally resonant” (Altheide and Michalowski 1999:479). The problem frame has caused moral panic and fear to become defining characteristics of the news. The mass media thus are important contributors to the culture of fear, which, as Furedi (2006) describes, is characterised by the greater moralisation of harm.

By comparing the factors that constitute newsworthiness with those that are conducive to moral panic, one can see that the two have a lot in common (Galtung and Ruge 1965). Critcher (2003:133) summarises that “[n]ews depends on events of sudden duration, which are unexpected, negative in import, serious in implication, seen as part of a pattern, personified, made

meaningful and rendered morally unambiguous, all appropriate for moral panics". Fear sells papers and the problem frame perfectly fits the modern 'sound-bite' media culture (Cricher 2003).

8.3 The British press

At a more macro-level, Thompson (1998) argues that the centralised nature of the British news media accounts for the spread of moral panics in Britain.

Cricher (2003:142) wrote the following about the *Daily Mail*:

In Britain during the 1980s and 1990s, no other individual organization or group has had such a profound effect on the development of moral panics. Occupying the space between the high ground of the upmarket papers and the low ground of downmarket papers, it is an exceedingly powerful institution, whose rationale is to speak for middle England. In moral panics, it was both the primary definer and the chief claims maker about rave/ecstasy, video nasties, child abuse in the family and paedophilia.

The national tabloid press plays an important role in the British media market, having historically faced less competition from radio and local and regional news structures than in other countries, such as Germany (Esser 1999).

'Tabloid' traditionally refers to a particular newspaper size and layout that can be easily read on trains and buses (Fang 1997) but it is also "a form marked by two major features: it devotes relatively little attention to politics, economics and society and relatively much to diversions like sports, scandal and popular entertainment" (Sparks 2000:10). Tabloids are driven by market forces and cater to the tastes of their audiences and advertisers, often giving rise to sensationalism and a preference for stories that are 'of interest to people', rather than 'in the public interest'. Several quality newspapers have become tabloid-sized but this has not necessarily affected their content (Biressi and Nunn 2008). *The Independent*, for example, has adopted a tabloid-style front page. Sampson (1996:44) however argues, with reference to both form and content, that "[s]ince the 1980s the frontier between qualities and popular papers has virtually disappeared". The 'tabloidisation' of quality newspapers is attributed to the corporatisation of the media (Esser 1999), growing pressure from

advertisers to reach larger audiences and the threat posed to the press from the internet and broadcasting industries. Tabloidisation thus implies the spilling-over into the quality press of tabloid news values and standards of journalism. In the face of declining circulation figures and competition from the internet and broadcasting channels, newspapers have had to alter their mode of address and the range and presentation of topics in order to maintain their market share (Conboy 2010).

Sparks (1998) and Bromley (1998) note that the circulation growth²⁴ of the quality press in the 1990s was largely the result of tabloidisation. This trend has continued in the new millennium, alongside additional pressure on newsbrands to diversify into the online market, although the printed paper remains the most important channel in terms of newspaper readership²⁵ (Thurman 2014). At the time of writing, the latest figures from the National Readership Survey (NRS PADD 2015) for the period April 2014 to March 2015 show that 64% of adults aged 15 or over consume quality daily newsbrands (including *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*) across print and digital media, compared with 61% for mid-market daily newsbrands (including the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail*) and 60% for popular daily newsbrands (including the *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*, *The People* and *The Sun*).²⁶ Popular daily newspapers are a lot less successful in capturing audience attention online than quality newspapers, with only a 90% uplift on print reach through digital media, compared to 162% for mid-market papers and 214% for quality papers. NRS data for the year to June 2013 (figure 8.3), shows the popularity, in terms of readership, of each of the newspapers in my sample towards the end of the sample period. *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian* have good uplift from online readership. It could be argued that this might counterbalance the effect of tabloidism, if not of tabloidisation. However, overall *The Sun* and *Daily Mail*

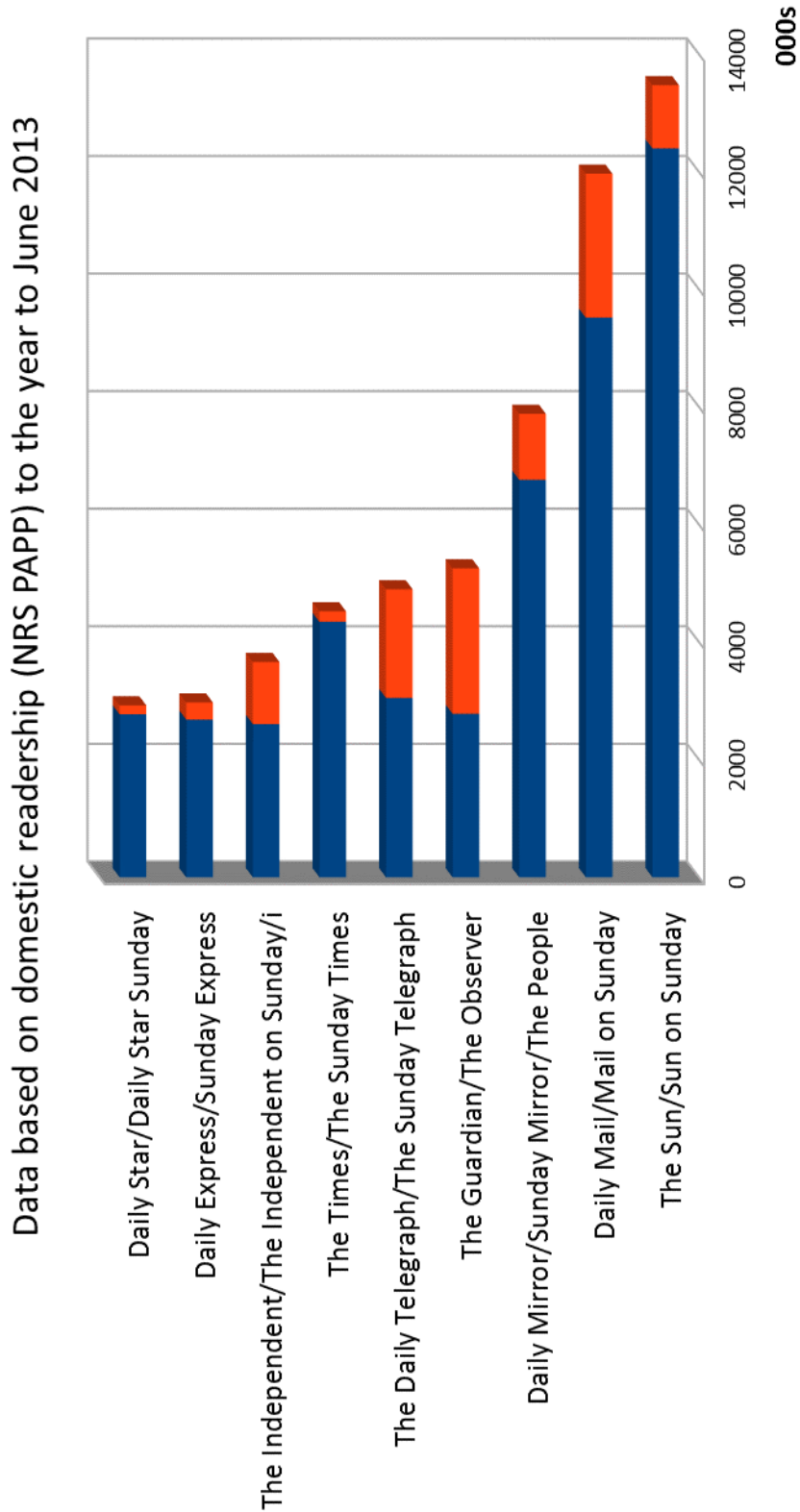
²⁴ Circulation audits are provided by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) and consist of a count of how many copies of each publication are distributed.

²⁵ Newspaper readership figures, provided by the National Readership Survey (NRS), are greater than circulation figures because most copies are read by more than one reader. Readership figures tend to be more relevant for advertisers and academics interested in the reach and impact of a particular publication. Although readership figures are calculated at the newspaper level, as opposed to the individual article, they give some indication of the potential impact of articles contained in my sample. A detailed quantification of impact is beyond the scope of this inquiry and would have to include factors such as layout, article positioning, intertextual chains and other measures of saliency.

²⁶ The NRS divides tabloids into mid-market and popular newsbrands.

remain the most popular newspapers. The graph also demonstrates the impact on readership of implementing online paywalls, as in the case of *The Times*.

Fig.8.3 Print and online popularity of national newspaper brands



The online availability of news has a significant effect on news content in general. In an era of 24-hour demand for news, newspapers respond with concision in the form of short news items, sound bites and live update feeds. Shortening news cycles and rapid production schedules, as well as the knock-on effects of online news publishing, have thus brought about a decline in thoroughgoing investigative journalism (Gunther and Mughan 2000).

McNair (2000:30) argues that in the context of the British news media in general, newspapers still “lead in establishing dominant interpretative frameworks” and are able to take sides, largely because they are not subjected to the same regulatory pressures as the broadcasting media (see also Howarth 2013). British newspapers are easily distinguished by their more or less overt party-political ideology. This is not to say that values and ideologies, even if only a commitment to the values of democracy and mainstream British culture, are not also embedded within broadcast news reporting.

8.4 Media influence and framing

Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery (2013) argue that in light of the developments in the British press summarised above, the trust in and influence of traditional newspapers may have declined. Barnett (2008) analysed data from a 2008 *YouGov* poll, which highlighted that audiences trust television journalists more than they do newspaper journalists, who are considered more partisan. The British press is a self-regulating industry, overseen until September 2014 by the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), a voluntary body whose role was to adjudicate on complaints but which had no legal powers. It was described by Petley (2011) as “merely a body which deals with complaints about the press, the equivalent of the customer services department of any large corporate organisation”. In the wake of the phone hacking scandal at the *News of the World*, a public inquiry was set up which heavily criticised the inaction of the PCC, resulting in its replacement by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). A search in the Press Complaints Commission's (PCC) archive for complaints relating to coverage of urban foxes, however, yielded just two results, neither of which concerned any of the newspapers in my sample. By comparison, there have been numerous complaints to the PCC about

reporting on the issue of badgers and bovine tuberculosis, another prominent example of human/wildlife conflict. One complaint concerned the use by the *Farmers Weekly* magazine of a photograph showing cows and badgers in close proximity in daylight. The complaint read, “the public could have been led to the conclusion that badgers were constantly in direct contact with cattle, and thus were to blame for bovine TB” (Wildlife Extra 2014). The magazine was encouraged to offer a clarification in a subsequent edition to emphasise that the photograph had actually been taken at a wildlife rescue centre when a badger was in the process of being 'soft-released'. Animal protectionists insisted that the picture had been published to say “badgers are guilty” and frame the issue in a misleading light.

Media frame-building plays an important role in agenda-setting and is part of the power/knowledge nexus. In the context of the urban fox case study, power and persuasion are exerted both through and by the media itself. Media frames identify issues, define protagonists, provide diagnoses and prognoses, make moral judgements and, in more or less overt ways, propose solutions (Entman 1993). As this chapter has already illustrated, frames built at the outset of a moral panic impact upon the way in which it subsequently develops. In other words, frames used in the reporting of one event provide templates for the framing of subsequent events. Vasterman, Yzermans and Dirkzwager (2005:111) add that “[r]eporters are looking for confirmation and tend to focus on all events and statements that provide it. This selective perception and selective reporting reinforces the original frame and seems to prove its tenability.” Frames construct a particular angle on an issue, connected to wider sociocultural factors, which allow a variety of incidents to be connected in a general symbolic context. Davis (2009) argues that “frames that emphasize conflict, morality, and uncertainty drive more public concern than frames that emphasize economics, policy, and other more routine issues”. Media frames subsequently call upon “stocks of cultural morals and values, and create contexts” (Cappella and Jamieson 1997:47).

Early approaches to the study of media influence operated with a 'hypodermic' model, in which the audience was made up of relatively passive individuals. Meanings were straightforwardly transmitted to the audience and thus audience

reception could be inferred from textual analysis. However, ever since Barthes (1968/2001) heralded the “death of the author”, it has been widely acknowledged that audiences are not passive and that meaning is created from the interaction between texts and their readers (McIlvenny 1996). Stuart Hall (1973) proposed a model which acknowledged the active role of the audience to a greater extent, whereby producers of media texts encoded their texts with messages that contained ideological content to be subsequently decoded and interpreted by the audience.

A major fact inhibiting the usefulness of audience research is that in an increasingly multi-mediated world, it is very difficult for audiences to accurately state what their main sources of information were. Most newspaper articles are now freely available to read online and are circulated through social media sites. Hall's (1980) emphasis on ‘resistant’ readers is thus increasingly relevant and undermines the assumption that audiences are loyal to particular newspapers that provide them with their information. Audiences are now larger and broader than the once loyal readership of particular newspapers and include many who previously did not read newspapers at all. On the other hand, there is a risk of overemphasising the active role of audiences in the production of meaning to the extent that one can only conclude that everyone interprets texts differently. New Audience Research (NAR), as it is sometimes referred to, is criticised by Garnham (1997) and Kellner (1995) for tending to the equally illogical opposite to the hypodermic model by suggesting that interpretation is entirely random and unpredictable and that therein lies a potent form of resistance. A ‘fetishism’ of resistance (Keller 1995), which grows out of this overemphasis on the power of the audience threatens to exaggerate the emancipatory potential of counterhegemonic readings. Morley (1992:29-30) summarises that “[t]he power of viewers to reinterpret meanings is hardly equivalent to the discursive power of centralized media institutions to construct the texts which the viewer then interprets; to imagine otherwise is simply foolish”. Reiner (2002:378) thus argues that “[t]here would be little purpose in studying media texts without a presupposition that the meanings conveyed by them have an impact on audience beliefs, values or practices”, and Kitzinger (2004:191) adds that “[w]e may not always be able to predict audience responses, but it would be quite wrong to dismiss textual analysis as completely

out of touch with the real sites of meaning creation”. Research on the discursive construction of social problems has repeatedly demonstrated that public perception incorporates many of the words, themes and frames originally found in media coverage (Comstock 1980, Altheide and Snow 1991). The majority of the population have not had personal encounters with urban foxes, according to the *Foxes Live* survey data summarised in chapter 7, so what they perceive is an expression of their mediated model of the urban fox issue.

Van Dijk (1991:224) used theories from cognitive and social psychology to illustrate the active processing of understanding, interpretation, memorisation and belief formation. Van Dijk (1991:229) emphasised that “strategic processing is context dependent, goal oriented, flexible, multi-level, effective, and fast, but possibly incomplete” and that “questions of meaning, interpretation, and understanding are not merely answered in semantics, but also have to do with people's minds, that is, involve the actual mental processing of texts by the readers” (p.226). Diverse mental strategies are used in the processing of news media texts and many of them are semi-automated. Some readers skim headlines and leads or read texts in a fragmented manner, leaving out entire sections. Others read articles in great depth. The process of understanding involves reference to knowledge 'scripts' that constitute the existing body of general knowledge around a particular topic or issue, and which help to fill gaps in what can be gleaned from a newspaper article alone. Van Dijk (1991:181) explains that “[t]he text is like an iceberg of information of which only the tip is actually expressed in words and sentences. The rest is assumed to be supplied by the knowledge scripts and models of the media users, and therefore usually left unsaid.”

Readers must supply information from general knowledge scripts, as well as their own experiences and opinions to the knowledge they derive from a text in order to construct what cognitive psychologists refer to as 'models' of events or situations. Models are continuously adapted in response to new information and contestation by others. Van Dijk (1991) examined the role of the media during the 1980s in the perpetuation of British racism, taking into account the political allegiances of particular newspapers, and interestingly found that the great diversity of newspaper representations of race and racism was not reflected in

the opinions of people he interviewed. He thus proposed that the effects of newspapers on their readers were somewhat mitigated by the social characteristics of the readers themselves.

Headlines are components of newspaper articles that act as important framing devices and illustrate the processes described above. They “present the reader with a 'fairly complex riddle', which, first, triggers frames and belief systems in the reader's mind, and, then, gets resolved in the ensuing text” (Dor 2003:698). The media act as gatekeepers of information, carefully guiding readers into a particular story in a way which has the potential to trap them within a particular frame or collection of frames. *The Daily Telegraph* headlines listed in chapter 7, for example, published in the first few days after the attack on the twins, contained elements of the *Crisis*, *Predator*, *Warning* and *Cull* frames, which trigger scripts and emotions in the readers' minds before the substance of the text has even been digested.

However, as argued in chapter 4, media influence goes beyond influencing the views of the general population and may in some cases 'bypass' them entirely, according to David, Rohloff, Petley and Hughes (2011). They (p.244) argue that “[i]f the media and the actions of a few can be utilized to represent the opinions of the whole of the general public – as in the case of 'penal populism' – something can be presented as 'popular' or as representing 'public opinion' whether or not the population has ever really been engaged with the issue. It is all a question of whose opinions are listened to, and by whom.” In other words, a 'panic' that appears to exist predominantly in the media, where there is little independent evidence that the public are strongly moved, might not qualify as a moral panic in the traditional sense of the term but still has the potential to lend legitimacy to reactionary and ostensibly disproportionate solutions. On the basis of data presented in chapter 7, including secondary opinion poll data from two surveys and additional commentary from sources inside and outside the media, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent the public were genuinely moved and whether their level of concern was influenced to a greater or lesser extent by news coverage. However, it appears that the rhetoric of *widespread* panic was not reflected in the public's response to surveys. Pest controllers have identified a greater market for fox control work, but to date there has not yet been a

centrally-organised cull of urban foxes and the advice of councils referred to in previous chapters has remained unchanged.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has offered an insight into how news values, thresholds of newsworthiness, and the specific characteristics of the British press account for the growth and decline of moral panics. It also examined the influence of the media on its consumers by summarising prominent theoretical contributions in the field of audience reception studies. Although the sensationalist and ideological tendencies of the press are conducive to moral panics, Jenkins (1992:21) maintains that “[i]t is dubious if the media could create and sustain a campaign to demonize a group or individual if there was not already a constituency prepared to accept such a view”.

Appendix 8 lists the frames identified from the main sample of newspaper items in the context of what has thus far been referred to as the urban fox moral panic. The list consists of frames reported by newspapers on the basis of external sources and corroborated by the newspapers' own thematic presentation of the issue.²⁷ Chapter 8 returns to the themes and discourses which connect various frames to underlying sociocultural factors and which were used to make the fox attack stories relatable to readers. The frames outlined thus far are symbolic forms, “meaningful constructs which are structured in definite ways and [...] are embedded in specific social and historical conditions” (Thompson 1990:280). Although the direct effects of media reporting are difficult to ascertain, the sociocultural contexts in which texts are produced and consumed can yield significant insight. As emphasised by moral panic theorists Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2011:34), “[d]eeper unacknowledged reasons underlie the concern, fear, hostility and outrage felt and ventilated about myriad issues and threats”.

²⁷ The table lists the main proponents for each frame. These include moral entrepreneurs whose voices appear in newspaper articles, as well as apparent endorsements by the newspapers themselves. The table does not distinguish between space given by newspapers to the voices of moral entrepreneurs and the editorial voice of the newspaper itself, as the former is often a reflection of the latter. However, main proponents do not include newspapers that cite the voices of moral entrepreneurs but whose editorial voice clearly speaks out against those voices.

CHAPTER 9. Social Practice: Agency, Space and Ethics in Human Conflict with Urban Wildlife

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Scapegoats and metaphorical animals

9.3 Agency, intention and blame

9.4 Pestilence and transgression

9.5 Urban animality and the discourse of civility

9.6 Conservation and alien species

9.7 Pet-keeping and feeding

9.8 Living cities

9.9 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The text-based analysis across chapters 5, 6 and 7 yielded a repertoire of frames evident in the urban fox moral panic (appendix 8), as well as a number of underlying discursive themes. Chapter 8 explored the dimension of discursive practice and suggested how the characteristics of the British news media were conducive to the generation of this moral panic. The following chapter relates to the social practice dimension of Fairclough's (1992) model of discourse, building on findings from previous chapters to discuss the origins and effects of media representations in this particular context. This stage in the analysis thus examines the role played by discourse in reproducing and transforming hegemonic structures and relations, and vice versa.

Animal bodies are contested sites, an appreciation of which is always already mediated by culture. As outlined in chapter 4, representations of animals are not neutral but are continually reconfigured in relation to particular historical, political and cultural contexts and human interests. To ascertain which mechanisms are used to render certain animals 'killable' requires an examination of the discourses that attach meaning and significance to animals and to our relationships to them. These mechanisms have direct material

consequences for the animals in question, for their discursive construction governs what can reasonably be said about and done to them (Molloy 2011).

To explain the origins and significance of the frames listed in appendix 8, this chapter takes a closer look at the themes (or concepts) of belonging, transgression, intention, visibility, disgust and authenticity, which were underlying many of these frames. These tie in with debates surrounding animal agency, the importance of space and the ethics of human/wildlife encounter. Frames and their associated themes can be examined in much the same way as an anthropologist examines myths, as stories that reveal how humans at different times and in different places relate to their more-than-human surroundings. By considering them in the context of changing human/animal, urban/rural and society/nature relations, it is possible to ascertain how this repertoire of frames has grown out of and resonates with contemporary British culture, thus configuring or contesting a particular human/animal geography.

The following two chapters borrow from the field of animal geography, which contributes a place-based understanding of human/wildlife relations (Castree 2005, Matless 2000, Whatmore 2002). Animal geography is described by Brown and Rasmussen (2010:160) as “a synecdoche for critical nature–society work” because it analyses and deconstructs notions of space and the changing inclusions and exclusions of animals from particular kinds of places. Animal geography thus exceeds the confines of discourse, or rather returns discourse to its role as a social practice. Animal geographers Philo and Wilbert (2000:5), for instance, “endeavor to discern the many ways in which animals are 'placed' by human societies in their local material spaces (settlements, fields, farms, factories, and so on), as well as in a host of imaginary, literary, psychological and even virtual spaces”. They propose that all cultures and societies have “imaginative [geographies] of animals” (2000:11) that define which animals 'belong' and influence the nature of human/animal encounter. Lynn (1998:231) emphasises that “[a]ll human activity, including moral conflict, occurs at sites embedded in situations, making geographic context a constitutive element of all ethical problems”. This chapter explores the spatial ontologies of 'pests', 'vermin' and other transgressive or liminal animals, and, together with chapter 2, offers a social history of human/fox relations in urban and rural space.

9.2 Scapegoats and metaphorical animals

Animals feature in moral panics in a number of ways, usually either as folk devils or as victims of deviant or problematic human behaviour (Mica 2010). Most of the explanations given and responses offered to the perceived threat from urban foxes focused on the nature and inevitability of fox behaviour or on the exacerbating effects of human action. Gerber, Burton-Jeangros and Dubied (2011:26) contend that “animals are rarely considered directly responsible for danger, i.e. they do not simply appear as scapegoats. Instead, emphasis is put on the role of human action [...], on its influence on natural processes and further on the culpability that derives from it.” Nevertheless, wild animals are widely blamed for the spread of disease, the disappearance of other species or the destruction of human ways of living, which themselves contribute to many of these predicaments. Focusing blame on wildlife has the potential to deflect or distract from anthropogenic factors. The etymological origins of the word 'scapegoat' lie in the ritual of purification and order-restoration on the Day of Atonement, when a goat bearing the sins of humanity was sent into the wilderness. Animals therefore may feature as direct scapegoats – blamed for the effects of human or other animal action – or as symbolic or metaphorical stand-ins for human anxieties. In many cases they are both (Hurn 2009 and 2012).

Podberscek (1994), Gerber, Burton-Jeangros and Dubied (2011) and Molloy (2011), for example, have studied the discourses surrounding 'dangerous dogs' in a variety of national contexts, demonstrating how the canine body had become a site of ideological contestation and the focus of public anxieties ranging far beyond the physical threat posed by dogs. Following a number of dog attacks on young children in the 1980s, the British government moved to ban particular breeds perceived as inherently dangerous. The measures taken impacted not only upon the animals themselves but also on the community of 'owners', and the discourse constructed by the media and moral entrepreneurs articulated many nascent anxieties over working-class masculinity (Molloy 2011). The media, for example, pointed to the involvement of pit bull 'owners' in other forms of anti-social behaviour and thus created a differentiation between 'good' dangerous breeds and 'bad' dangerous breeds, largely on account of the

social status of their 'owners'. Breeds recognised by the Kennel Club, such as the Doberman, Rottweiler and German Shepherd, had also been involved in dog attacks but it was not suggested that they be banned or required to be muzzled in public spaces, as this would have provoked considerable outrage with the middle and upper classes who were more closely associated with these breeds. The moral panic surrounding dangerous dogs incorporated discourses of masculinity, national identity, antisocial behaviour and social class, and increasingly focused on a community of dog 'owners' that was seen to encapsulate all related public fears. They in turn were excluded from the production of knowledge about canine risk.

The dangerous dogs example illustrates that animals and their behaviours can function as powerful metaphors for human society and social conflict (Baker 2001, Fudge 2002). Animal behaviour (and changes to it) may be seized upon to model conflict between communities, social groups, genders and even nation-states. Burt (2001) laments the resulting scholarly treatment of animals as mere symbols or metaphors for human society. Many animal geographers share this concern and note that “[i]f we concentrate solely on how animals are represented, the impression is that animals are merely passive surfaces on to which human groups inscribe imaginings and orderings of all kinds” (Philo and Wilbert 2000:5). Returning to the question of animal agency posed in chapter 4, it is important to acknowledge that in seeking to highlight the role of metaphor and symbolism, which may help to call into question certain forms of human/animal relation, moral panic theorists paradoxically threaten to undermine efforts to recognise the agency of other animals. Neglect of animal experience is a common feature of discourse analysis and social constructionism more generally, producing an animality which has nothing to say for itself. This has caused some animal geographers to turn to non-representational (Thrift 1999, 2000) or actor/network (Latour 1993) approaches, which are committed to a conceptualisation of agency as a relational effect, as opposed to an essentialist view of agency as a capacity possessed by bodies. Castree (2004:194), however, comments that “revealing nature as a social construct [...] is still necessary and useful so long as the dichotomy of society–nature continues to inform lay and expert discourses”. In other words, although it is important to appreciate the more–than–human construction of the social

world, “it is important also to understand the selective processes through which cultures shape animals, criminalising and sanctifying them, making them objects of disgust and contempt or concern and protection, in accordance with changing priorities” (Milton 2011:77). Philo and Wilbert's (2000:5) solution to this issue is “to give credence to the practices that are folded into the making of representations, and – at the core of the matter – to ask how animals themselves may figure into these practices”. In other words, they ask how animals themselves might perform, destabilise, transgress or even resist human (spatial) orderings.

Agency, defined by Irvine (2004) as the propensity for self-willed action, is also related to such elusive concepts as free will, mind, subjectivity and morality, all of which carry their own complex epistemological legacies. Because humans cannot understand other animals' perspectives fully, they often simply deny them. Derrida (2002) writes about the human propensity for seeing animals but denying being seen by them and states that this “immense disavowal, whose logic traverses the whole history of humanity” (2002:383) defines what it means to be human, as opposed to animal. A categorical denial of animal agency is a betrayal of Darwin's (1871) insistence that the difference between humans and other animals are merely differences in degree, not kind, and is fraught with epistemological circularity. McFarland and Hediger (2009:11) explain that “the initial assumptions about animals' rational and linguistic capabilities become self-fulfilling prophecies: when researchers allow too little room for animals' own novel forms of agency, the animals' other, related abilities – in language, in reasoning – are also obscured”. Armstrong (2008:3) adds that “the assumption that agency – the capacity to effect change – necessarily requires a combination of rational thought and conscious intention depends in the first place upon an Enlightenment humanist paradigm within which these traits came to define the human as such”. To develop a definition of agency out of a particular understanding of human subjectivity and interiority and then to insist that imputing agency to other animals is a form of dangerous anthropomorphism is thus itself an anthropocentric and ethnocentric (Western) project. We cannot escape the conclusion that humans and other animals are more alike than they have been perceived in the past.

However, acknowledging the propensity for self-willed action in other animals does not necessarily have a liberatory effect for those animals. Writing about domestication and agency, Donaldson and Kymlicka (2012:11) insist that “the veneer of agency and consent simply becomes a recipe for legitimating domination”. In the context of human/horse relations, Clark (2009:179) notes:

The horse was never given the opportunity to decline to participate in the human/horse relationship, nor does the horse possess the capacity to exit the relationship. Suggesting that the horse does possess this sort of agency is to suggest that it is within the control of the horse to defend itself against abuses through a termination of the human/horse relationship. The implication is that by not exiting the relationship, the horse is satisfied with its treatment at the hands of the human, which in turn gives humanity permission to overlook any exploitation of the horse.

To resist human confinement and purpose should be seen as an expression of animal agency, but a refusal to break free cannot be considered evidence of their consent to exploitative treatment, for consent requires awareness and understanding of the consequences of acquiescence (Palmer 2010).

Actor Network Theory (ANT), which posits that any material entity possesses agency, including plants, rocks and minerals, draws similar criticisms. Contrary to developments in ethology which call on humans to recognise that other animals have a developed sense of self (Irvine 2004) and are even capable of moral agency (Bekoff and Pierce 2009), ANT dismisses the relevance of selfhood and intentionality for the definition of agency. Agency is basically defined as anything that has an effect, leading to the rather unhelpful and unproductive conclusion that everything affects everything in one way or another. Callon's (1986) famous suggestion that scallops ‘choose’ when to be caught and thereby exert agency in the domestication process, which harks back to the descriptions of animal agency prevalent in hunter-gatherer communities described by Ingold (1988), also demonstrates how such a definition can lead to an inappropriate attribution of intentionality and acquiescence.

Carter and Charles (2011, 2013) argue that various existing definitions of agency, even those which restrict agency to sentient entities, risk conflating agency with action in a manner that inhibits an appreciation for how the options of individuals are shaped by their relations with other members of a collectivity and the positions they occupy within society's distribution of resources. If all animals are considered to have agency, and agency is simply defined as the capacity for self-willed action, then it becomes difficult to account for the differences in outcome and effectiveness of some actions over others. Carter and Charles advocate retaining a concept of agency that does not erase human/animal difference in its quest to undermine human exceptionalism. Their definition borrows from Archer's (1988, 1995, 2000) morphogenetic model and defines agents as collectivities sharing the same life chances. Agents, such as urban foxes roaming London's streets or pigs raised for slaughter, are always defined in the plural. Urban foxes are not reducible to this collectivity but belonging to it conditions their possibilities for action, the roles they can occupy, and even the desires they may hold. Agency is thus fundamentally relational and social and it shapes the settings for action. Carter and Charles (2013:332) note that "most animals are placed in a highly disadvantaged location within a human-centred distribution of resources, precisely because they are non-human animals in an agential relation to human animals", so the pertinent questions relate to the extent to which animals can modify their own agential conditions and how or whether the agency of humans and other animals differs.

The agential position of urban foxes is at first involuntary; it temporally predates them. However, this definition of agency would be fundamentally self-defeating if it did not allow for the possibility that agential conditions may themselves be causally affected by action. Carter and Charles (2011, 2013) distinguish between Primary Agency (PA, described thus far) and Corporate Agency (CA), the latter referring to the outcome of a recognition of shared circumstances and a collective reimagining of alternative futures. This commonly leads to some form of collective action from which enhanced political influence may emerge. Important for the distinction between humans and other animals is that "the recognition of shared life chances, an assessment of their possible causes, and judgements about possible political remedies all require the mobilisation of political, cultural and linguistic resources rather than individual 'resistance'; they

require an imagining of alternatives” (Carter and Charles 2013:333). In other words, while other animals may indeed affect the social order that sustains their disadvantaged position, only humans are capable of mobilising the necessary political, cultural and linguistic resources for generating CA. Carter and Charles (2013) propose that syntactical forms of language, which enable a move beyond basic indexicality, give rise to the kind of ‘reflexive embodiment’ that is necessary for CA. Whereas animals may struggle individually and resist the effects of the relations of power in which they find themselves, this does not involve the collectively imagined alternative future constitutive of CA.

Carter and Charles thus conclude that while animals can certainly resist their agential conditions and even change those conditions in the process (acts of ‘transgression’ are rightly described as resistance), only human animals are capable of ‘reflexive embodiment’ and Corporate Agency. They give the example of the ‘Tamworth Two’ (also described here in chapter 4), the pigs who escaped from an abattoir, and note that their escape was variously described as evidence of their intention, planning and cunning. The outcome of their action (their eventual retirement to an animal sanctuary), however, was an emergent product of their engagement as actors with their agential circumstances and the responses of humans who were affected by the story. Carter and Charles therefore draw the rather uncontroversial conclusion that while animals certainly act and have agency, their actions are conditioned by temporally prior structures and relations of power, just as the actions of humans are. But given their lack of Corporate Agency, and to return to the case of urban foxes, if the agential conditions for the collective change then this must be seen as an emergent product of the repeated, but not reflexively coordinated, exertion of their Primary Agency and the resulting response from the human social realm.

9.3 Agency, intention and blame

The attribution of animal agency and intention often goes together with the attribution of blame, which, as we have seen in previous chapters, may be used to justify human action to curtail animal behaviour. Urban foxes were constructed as biologically-driven automata, whose behaviours are innate and inevitable. They are natural carnivores and were seen to pose an indisputable

risk to pets and small children whom they cannot help but see as sources of food. Their attacks on humans were thus commonly viewed as predatory in nature, as opposed to an act of defence. At the same time, however, foxes were imbued with human moral qualities that implied a form of aberrant agency and choice. The phenomenon of surplus killing, for example, was frequently drawn upon during the urban fox moral panic to portray urban foxes as merciless killers who kill just for the sake of it. Paradoxically, the situations in which the phenomenon of surplus killing arises are typically artificial, such as the confinement of large number of prey animals for human consumption. There are two main schools of ecological thought that explain this phenomenon (see Kruuk 1972), the first of which states that predators will fully exploit a bountiful source of food because they cannot guarantee how often they will come across such a bounty. Though foxes may not immediately consume all their bounty in one sitting, they will return to collect and stash the remainder at a later date, as long as they are undisturbed. The second theory suggests that predators are at the mercy of a natural killing mechanism that is hyper-stimulated in the presence of an abundance of prey. In other words, foxes do not possess an inhibition to stop killing when they are faced with multiple chickens held in confinement and unable to escape. The effect of granting foxes a form of agency that implies choice or of portraying them as ruthless killers driven by instinct is often the same: they may be subjected to what Derrida (1989/1995:278) described as a “noncriminal putting to death”.

Some cognitive ethologists (Bekoff 2008, Bekoff and Pierce 2009) have indeed argued that there is evidence in the play behaviour of animals not only for joy and sorrow but also for moral behaviour, including a capacity for empathy, fairness and reciprocity (see also Rowlands 2012). However, humans do not tend to hold other animals morally responsible, never mind legally liable, for their actions (Brown and Rasmussen 2010).²⁸ In 2000, an elephant killed a zookeeper in London Zoo and an eye witness commented that the elephant had seemingly intended to do this (Wilbert 2006). She had suffocated the zookeeper with her trunk and stood on his head. Nevertheless, the coroner's verdict was

²⁸ It would seem out of step with modern times if medieval animal trials were to have carried on to this day. Up until the nineteenth century across Europe animals were tried, convicted and sentenced for moral wrongs, including murder and bestiality, in a similar way to how human criminals were treated (Evans 1906/1987).

'accidental death'. It is possible that the implications for human society of accepting animal intentionality, the capacity for constructing and executing a plan, remain harder to come to terms with than the tragic deaths of humans occasioned by animal instinct and human carelessness. The culprits are usually 'destroyed', as in the case of 'dangerous dogs'. It is worth noting that the use of the word 'destroyed', as opposed to 'killed', itself relegates the animal to the status of an object. There is no doubt a further distinction to be made between dogs who are 'destroyed' because of their actions and those who are 'destroyed' because of their breed, ostensibly to protect human society from the behaviours considered innate to their breed. There is an important difference between the lone elephant in the zoo and the population of foxes roaming city streets at night, uncontrolled and uncontrollable. The actions of the former need not provoke moral outrage because the space of the zoo can be easily 'cleansed'.

The case of urban foxes is more similar to that of the pack of wild dingoes that attacked and killed a nine-year-old boy on Fraser Island in 2001 (Peace 2002, Wilbert 2006). The latter were quickly painted as vengeful animals and natural killers whose intentions had been to steal from and attack humans. Just as with urban foxes, dingo behaviour was categorised as 'natural' and 'unnatural' depending on where it occurred. Carter and Palmer (2016:8) note that "[t]hese definitions in turn enable the human act of killing to be ethically justified in that it becomes not simply the killing of animals who transgress 'human' space and threaten humans, but the mercy killing ('euthanising') of 'unnatural' animals who can no longer represent the 'pure', natural dingo and have lost their dingo way". The spatial context of agency is a significant factor in the demonisation and punishment of the culprits, and can lead to their portrayal as 'inauthentic' and degenerate members of their species or as a 'rational enemy' of humans (Neff 2012). The moralisation of fox behaviour has a lot to do with the spaces in which their actions take place and the capacity for purification of those spaces.

The dingoes on Fraser Island have a similarly ambiguous relationship with humans as urban foxes do, appearing variously as 'tricksters', 'sheep-murderers', treasured native icons and even pets. They "inhabit wilderness and urban and rural space, each with different discourses around the dingo's

protected status as wildlife, its pest status as destroyer of other animals, its iconism as a keystone predator representing increasingly distanced nature, or as domesticated pet” (Carter and Palmer 2016:2). The response to the death of the young boy in 2001 was also familiar, with calls for ‘something to be done’ responded to through a one-off use of lethal force. Thirty-one dingoes were killed immediately, but since then the management approach has become more about killing ‘problem individuals’ and discouraging human behaviour that could lead to habituation. Carter and Palmer (2016:8) make the important observation that transgression goes both ways; “in their offerings of food to dingoes and their assumption that dingoes could be tamed into behaving like domestic dogs, tourists on Fraser Island have [...] effectively transgressed into dingo’s territory by stealth and attempted to colonise it”.

Post-reunification urban sprawl in Germany also contributed to humans coming into greater contact with wild boar in new suburban areas around Berlin, yet it was the wild boar who were considered to have ‘invaded’ human space. Their natural behaviour, which involved churning up the ground in search for food, was considered a destructive nuisance, but it took the death of a 72-year old member of a hunting party some seventy kilometres outside Berlin to provide justification for a widespread cull of this “murderous beast” (Spiegel 2008). When it comes to urban foxes, dingoes, wild boar and other transgressive wildlife, “[t]he shifting boundaries and classifications reveal animal transgression as a marker of an anthropocentrically constructed landscape that changes according to the shifting needs and desires of humans” (Carter and Palmer 2016:3). In all of these cases, human encroachment on habitat through urban sprawl or the development of the tourist industry make problematic human/animal encounters more likely.

9.4 Pestilence and transgression

Foxes in the countryside are traditionally blamed for their carnivorism, and the manner in which they take prey is interpreted as treacherous (see chapter 2). Lorenz (1949/2002:172) notes that “the average person [...] does not judge the fox that kills the hare by the same standard as the hunter who shoots one for precisely the same reason, but with that severe censure he would apply to the

gamekeeper who made a practice of shooting farmers and frying them for supper!" Urban and rural foxes are often referred to as 'pests' or 'vermin'. To understand what these categories mean and to ascertain what they say about the human societies which attribute these labels, scholars have examined historical changes in which animals are defined as pests or vermin, the specific ways in which they are framed and the human responses they elicit.

Although the terms 'pest' and 'vermin' were frequently used interchangeably in the corpus of newspaper articles examined in previous chapters, distinctions between the two categories are sometimes made elsewhere, with 'pest' referring to insects and 'vermin' referring to mammals such as rats, mice and foxes, and birds, such as pigeons. Animals in both categories may contaminate or consume foods destined for humans and both may be said to 'infest' human spaces. Consumption includes predation on animals, be they 'livestock' or 'game', which humans themselves want to kill for food, or in some cases for sport (see chapter 2). Candelaria (2009:301) summarises that animals are classed as 'vermin' on account of their "propensity [...] to live with and among us, opportunistically harvesting our food, water, and shelter resources to promote their own genetic heritage". 'Pests' and 'vermin' are thus not defined simply according to their species but by virtue of their relationship to humans: human spaces, cultural values and material resources. Rats, for instance, are encountered variously as vermin, pets, experimental subjects in laboratories, and in some cultures even as food. Wolch and Emel (1998) add that animals may qualify as pests if they are considered 'useless', not fulfilling any particular (human) purpose but wreaking widespread havoc and destruction.

However, economic damage is not a necessary component of pestilence. It is through their transgression of and resistance to human structures and boundaries, not limited to the physical dimension, that animals become 'pests' or 'vermin'. Non-pest animals occupy their proper space and fit neatly into their assigned categories, including 'pet', 'livestock' and 'game', whereas 'pests' and 'vermin' are framed as intruders and transgressors, manifesting their own choices and resisting human constructs. Foxes exist "on the borderline between edible field and inedible wild animals" (Leach 1964:45). They are either dangerously unaware of the physical and cultural boundaries they breach or, as

we have seen in previous chapters, may be accused of deliberately ignoring these boundaries. The latter suggests that they possess an awareness of the existence of human-set boundaries and is implied by words such as 'cunning', 'sneaking' and 'skulking'. These words are common components of 'pestilence discourses' (Knight 2003), which represent 'pests' as criminals or deviants that spread diseases, have an insatiable desire to kill, and breed out of control. Pest control industry discourse warns of the potential consequences of these 'compulsions' using apocalyptic language and horror story scenarios. Stewart and Cole (2016) emphasise that the physical threat posed by the natural carnivorous and scavenging behaviour of urban foxes only became problematic when this behaviour constituted an inappropriate transgression of human-set boundaries. This transgression also drew attention to their agency.

Fissell (1999) identifies a distinction between early modern and contemporary definitions of vermin. The focus in early modern discourses, she argues, was on how animals compete with humans for resources. Foxes, for example, were the non-human equivalent of the poacher, taking animals that were 'managed' by humans and thus, ostensibly, belonged to them. The punishment incurred was usually lethal, and this remains the case today. However, contemporary discourses additionally contain associations of dirt and disease, which may have become more significant with the development of medical and epidemiological knowledge. No longer a significant resource competitor with humanity, 'vermin', according to Fissell (1999), are increasingly viewed with disgust. Disgust exists in several forms, categorised by Rozin, Haidt and McCauley (2008) as core disgust (revulsion at the risk of contamination through oral incorporation), animal-nature disgust (revulsion at humans' animal instincts), interpersonal disgust (revulsion at the bodies of others) and moral disgust (revulsion at violations of a moral nature). Marzillier and Davey's (2004) experiments identified two main categories of disgust: primary and complex. Primary disgust is composed broadly of what Rozin, Haidt and McCauley (2008) labelled core disgust, animal-nature disgust and interpersonal disgust, and complex disgust consists of moral disgust or abjection. Whereas the disgust vector represents unease about the risks inherent in the proximity to other lifeforms, abjection is an emotion that stems from an uncomfortable awareness of the similarities and connections between humans and other animals.

Longhurst (2000:28) explains that some things “[provoke] fear and disgust because [they] expose the border between self and other”. Behaviours of 'vermin', including defecation, consumption and sexual reproduction, are thought to remind humans of their own baser instincts and 'animalistic' behaviours. An article in *The Observer* (3/11/2012) makes a similar statement:

Pests taunt us with the knowledge that for all our posh kitchens, we haven't moved so far from the cave: they represent the nameless wild things out there, barely kept at bay. No wonder plagues in the Bible are so closely entwined with shame. But the irony is that, in so many ways, the story of pests' success is also the story of our own.

Abjection is a psycho-socio-linguistic response to the transgressive behaviours of certain animals which also features in racist and ethnocentric discourses that represent other cultures or ethnicities as subhuman, uncivilised or unclean (Hurn 2012). As we saw in chapter 4, groups of humans, including Jews, black Africans, and the working classes, have historically been devalued by attributing animal propensities to them, thus bringing them closer to nature and further from culture and civilisation (Joffe 1999, Lupton 1999).

However, Fudge (2011:6) adds the following:

The modern meaning of 'vermin' attempts, I think, to demonise the animals, not because they are dangerously like us [...], or because they bear supernatural meaning (the plague of locusts of the Old Testament), but because they are dangerously destructive of human ways of living, which ways are revealed, through the presence of such creatures, to be not so much the dominant order of the world as very fragile.

Perfect control and order are unattainable goals. Griffiths, Poulter and Sibley (2000:69) note that “[t]he realisation of an ordered city, like removing bodily odour or staying young, is an impossible project”. The human yearning for order and the compulsion to maintain boundaries stem from the fact that order only ever exists as a possibility (Sabloff 2001). Candelaria (2009:305) argues that “[w]hen vermin compete with humans, the competition for control of the space

also becomes a direct competition for a place in the relationship, creating forms of love triangles where either the human or the vermin must be displaced and a single master of the space established". They do not merely enter that space but threaten to undermine the proper designation of space and the ideas associated with it. Jenks (2011:235) explains this as follows:

Transgressive behaviour therefore does not deny limits or boundaries; rather it exceeds them and thus completes them. Every rule, limit, boundary or edge carries with it its own fracture, penetration or impulse to disobey. The transgression is a component of the rule. [...] Transgression is not the same as disorder; it opens up chaos and reminds us of the necessity of order. [...] Moral panic devices are that which we employ to provide some temporary state of solidity in an uncertain world.

At stake in instances of disruptive animality is the success of human efforts to create the home as the innermost sanctum of human society. Power (2009:29) states that "border practices separating home from 'outside', wildness, nature and dirt are central to the material and conceptual construction of western homes as safe, secure, autonomous human spaces". The home, therefore, is a site of purity that is always threatened by contamination from the outside. Douglas (1991:287) writes about the "tyranny of the home", which has physical as well as moral and spiritual elements. Victorian housekeeping journals emphasised that the presence of dirt threatens not only the physical, but also the spiritual and moral wellbeing of the occupants of the home. "There is no such thing as absolute dirt;" Douglas (1966/2002:2) writes, "it exists in the eye of the beholder". Animals, like dirt, become "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966/2002:36) when they transgress the "socio-spatial order which is created and policed around them by human beings" (Philo 1998:52). The presence of rodents in the kitchen, or foxes in the nursery, thus is antithetical to the idea of the home.

Animals that transgress or refuse to fit neatly into the roles and spaces to which they have been assigned come to occupy the lowest ranks on what Arluke and Sanders (1996:175) refer to as the sociozoologic scale. Through an analysis of 155 years of *New York Times* articles, Jerolmack (2008) demonstrates how

pigeons became problem animals and evolved into 'rats with wings' through the popular use of the rat as a metaphor for disease and degradation. The particular way in which pigeons were problematised thus exposes modern Western conceptions of appropriate human/animal spatial relations. Whether they expose the myth of human exceptionalism or the myth of order, 'vermin' or 'pests' thus elicit powerful emotions that often culminate in a desire for extermination and cleansing in an effort to reassert and preserve a particular ideology of space. The fact that they exist, uninvited, in close proximity to humans and have a tendency to thrive despite human attempts to exterminate them or limit their reach only makes them more contemptible. In fact, 'pests' or 'vermin' are unique in the fact that they do not require human intervention or stewardship to ensure their preservation. Knight (2003:16) agrees that “[w]ildlife pests, as wild animals that exist in human space, straddle the nature–society boundary and as a result become ready candidates for order-restoring cultural practices”.

'Vermin' are additionally rendered killable through deindividuation. Cassidy (2012) has examined the framings of badgers in the British media in the context of the debate about bovine tuberculosis (bTB). Where during the 1960s and 1970s there had been talk of 'rogue' or 'problem' badgers, the contemporary debate discusses badgers in the plural, in a depersonalised manner that renders all badgers problem animals. In a similar way, the massification of 'urban foxes' of removing consideration for the difference in biography, behaviour and personality of individual foxes (Stewart and Cole 2016). Fudge's (2011:8) description of her efforts to live with mice in her home by translating 'vermin' into 'pet' provides an interesting illustration of the psychological significance of this mechanism: “I gave the individual name 'Tom Pinch' to more than one mouse and in so doing made it harder to kill the animal(s) because killing Tom Pinch would be a violation of what Marc Shell has called 'pet-hood'. Thus I removed the concept of group – of swarm, plague, scourge – from my experience of living with the world beyond the washing-machine and replaced it with a form of domesticated, orderly existence.”

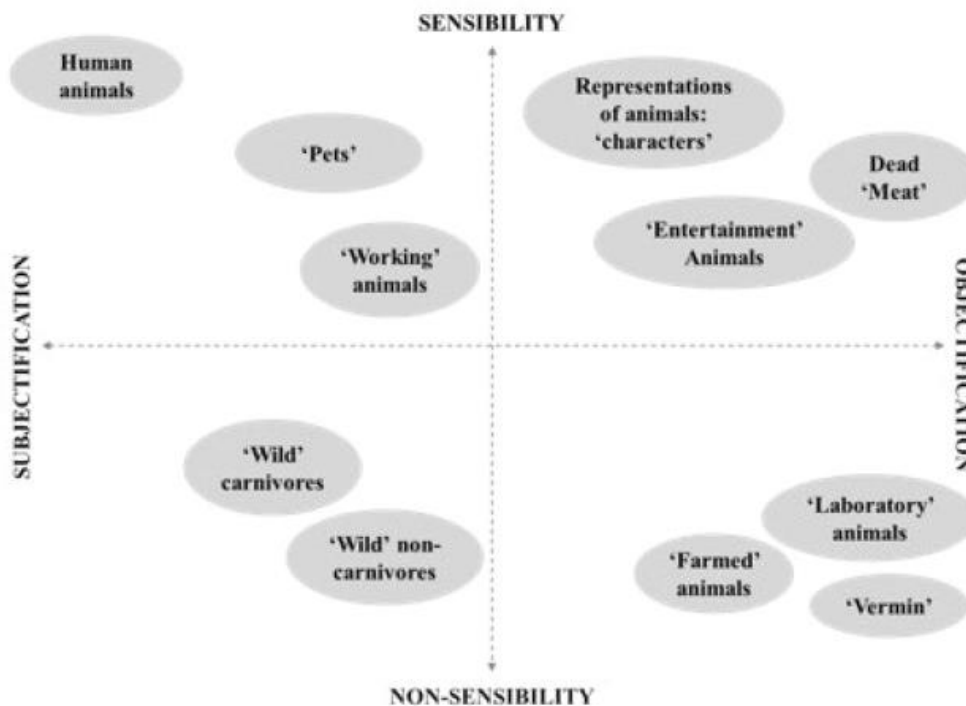
Animals become visible, not only physically but also ethically, when they transgress and break boundaries. For some this can have a positive effect (see

chapter 4). Jones (2000) explains that visibility, distance and otherness are crucial factors in determining the level of ethical concern attached to bodies within particular spaces. He emphasises that “[w]ithout the presence of the ethically visible body to ground the ethical practices within these spaces, whatever ethical consideration there may be becomes generalised and dissipated via convention, markets, legislation, discourse and practice” (2000:286). Butch and Sundance not only escaped the space of the farm but also escaped their condition of being just one member of a species or category. They became individualised and thus rendered less killable. Foxes also become more visible when they transgress, but this often has a more negative effect. Luther (2013:50) explains that “events that tear at the social fabric can create a space where our cultural anxieties attach themselves to otherwise invisible urban animals” and result in strategies to limit their transgression.

As mentioned in chapter 4, animal lives are shaped by shifting formations of human power and their ‘place’ is subject to constant spatial and social reordering, which accounts for the precarity of the human tolerance of urban foxes. Stewart and Cole (2016:126) have designed a conceptual map of human/animal relations (figure 9.1), which “illustrates the contingency and peril of other animals’ relationships with humans, by virtue of the differential levels of subjectivity and sensibility afforded them by human discourse and practice”. Animals, including the human animal, ‘pets’, ‘wild’ animals, ‘vermin’ and so on are located in this relational typology along axes of sensibility / non-sensibility and subjectification / objectification. Stewart and Cole argue that constructing foxes with elevated subjectivity and sensibility is risky because their everyday behaviours, which include scavenging, traversing human gardens and protecting their territory, can be recast as hostile and aggressive acts when they transgress the human social order, creating a situation in which agential villains such as urban foxes are seen to be ‘deserving’ of retribution. In other words, transgression creates a situation in which violence is ‘justified’ to maintain the speciesist social order. More ‘fixed’ in this typology than transgressive urban foxes are captive ‘meat’ animals such as chickens, whose position is even further entrenched by the resulting legitimisation of human domination: foxes threaten chickens, so the human status as ‘protector’ of chickens is legitimised. This typology, the authors argue (p.136), “highlights the lethal fickleness of

human meaning-making practices in relation to other animals, a fickleness that is made possible by the fog of self-serving representations that intercede between humans and other animals”.

Fig.9.1 Conceptual map of the social construction of ‘other’ animals (Stewart and Cole 2016:125)



Emel (1998:106) writes about the “learned capacity to cut off feelings in order to facilitate death or degradation” in the context of wolf eradication plans in the US. The result for wolves is that they may be killed by extremely cruel means, including the use of poison bait, snares and dynamite to destroy wolf dens. The cruelty involved in these methods is congruent with the atavistic sense of justice evident in the pro-eradication discourse. Although it is illegal in the UK to use poison to kill foxes, the common methods of snaring, shooting and trapping are complemented by terrier-work in the context of protecting birds reared for shooting. An exemption to the hunting ban (see chapter 2), terrier-work involves the use of a terrier below ground, in a fox earth or other refuge, to keep a fox at bay while a gamekeeper digs it out. Both terrier and fox may sustain lethal injuries during this forced subterranean encounter.

The definition of cruelty is context-dependent and strongly tied to visibility and notions of spatial legitimacy and animal belonging. One of the primary criticisms of Western animal cruelty legislation is that it tends to only prohibit 'unnecessary' suffering, where the parameters for necessity are defined by humans (Luther 2013). O'Sullivan (2011), for example, examines various pieces of legislation that prohibit the long-term confinement of animals whilst excluding from protection those animals that have been specifically bred to be confined. Luther (2013) argues that protecting urban wildlife from cruel treatment raises numerous conceptual questions because their spatial legitimacy is contested. The discourse of urban civility defines animal cruelty in a particular way and is heavily invested in this definition.

9.5 Urban animality and the discourse of civility

The history of human/wildlife relations in urban space and the legacy of British animal cruelty legislation are heavily implicated in the urban/rural dichotomy. Cities are sites of complex and deeply ambiguous socio-spatial orderings. The term 'urban wildlife' is a curious oxymoron, for the 'wild' is generally constructed in opposition to the urban. Cities are, ostensibly, spaces of human civilisation, not wild animal habitation. Thomson (2007:80) states that "a default frame tends to inform the theorizing of urban wildlife relationships. In this frame, the city is distinguished from non-urbanized areas and treated as a special place with a negative essence in relationship to wildlife." This discourse of the city essentialises both nature and humanity and renders urban space inimical to wildlife. Images of foxes lurking in the shadows, unwelcome intruders into human space, define urban areas in opposition to the natural habitats of wild animals. Even those who draw attention to the challenges faced by animals in urban spaces risk entrenching this alienation of the city from nature. Wolch, West and Gaines (1995:736), for example, claim that "[i]ndividual animals crowded out of their homes must risk entry into urban areas in search of food and/or water, where they encounter people, cars and other dangers". The image of wildlife 'refugees' fleeing their 'proper' habitats "[reinforces] the human/nature binary that positions the city as (dangerous) human territory and the wilderness as (benign) nonhuman habitat" (Thomson 2007:86-87) and leads to the impression that "animals prefer to live apart from us" (Low 2003:47).

“[T]he moral compass of human–animal relations in the city is shifting and, like so many other aspects of city life, is subject to constant renegotiation”, argue Wolch, West and Gaines (1995:733). Historically, cities have been considered safe havens from large wild mammals, particularly carnivores. As such, they have come to function as a “monolithic tribute to the colonial project of civilization's struggle against wildness” (Thomson 2007:83). The last two centuries in particular have witnessed a spatialisation of nature into the countryside and a concomitant entrenchment of the urban–rural dichotomy (Macnaghten and Urry 1998, Milbourne 2003). Philo (1998) has investigated the role played by animals in establishing a difference between urban and rural values, norms and standards of civility during the Victorian era. He was specifically interested in the inclusions and exclusions of farmed animals in cities and the control of animal power. Early nineteenth century London was a place where live markets, slaughterhouses and related animal industries existed side-by-side with shops, public houses and other businesses. Animals were herded through busy streets, causing disruption and forcing shoppers and city-dwellers to witness the sights, sounds and smells of animal business. Smithfield market was one such place where animal indecency, together with the alcoholic excesses and sexually transgressive acts of drovers and slaughtermen, was increasingly seen as an affront to Victorian civility. Luther (2013:41) explains that “[c]ivility [...] is a principle that has the power to actively expel those who challenge the socio-spatial boundaries of the moral order. The city, conceptually separate from the wild through this same rhetoric of civility, becomes a physical and metaphorical space for well-behaved people.” In the end, the live animal presence at Smithfield market was brought to a close and other markets were opened on the outskirts of the city, which was “increasingly identified as a place for people rather than for beasts” (Philo 1998:65).

As we saw in chapter 1, the history of nineteenth century animal cruelty legislation was as much, if not more, about the desire to remove animals and animal practices from view to guard the sensitivities of the middle and upper classes, as it was about cruelty. Animal cruelty was defined as incivility and thus its construction as a social problem had an effect not only on its victims but also on those who were defined as its human perpetrators (Ritvo 1987). Many of the activities of the working classes, such as slaughter work and baiting sports,

were either removed from view or legislated against. Animal cruelty posed a threat to the humane attitudes of the middle classes and thus the discourse of civility came to constitute a form of social power used to define and separate the lower and middle classes. Luther (2013:44) asks the pertinent question, “[i]f [...] narratives about cruelty to animals implement morality as a tool of socio-spatial discipline, what can it mean to use the concept of cruelty to protect animals who are themselves transgressors of that order?”

9.6 Conservation and alien species

The spatialisation of wildlife can also be considered in the context of contemporary conservation discourse and practice, which is often occupied with the distinction between native and non-native or alien species. At the start of the twentieth century wild animals were primarily valued according to whether or not they were 'vermin' (Smout 2005). Non-native and exotic animals were imported for private collections and introduced into the British countryside for diversity and utility (such as the non-native pheasant). Grey squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) and red squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*) were both treated equally as enemies of forestry, and rabbits were persecuted purely on account of the threat they posed to agriculture, not their non-native origins. Ritchie's (1920) book *The Influence of Man on Animal Life in Scotland* was one of the first to warn against human intervention in nature through the artificial introduction of species, but most conservation scientists writing about non-native species until the 1970s did not raise any major concerns (Nicholson 1951, Salisbury 1961, Elton 1958). However, in the 1970s and 80s popular and scientific opinion changed. With growing scientific understanding of animal populations, including at the molecular and genetic level, many species such as grey squirrels, muntjak deer and American mink, were reclassified as threats to native British biodiversity and the 'genetic integrity' of British species. Nowadays, twenty-one out of forty-nine established British mammals are regarded as non-native (Smout 2005). Endemism, a form of spatial legitimacy, is now a major factor in determining support for conservation and statutory protection (Meuser, Harshaw and Mooers 2009).

A genealogical perspective on the historical development of conservationist thought would emphasise the role played by the nineteenth century rise in popularity of nature study and ecology, as well as growing popular disapproval of animal cruelty, concern for the human role in animal extinctions, and the romantic appreciation for nature and wild spaces that remained untouched by humans. Added to this came a twentieth century awareness of human biospheric dependence around the development of the 'crisis discipline' of conservation biology (Soulé 1985) and the invention of the concept of 'biodiversity' in the 1980s, which was to play an important political role at a national and international level (Takacs 1996). Biodiversity conservation is now an international obligation, but the preservation of diversity requires defining which species belong in particular regions, an exercise which is fraught with definitional challenges. The UK's *Biodiversity Action Plan* (UK Steering Group 1994:175) defines non-native species as those “which [do] not naturally occur within an area (usually a country) and which either arrived naturally, or more usually as a result of man's intervention”. The generally accepted scientific definition of a non-native species in Britain is one which was introduced through human action at any point since the last ice age, 10,000 years ago (Smout 2005). However, there are many species, such as beavers, which became extinct in Britain since this time and which were subsequently reintroduced by humans. They could be classed as native but their recent reintroduction into various parts of England has been controversial. Milton (2000:240) notes that “[b]y enabling species to be identified as native or alien, the distinction between human and non-human processes guides the actions of conservationists”. The human introduction criterion entrenches the view that what is 'natural' and 'good' is that which is untouched by humans (Woods and Moriarty 2001). However, nature is always already in a state of evolution and flux, regardless of human intervention.

Aside from the value put on the persistence, stability and diversity of species and ecosystems, there are many social values at stake in the conservation debate. Smout (2005:277) notes that “the language of the conservation scientist can sometimes sound, to the impartial ear, in danger of coming close to the neo-fascist”. Several studies have highlighted the use of nationalist rhetoric and xenophobic language in public debates about non-native species (Larson 2005,

Olwig 2003, Simberloff 2003, Seymour 2013, Subramaniam 2001). Alien species are often portrayed as a threat not only to the native flora and fauna but to the social fabric and economy of the nation itself. In New Zealand, for example, possums became the target of such sentiment after they were introduced into the country for the fur trade in the nineteenth century and subsequently escaped and established themselves in the wild (Milton 2011). Potts (2009:3) explains that “possum eradication therefore becomes a patriotic act that helps to preserve (an imagined) New Zealand figured in ecological and economic term”. Matless (2000) explains that particular animals in Britain also reflect a notion of proper British nature, and the eradication of alien species, the flip side of conservation management, becomes a form of boundary maintenance.

Ruddy ducks are an example of a species that has been portrayed as out of place in Britain and implicated in the construction of national identity. Ruddy ducks were brought in from North America in the 1940s and kept in private collections, but many escaped and began breeding in the surrounding environment (Milton 2000). Concerns were raised over the potential spread to other European countries and the threat posed to the genetic distinctiveness of the Spanish white-headed duck through possible interbreeding. These fears were confirmed in the 1990s and as a result the British government began a three-year trial eradication plan, with the support of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Smout (2005:277) explains that “[t]he ruddy duck's offence [...] is to make love not war, though the proponents of the cull have been known to describe the male's forceful courtship technique as rape”. Ruddy ducks had breached several boundaries: the boundary between 'native' and 'alien' species, the boundary between two species of duck, and the boundary between human and 'natural' processes (humans were ultimately responsible for their introduction). Representations in the media during the 1990s also drew an analogy between ruddy ducks and the behaviour of stereotypical British male holiday-makers ('lager louts'). However, as Smout (2005:180-181) notes, “surely, if the ruddy duck hybrid with the white-headed duck is better able to survive the rigours of the Spanish environment than the pure-bred ruddy duck, the cross will have resulted in an organism well-suited to its ecological niche”.

This criticism of the conservationist obsession with species origin and genetic integrity highlights the ecological and ethical dilemmas inherent in the construction of 'true natures'.

Another important effect of this conservation discourse is the emphasis it places on the future of the species over the sentience of the individual animal, which has a lot in common with the ethical approach to wildlife in general. If, as animal rights discourse proposes, sentience is the bedrock of ethics and an important criterion for moral consideration then it must continue to be so, whether or not an animal is a member of a non-native species. Conservation charities such as the RSPB, however, regularly kill tens of thousands of 'invasive' island rodents to protect endangered native birds, such as the Henderson petrel on Henderson Island (RSPB 2013). This is an action which is seldom questioned, perhaps because the island rodents are doubly anathematised as non-native animals and 'vermin'.

The dual construction of foxes as 'vermin' and as animals that are alien to the urban environment and don't belong renders them killable in the eyes of some and unwelcome in the eyes of more moderate others. However, urban foxes also appear to have something in common with the feral cats studied by Griffiths, Poulter and Sibley (2000). Their examination of the politics of feral cats in the city of Hull showed that the cats were also the subjects of a desire to save, tame and eventually rehome them.

9.7 Pet-keeping and feeding

As we have seen, the discourse of the city is a changing narrative of belonging, of inclusions and exclusions of animal life. Urban animals are assigned an identity which corresponds with their spatial location. Pets belong in the home, farm animals in the UK tend to only enter the city as dead flesh to be consumed, and pests don't belong at all and require extermination.

Summarising the place of urban wildlife, Hinchliffe, Kearnes, Degen and Whatmore (2005:645) write that “[t]hings do not look too rosy for urban wilds. Not pure enough to be true and not human enough to be political, urban wilds have no constituency.” Wild animals are thus liable to being incorporated into

either category of 'pest' or 'pet' (Wolch 1998). Griffiths, Poulter and Sibley (2000:59) agree that “[u]rban living has resulted in the incorporation of animals, into the private sphere (as pets), or urban culture has removed them to a real or imaginary 'wild' or to some rural past”.

Pet-keeping grew in popularity in the nineteenth century and pets became a key feature of Victorian living (Ritvo 1987). Pets, or companion animals, are typically bred and selected for their temperament and aesthetic qualities and become an expression of personality and status. Berger (1980:12) explains that “[t]he pet completes him [the human], offering responses to aspects of his character which would otherwise remain unconfirmed”. Berger (1980:12) writes about pets as “mementoes from the outside world”, as subdued, diminished and controlled versions of 'real', wild animals. Stripped of their wildness and physically and psychologically altered to suit the demands of human companionship, these animals are portrayed by Berger as inauthentic, humanised forms that have lost their ontological way.

The inauthenticity of urban animality connects with the notion of the inauthenticity of urban experience. The peasant living off the land has an ostensibly authentic relationship with nature, whereas in contemporary capitalist societies animals are exploited in factories or confined in households for the benefit of an alienated urban population. The urban animal gaze, Berger (1980) argues, is a one-way exercise, often mediated by the lens of a camera or the bars of a cage in the zoo.

Animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. (Berger 1980:14)

Modernity according to both Berger (1980) and Tester (1991) is about the gradual disappearance of authentic animal life. The hollow modern experience of the animal, both argue, has a lot to do with the effects of urbanisation and the growing scientific knowledge of the natural world. This coincides with the rise in concern for animal welfare, particularly among the intellectual and urban middle

classes (see chapter 2). However, these groups had “the least strong direct relationship with animals” and “the least first-hand knowledge of animals” (Tester 1991:53-54). Rural populations, on the other hand, ostensibly retained a direct relationship with animals, which many commentators in the urban fox moral panic, alongside Berger himself, regard as superior to the modern urban experience. However, the suggestion that companion cats and dogs are somehow less 'real' than the animals found in rural spaces, including cows, sheep and pigs, which themselves have undergone extensive domestication and selective breeding over the centuries, is difficult to sustain.

Tuan (1984) argues more neutrally that pets complete the picture of the city as locus of human control. Rather than threatening the spatial dominance of humans, pets actually entrench it. They become perfectly dependent on their human 'owners' for food, shelter, medical attention and companionship. Animals that break free from their status as pets, by escaping from the home and becoming ownerless, are branded 'feral' or 'stray'. 'Vermin' are the direct antithesis to pets, and treating them as pets is generally frowned upon.

Feeding is one behaviour which featured heavily in the criticisms of the treatment of urban foxes by city residents. It was used as an example of the problematic tendency of urbanites to want to tame foxes and treat them as pets. A survey of Bristol residents in the early 1990s found that 10% regularly fed foxes (Baker, Funk, Harris, Newman, Saunders and White 2004). As we saw in chapter 7, opinion polls conducted even after several prominent fox attacks confirmed that the vast majority of urban dwellers appreciated foxes, and bearing in mind the limitations of television surveys, 30% of respondents to the survey during the 2012 *Foxes Live* documentary series admitted to feeding foxes (*The Independent on Sunday* 3/06/2012).

There are a variety of motivations for feeding urban foxes and other wildlife. Feeding is often a pragmatic means of medicating wild animals, removing the need for direct human contact. Bulbeck (2005), Lott (1988) and Steinhart (1980) argue that feeding is often motivated by a desire to express kindness and compassion, and this may be exacerbated when the animal in question is considered particularly attractive or cute. Writing about an ostensibly natural

human attraction to possums, Milton (2011:67) states that “[t]here is a widespread understanding among some scholars that humans are 'naturally' inclined to like cute furry animals. If this is so, specific cultural mechanisms may be needed to make people dislike possums when it is deemed necessary that they do.” She explains that cute, furry animals with big eyes have a tendency to activate mechanisms known as 'social releasers' that stimulate nurturing behaviour. Lott (1988) demonstrates that the hand-feeding of wild sheep also enhances the self-esteem of the feeder, as the sheep's choice to take the food is interpreted as a sign of trust. Similarly, the maintenance of bird feeders shares many of the benefits of pet ownership, by providing a sense of meaning, duty and companionship (Horvath and Roelans 1991). Speaking on the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme on 11 February 2013, Professor Stephen Harris explained that the feeding of foxes in particular may be related to the desire to coexist with wild animals in urban areas by taming them. The *BBC's Natural World: Unnatural History of London* documentary (18/06/2012) showed an elderly woman living on her own in a tall block of flats in London, who regularly fed a family of foxes. She would throw sausages from her window and had trained the foxes to sit in anticipation, praising them with the words 'good dog' whenever they obeyed the command. This habit, the narrator suggested, was about finding solace and a connection with nature, which was so often absent in urban living. When wild animals respond to humans, it brings immense joy, he explained.

The practice of feeding can also be compared with that of wildlife viewing, which as Knight (2009:167) explains, “rests on an underlying contradiction. Wild animals are generally human-averse [...]” The challenge of encountering wild animals in their own habitats, as opposed to in captivity, provides an added thrill. Aversion is often addressed by baiting an area with food to attract animals to a place where they can be watched. Feeding can contribute to habituation, which is defined as the waning of avoidance behaviours in response to repeated exposure to a neutral human presence (Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Stewart and Roy 2006). Feeding thus carries the “potential to manipulate wildlife distribution and behavior for close, benign, and extraordinary viewing experiences” (Gill 2002:222). However, the provision of food can go beyond encouraging animals to tolerate humans and may make them “positively

attracted to humans”, which can end in animal intrusion, where “the invitee becomes a trespasser” (Knight 2009: 177 and 180).

McNay (2002) and Herrero, Smith, DeBruyn, Gunther and Matt (2005) demonstrate that problematic carnivore behaviours are often exacerbated by food provisioning and habituation. As wildlife populations are encouraged in residential areas, the risk of negative human/wildlife interactions increases (see also Bounds and Shaw 1994, Kitchen, Gese and Schauster 2000, Lambert, Wielgus, Robinson, Katnik, Cruickshank, Clarke and Almack 2006). Just as urban carnivores acclimate to human presence, humans also become habituated to them in a process of 'co-habituation' (Zinn, Manfredo and Decker 2008). Feeding can pose risks to the animals themselves, not only through malnourishment but also because it encourages a dependence on human food sources that might not be sustainable (Green and Higginbottom 2001). Baker, Funk, Harris, Newman, Saunders and White (2004) demonstrate that the population of urban foxes in Bristol rose significantly as a result of human food provisioning. Breeding rates and fox population density may increase in areas where natural food sources are subsidised with anthropogenic foods, and as a result the size of fox territories may shrink (Harris 1981, Saunders, White, Harris and Rayner 1993). This increases the potential for conflict with foxes from neighbouring territories, as well as fouling in residential gardens. Curtis and Hadidian (2010:205) thus advise that “the deliberate feeding of wild carnivores, for entertainment purposes or out of some desire to be 'kind,' must be discouraged”.

9.8 Living cities

At the same time as the human/wildlife relationship helps us to understand the history of the city and the origins of anxieties expressed during the urban fox moral panic, urban wildlife also causes us to reconceptualise cities as ecosystems. Wundram (1981:168) explains that “[a]lthough the urban environment is often viewed as an artificial one, it is the natural habitat of a wide diversity of animal species that are thriving in coexistence with their unwitting human hosts”. The field of urban ecology has drawn attention to the process of synurbanisation, an increasing animal tolerance for human activity (Adams,

VanDruff and Luniak 2005, Ditchkoff et al. 2006). Cities cannot remain conceptualised as hostile environments because there are many animal species, termed 'synanthropic', which thrive there. Hinchliffe and Whatmore (2006:123) note that the UK has witnessed a 'greening' of urban policy in recent years, with a revaluing of sites previously dismissed as of low ecological value, such as brownfield land, derelict spaces and railway cuttings. They call for a reconceptualisation of cities as living spaces, "allied to a realignment of the politics of nature such that cities are appreciated as 'ecological disturbance regimes rather than ecological sacrifice zones' (Wolch, 1998) in which people are no longer considered inimical to nature, nor natures antithetical to cities" (Hinchliffe and Whatmore 2006:134). Others have begun to work on a 'transspecies urban theory', which takes seriously the interactions between human and animal ecologies in urban space (Wolch, West and Gaines 1995). "The city is the quintessential symbol of human ingenuity and handiwork, the triumph of the artificial, of the intentionally humanly created", argues Sabloff (2001:12), but cities also teem with animal life.

Foxes challenge the supposed antithesis between urban development and animal life. More significant than the limited physical threat they pose to humans, therefore, is the threat they pose to the myth of the city through their transgressive behaviour and deep status ambiguity. There are a variety of theories which explain the colonisation of British cities by foxes (Harris and Rayner 1986). The first is the population pressure hypothesis, which shares with the *Rural Exodus* frame discussed in earlier chapters the assumption that foxes were pushed out of rural areas or were breeding in such numbers that the countryside could no longer sustain the growing population. The second is the urban island hypothesis, which simply argues that foxes are well-suited to urban areas and there are no significant obstacles to their breeding there. Any explanation of the colonisation of urban areas must also take into account that urban sprawl brought humans into areas already occupied by foxes, so the movement went both ways. Urban sprawl and the birth of suburbia during the early decades of the twentieth century involved the building of the kind of low-density housing that would provide ample denning sites and food sources for foxes (Harris and Rayner 1986, Harris and Baker 2001). The data submitted for the *Foxes Live* survey confirms that residential gardens provide better habitat

for urban foxes than large parks and open green spaces (Scott, Berg, Tolhurst, Chauvenet, Smith, Neaves, Lochhead and Baker 2014). Southern English cities in particular were colonised by foxes in the 1930s (Harris and Woollard 1988), whereas many cities in the north of England only began to record the presence of foxes in the 1980s (Wilkinson and Smith 2001). Foxes had been traded at Leadenhall market in London for centuries (see chapter 2) before the animals themselves became established in the city. Velten (2013) explains that foxes eventually accessed the inner city by following new railway lines and roads.

Not long after they had made themselves at home in London, people started shooting them, beginning with organised fox shoots in Richmond Park in the 1930s and leading to a wider programme of fox control initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in the 1940s. Fox shoots took place in urban parks, on allotment sites and communal or waste lands (Teagle 1967). However, by the 1970s it had become apparent that shooting was doing little to reduce numbers. Several London boroughs decided to take on the job of killing urban foxes by trapping, shooting and gassing. Some, such as the borough of Bromley, even employed dedicated fox control officers whose sole task was to shoot urban foxes. However, towards the end of the 1970s most boroughs had abandoned this task as costs were mounting and control was proving ineffective (Harris 1985). Curtis and Hadidian (2010) explain that the indiscriminate culling of urban carnivores often has unintended consequences, including increasing breeding rates and litter sizes, destabilising territories and social groups and causing problem behaviours. Fox control was also proving increasingly unpopular, according to a survey conducted by the London borough of Bromley in 1979, which revealed that 93.4% of respondents objected to the killing of foxes on a local allotment site (Harris 1985). The urban fox population reached its highest point in the early 1980s but a mange epidemic in the 1990s resulted in enormous decline. In Bristol the density of the urban fox population was reduced by up to 95% within just two years (Baker, Newman and Harris 2001). Battersby (2005) shows that the national fox population, however, has remained stable since the mid-1990s, and that foxes have adapted perfectly to urban living.

9.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the origins and effects of media framings of the urban fox moral panic through an examination of many of the discursive themes that bound together the frames identified in earlier chapters. The discussion sought to ground discourse in the spatial dimensions of social life and highlight the significance of spatial context for the moralisation of animal behaviour and the ethical and physical visibility of animal bodies. It outlined the spatial ontologies of 'pests', 'vermin' and other transgressive animals and suggested that certain animals are defined as out-of-place as a result of a particular ideology of space. The ideology finds its expression through an historically-specific discourse of the Western city and is institutionalised by way of pest control and wildlife management industries which assert the spatial illegitimacy of certain animals through their practices. As we have seen, transgression gives rise to cultural anxieties and a desire for order-restoration. The urban fox moral panic is an expression of this need and sheds light on the history of human relations with urban animality in the context of changing sensitivities. However, as we saw in chapter 2, this is not the full story. In line with McRobbie and Thornton's (1995) emphasis on the claims-making significance of pressure groups, it was important to demonstrate the discursive similarities and interrelations between the urban fox moral panic and the long-standing debate on foxhunting. The urban fox moral panic therefore is representative of the conflict between different symbolic-moral universes and diverse actors have used this moral panic to create social solidarity.

CHAPTER 10. Conclusion: From Fox Attack to Moral Panic

There was a gradual development of concern about urban foxes expressed in the media over several decades leading up to the attacks on Isabella and Lola Koupparis. Fox behaviour had been talked about in the context of risk, although usually with reference to minor nuisances as opposed to physical threats to humans. The *Warning* phase featured articles predicting attacks on children, particularly in the centre-right and right-wing tabloids and broadsheets, whose fears were vindicated when the first fox attack story broke. The tabloids employed a rich vocabulary to describe the vulpine culprit, including words such as 'savage', 'snarling', 'skulking' and 'prowling'. The urban fox population was said to have exploded, with numbers cited by newspapers varying drastically and the most common piece of evidence given as the booming trade made by pest controllers in the wake of the attack. However, the latter is more a measure of concern than a measure of threat and gives an initial indication of the impact of media representations. Urban foxes, they emphasised, were also more visible, and even where there were no foxes to be seen, their presence was confirmed by the trails of destruction they left. The public had of course become sensitised to their presence, contributing to a change in the nature of human/fox interactions and control strategies.

Following the attack on the twins, the threshold of news coverage was lowered, previous and subsequent incidents were made to fit the original news theme and the latter was further developed, setting looping effects in motion. The fox attack news theme had developed into its own news value. Conservative newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *The Sun*, having broadened their focus to include previous incidents, fox attacks on adults, minor incidents without injury, and stories set in rural areas, wrote of a 'spate of attacks' and encouraged readers to send in their comments and experiences. By way of a correspondence assumption, heightened media coverage gave the impression of an escalation of incidents and an increased threat from urban foxes, who were said to be growing in number, size and brazenness. The Fieldsports Channel and *The Daily Telegraph* also seized the *Monster* frame, with the latter still perpetuating the claim that urban foxes were increasing in size many months after attention from other newspapers had

dropped off. Dominant frames (*Invasion, Infestation, Predator, Brazen, Diminished, Monster, Direct and Indirect Feeding, and Growing Threat*) elicited reactionary counter-frames (*Rural Exodus, Indigenous, Population Stability, Food Deprivation, Rarity, and Perspective*). Foxes should be scared of humans and these fox attacks had proved that they had lost their fear, so the argument went. Many of the tabloids, as well as *The Daily Telegraph*, subscribed to the *Predator* frame, suggesting that urban foxes intended to eat children. They were simultaneously cast as dirty, disease-ridden pests and diminished versions of their rural cousin and as powerful, sinister, calculated 'gangsters' stalking city streets in packs and launching malicious attacks on unsuspecting victims. Many of the frames identified in chapters 6 and 7 centred on whether foxes belonged in cities or not; their purported failure or ability to thrive was here used as evidence of their spatial (il)legitimacy. Given that foxes are similarly unwelcome in the countryside, this raises the question of where, if anywhere, foxes do belong.

The conservative *Daily Mail, Daily Express* and *The Daily Telegraph* acted as primary definers in identifying a second folk devil, 'animal rights extremists'. Much like the urban foxes they were defending with claims that this reeked of a constructed media hype, they were labelled 'scroungers' and urban degenerates. The reaction to the fox attacks was strong and insistent. Foxes had crossed the line and serious 'anti-fox' action was called for. Urban residents were derided for their misplaced sentimentalism and foxhunting advocates demanded to be heard. The ban on hunting was borne out of the same 'townie' attitude that had caused the proliferation of urban foxes, the conservative press argued. Over time, the voices of the foxhunting community grew stronger and media endorsements of their views became more blatant, particularly in *The Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*. Criticisms of urban ignorance, slovenliness, decay, decadence and dependency came to the fore. *The Daily Telegraph* was particularly dismissive of fox ecologists and scientists and together with the *Daily Express* devoted a smaller amount of space to the voices of fox defenders than other newspapers. The political allegiances of newspapers were more significant than their market segment in determining their reliance on pro- and anti-fox voices, confirming the hypothesis that foxes have become deeply party-political symbols. Scientists were castigated as

'foxites' and the label 'experts' often referred to pest controllers and fieldsports organisations in *The Daily Telegraph*, although they were often not explicit about their sources. Coexistence and human behaviour change was advocated by scientists, local authorities and animal protectionists, but dismissed as the 'soft option' and a distraction by others.

Of the actions called for following the attacks on the Koupparis twins and on Denny Dolan, few have yet materialised. Local councils took immediate symbolic action to trap foxes in the neighbourhoods of the victims and the controversy sparked a debate in parliament in the hope of prompting councils to do more. In the face of their inaction, residents across London began to take matters into their own hands and call-outs to pest controllers surged. Natural England also reported an increase in the use of illegal methods to kill urban foxes. The moral panic had succeeded in generating some level of genuine concern, although the various opinion polls summarised in earlier chapters undermine the suggestion that there was a consensus over the nature and severity of the threat. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of concern in newspapers was strong, particularly across the tabloid and right-wing broadsheet press. Opinion polls also identified a marked difference between Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour voters, the former being more adamant that stronger action should be taken to control urban foxes. Popular commentators and left-wing newspapers, particularly *The Guardian*, grew increasingly critical of media 'scare-mongering', giving rise in August 2010 to the Urban Foxhunters hoax, followed in Spring 2012 by the *Foxes Live* television series which sought to separate fact from fiction. It challenged the claim that the urban population was genuinely panicking about urban foxes and called for perspective. This in turn led to a series of pest control industry conferences and the formation of the Association of Urban Wildlife Professionals, with the aim of formulating an industry position and influencing the guidance offered by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health on urban foxes. However, to date there has not been a significant change in the management strategies adopted by local councils. The urban fox moral panic has reached a *Latency* stage. At the same time, there is a political stalemate with regard to the hunting ban, which is neither strongly enforced nor an urgent item on the agenda of the Conservative government, after it had to call off its attempts to amend the law in summer 2015. However, a

precedent has been set and there is potential for renewed media interest if another incident were to occur, particularly as the underlying tensions of which the moral panic was a vicarious expression are not resolved.

It is appropriate at this stage to revisit the evidence that this period of heightened media attention to urban foxes qualifies as a moral panic. As moral panic theory is applied to ever more varied cases, and there are now many more tools and concepts for their analysis and interpretation, and as the relationship between the media and the rest of society itself is changing, many contemporary critics of moral panic theory have asked where to draw the line between moral panic and other forms of media-driven anxiety, such as media hypes and moral crusades. The media and moral entrepreneurs are key features of all of these. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) have suggested that moral panics are different from moral crusades because they are representative of widespread public anxiety. However, as has been established, public concern and anxiety are difficult to prove and their relation to media coverage is also difficult to establish. Maneri (2013) argues that moral crusades and moral panics are distinguishable based on whether they are primarily orchestrated by campaigners and moral entrepreneurs or whether they are the outcome of more autonomous journalistic practices. In order to turn a moral crusade into a moral panic, it must be possible to mobilise a larger constituency of public opinion representing varied interests. This thesis has established the importance of both social movement claims-makers and the role of news values and journalistic norms in the British press.

The difference between moral panics and media hypes is more difficult to establish. Media hypes, like moral panics, are characterised by feedback loops, waves of news coverage and changing news thresholds. Vastermans, Yzermans and Dirkzwager (2005:111) summarise this as follows:

A news wave is created by these intensive news-making activities of the media and [is] then reinforced again and again by extensive coverage of the social actors' reactions, responding to the massive media attention to a topic. Once a topic gains a certain level of attention in the media, it attracts more attention, and because it attracts more attention, it becomes more newsworthy. This self-referential system creates positive feedback loops, expanding the news wave.

Fear and panic are common elements of contemporary news in general and are not reserved to moral panics (Altheide 2003). However, according to Maneri (2013), the figure of the folk devil, and the hostility directed at this character, plays a greater role in moral panics than it does in media hypes. Moral panics, therefore, could be considered a subcategory of media hypes.

The urban fox issue certainly contains all of the following common elements of a moral panic: “[s]tatements of alarm by broadcasters and glorification of wannabe experts [...] the use of poignant anecdotes in place of scientific evidence, the christening of isolated incidents as trends, [and] depictions of entire categories of people as innately dangerous” (Glassner 2009:208). The urban fox moral panic contained an easily demonised folk devil whose defenders themselves were castigated by the media, readily available moral entrepreneurs, links with other current issues and social conflicts, previous and subsequent incidents that could be incorporated to bolster the narrative of a growing threat, and the most innocent form of victim.

It is difficult to determine whether the moral panic denotes a genuine, growing threat from urban foxes, but a comparison with data on dog attacks yields some interesting insights. Dog bites are the most common cause of severe facial injuries in children. They disproportionately affect children under nine, who also account for two thirds of fatalities from dog bites (HSCIC 2015a), whereas the risk of being bitten by other mammals increases with age (HSCIC 2015b). From March 2014 to February 2015, 17.5 in every 100,000 children reported to hospital after being bitten by a dog, compared to just 3 admissions per 100,000 following bites by other mammals, according to Hospital Episodes Statistics published by the British Health & Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC 2015a). The total number of dog bite admissions in the London area during this

period was 689, compared with 249 bites from other mammals (HSCIC 2015b). The vast majority of overall dog and other mammal attack injuries were recorded as an 'open wound of wrist and hand', although the main injury (82.5% of primary diagnoses) to children under nine following a dog attack was an 'open wound of head' (HSCIC 2015a). The data additionally shows that hospital admissions resulting from dog attacks increased by 76% in ten years and the same percentage increase was witnessed for admissions following bites or strikes by other mammals. Total admissions increased 25% during this period (HSCIC 2015a).

It follows that there has either been a genuine, substantial increase in animal attacks, or people are simply more likely to report to hospital following such an incident than they were before (or a combination of both). It would be easy to interpret this as a general attack epidemic, but given that the percentage increase is identical for dogs and other mammals, it seems sensible to conclude that this may have more to do with risk perception, including concerns about disease transmission, for example. Hospitals and the police record dog attacks, whereas they do not keep separate records for fox attacks, which also emphasises the much greater significance of dog attacks compared to fox attacks and calls into question whether media portrayals of the urban fox issue gave a proportionate portrayal of the physical threat from foxes.

In addition to assessing the extent to which the urban fox issue meets the criteria for moral panic, it is worth asking what the moral panic model and the tools it provides have contributed to an analysis of this social phenomenon. Moral panic theory shines a light on the definers of deviant and ostensibly threatening conditions and behaviours and illuminates the values, fears and moral antagonisms that give rise to moral panics as their acting-out expression. The events that spark a moral panic “are damaging in themselves – but also merely warning signs of the real, much deeper and more prevalent condition” (Cohen 2002:vii-viii). Moral panic theory thus encourages analysts to critically examine both the overt concerns expressed by moral entrepreneurs and the underlying social, cultural and economic factors that account for a heightened perception of threat and attribution to a folk devil. Moral panics can be seen as vicarious expressions of anxieties surrounding, for example, structures of

human/animal relations in urban and rural areas and act as “a consensus-generating envoy for the dominant ideology” (Ungar 2001:284).

This thesis provided a detailed exposition of the ways in which aberrant characteristics, behaviours and intentions were attributed to the urban fox folk devil, and generated a typology of frames that were connected by significant discursive themes: visibility, transgression, intention, belonging, authenticity and disgust. The discussion of these themes was situated within an examination of a variety of spatial ideologies, in addition asking how animals themselves perform, destabilise, transgress and resist human spatial orderings. This discussion highlighted the importance of the spatial context of animal agency for the moralisation of fox behaviour and the ethical and physical visibility of animal bodies.

Chapter 2 provided a detailed social history of foxhunting to illustrate how foxes are also tangled up in long-standing conflicts over appropriate human/animal relations in the countryside. The foxhunting debate and the organisations in favour of repealing the Hunting Act provided much of the discursive material for the urban fox moral panic. Chapter 2 also drew attention to the ways in which pro-hunt campaigners have used the urban fox moral panic in service of their agenda. In fact, the moral panic was called into service on both sides of the foxhunting debate, including by those who suggested that it was part of an ongoing historical demonisation of foxes. Foxhunting legitimations have changed against the backdrop of changes in the nature of British class structure, conceptions of Englishness and national identity, growing urbanisation and other social trends, as well as in response to popular and increasingly verbalised criticisms of the pastime. The chapter outlined the rise of the pest defence of hunting. The fieldsports community was a key moral entrepreneur in the urban fox moral panic and they, along with the pest control industry, have a strong vested interest in manipulating fear and influencing urban attitudes to foxes. It is reasonable to conclude that the moral panic was precipitated and furthered at least partly by the parallel debate about foxhunting. Molloy (2011:13) notes that “[m]edia discourses are important in sustaining a range of constructions of animals that are connected, appropriated or co-opted

by other systems of production and so play a role in the normalization of particular practices and relations”.

This thesis also advances moral panic theory by operationalising Maneri's (2013) five-stage model in combination with Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of discourse, yielding a theoretical and methodological framework for the analysis of moral panics in the media. Maneri's (2013:171-172) model is based on the recognition that “[c]onsensus, disproportionality and concern – the most discussed attributes of a moral panic – can be understood in less controversial fashion if they are considered to be properties of the dynamics of mediated discourse”. It proposes that there is no great need to prove disproportionality or irrationality and argues for a focus on elements of discourse and the discursive amplification of the threat from a purported folk devil.

Many forms of discourse analysis neglect the importance of genre or what Fairclough labels the 'discourse practice' dimension, in other words the dynamics of production, distribution and consumption of media texts. The thesis thus discussed the particular characteristics of the British press, the role of readership and other trends, the influence of politics, and the elements of the British print media that are conducive to the generation of moral panics. Attending to the tendencies of the news media to exclude and amplify certain voices is particularly important in this moral panic because the voice of the animal folk devil is immediately muted. CDA therefore focuses on the socio-historical context and institutional surroundings of discursive events and “involves a principled and transparent shunting back and forth between the microanalysis of texts using varied tools of linguistics, semiotics, and literary analysis and the macroanalysis of social formations, institutions, and power relations that these texts index and construct” (Luke 2002:100). CDA is “an approach or attitude rather than a step by step method” (Huckin 1997:1), and corpus analysis tools were incorporated to add a quantitative dimension and provide an alternative way into the data.

Moral panic theory also asks how social control itself generates deviance. Bringing animals into moral panic theory has made it possible to demonstrate that the phenomenon of deviance amplification transcends the species barrier. Arguably more significant than its power to cause an escalation in deviant behaviour was the inclusion of peripheral, similar and precursory events and behaviours and the change in meanings attributed to them, akin to the signification spirals identified by Hall et al. (1978). Bringing animals in, however, also necessitates returning to the points made in earlier chapters about marginalising animal voices. Lumby and Funnell (2011:279) note that “contemporary moral panic theorists are often too narrowly focused on either refining the sociological framings of moral panic theory or, alternatively, on applying that theory to case studies without first asking how the theory might be used to frame strategic interventions into public debate and policy”. They advocate that moral panic theorists seize the opportunity to “not simply stand by when moral panics erupt but [...] be prepared to use their knowledge to make a difference” (p.288). Their call to “instrumentalize moral panic theory” (p.279) and launch “strategic interventions” (p.282) shares with Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Animal Studies an emphasis on the importance of sociological engagement. While I acknowledge the criticisms made of discourse analysis with regard to animal agency, I therefore want to reiterate that this thesis was not intended to perpetuate the exclusion of animal agency but rather to draw attention to the unequal power relations between humans and other animals and to the powers of discourse in making animals ‘killable’ and marginalising their suffering. A lot of this research was conducted a time when the moral panic was in full swing and I was able to voice my developing analysis to many of the key moral entrepreneurs themselves, including prominent fox ecologists and pest controllers during industry events and pro- and anti-hunt campaigners at events organised by the League Against Cruel Sports, such as their Foxycology conferences in 2015 and 2016. It is hoped that this thesis has prompted insight and promoted reflection and can contribute to an improvement in human/vulpine relations.

APPENDIX 1 Newspaper ownership and political orientation

Newspaper	Ownership	Political orientation	Party support in 2010 General Election	Party support in 2015 General Election
The Guardian / The Observer	Scott Trust Limited (i)	centre-left	Liberal Democrat (tactical voting to prevent a Conservative victory) (x)	Labour Party (also Green Party and Liberal Democrat Party in non-Labour marginals) (xi)
The Independent / The Independent on Sunday	Alexander and Evgeny Lebedev (ii)	centrist (economically liberal)	Labour Party and Liberal Democrat Party (tactical voting to prevent a Conservative victory) (x)	Conservative / Liberal Democrat coalition (Sunday paper gave no preference) (xi)
The Times / The Sunday Times	News Corporation (Rupert Murdoch) (iii)	conservative	Conservative Party (x)	Conservative Party (xii)
The Daily Telegraph / The Sunday Telegraph	Press Holdings Limited (Barclay brothers) (iv)	conservative	Conservative Party (x)	Conservative Party (xi)
Daily Mail / Mail on Sunday	Daily Mail and General Trust (Lord Rothermere) (v)	conservative, populist	Conservative Party (x)	Conservative Party (xi)

Daily Mirror / Sunday Mirror	Trinity Mirror (vi)	centre-left, populist	Labour Party (x)	Labour Party (xiii)
Daily Express / Sunday Express	Northern & Shell (Richard Desmond) (vii)	right-wing, conservative	Conservative Party (x)	UK Independence Party (UKIP) (xi)
Daily Star / Daily Star Sunday	Northern & Shell (Richard Desmond) (viii)	generally non-political	no preference given (x)	no preference given (xi)
The Sun / Sun on Sunday	News Corporation (Rupert Murdoch) (iii)	conservative, populist	Conservative Party (x)	Conservative Party (UK), SNP (Scotland) (xi)
The People	Trinity Mirror Group (vi)	centre-left, populist	no preference given (x)	Labour Party (xi)
i	Johnston Press since 2015, previously Lebedev family (ix)	centrist	newspaper not in existence at the time (x)	no preference given (xi)

Sources: i) *The Guardian* (2015), ii) *London Evening Standard* (25/03/2010), iii) News Corp (2017), iv) *The Daily Telegraph* (23/06/2004), v) BBC (04/10/2013), vi) Trinity Mirror plc (2017), vii) BBC (12/02/2004), viii) Northern & Shell (2017), ix) PrintWeek (24/03/2016), x) *The Guardian* (2010), xi) International Business Times (05/05/2015), xii) *The Times* (06/05/2015), xiii) *Daily Mirror* (06/05/2015)

APPENDIX 2. Newspapers included in the main sample

Newspaper	Publication frequency	Nexis archival coverage start date
The Guardian	Daily; Monday to Saturday	14/07/1984
The Observer	Weekly; on Sunday	07/10/1992
The Independent	Daily; Monday to Saturday	19/09/1988
The Independent on Sunday	Weekly; on Sunday	19/09/1988
The Times	Daily; Monday to Saturday	01/07/1985
The Sunday Times	Weekly; on Sunday	01/07/1985
The Daily Telegraph	Daily; Monday to Saturday	30/10/2000
The Sunday Telegraph	Weekly; on Sunday	30/10/2000
Daily Mail	Daily; Monday to Saturday	01/01/1992
The Mail on Sunday	Weekly; on Sunday	01/01/1992
Daily Mirror	Daily; Monday to Saturday	29/05/1995
Sunday Mirror	Weekly; on Sunday	29/05/1995
Daily Express	Daily; Monday to Saturday	02/10/1999
Sunday Express	Weekly; on Sunday	02/10/1999
Daily Star	Daily; Monday to Saturday	15/12/2000
Daily Star Sunday	Weekly; on Sunday	15/09/2002
The Sun	Daily; Monday to Saturday	31/12/1999
The Sun on Sunday	Weekly; on Sunday	03/12/2002
The People	Weekly; on Sunday	02/01/1994
i – Independent Print	Daily; Monday to Friday	28/10/2010

APPENDIX 3. Newspaper articles included in the sample

Main sample

Article title	Newspaper	Date
Why does shopping always bring out the worst in people?	The Times	01/01/2014
'We intended The Fox to be a failure'; Will Hodgkinson speaks to the duo behind the song that has become this year's biggest YouTube video, with 292m views	The Times	23/12/2013
Weekend: Reposection: By Lionel Shriver: Illustrations by Michael Kirkham	The Guardian	21/12/2013
Jack's the panto lad to beat - oh yes he is!	The Times	03/12/2013
Death-Smash Peril As Foxes Eat Brakes	Daily Star	15/11/2013
Tech Monthly: My favourite gadgets	The Observer	10/11/2013b
Outdoors: Chris Packham Naturalist	The Observer	10/11/2013a
Comment: An omen for our times: Humans seek stories of disaster, from dying ravens to autumn storms, to reassure us of survival	The Guardian	29/10/2013
Viewing Guide	The Times	29/10/2013
-	The Observer	27/10/2013
Mystery of the wild... Britain's foxes are in decline	The Sunday Telegraph	27/10/2013
Picks of the Day	The Sun	26/10/2013b
The A to Z of Autumnwatch	The Sun	26/10/2013a
Viewing Guide	The Times	26/10/2013
A wry portrait of a creature which divides the nation; Last night on television	The Daily Telegraph	23/10/2013b
Foxes don't harm children, insists BBC filmmaker	The Daily Telegraph	23/10/2013a
G2: Television: Last night's TV: The final's pretzels and cake weren't up to much - but Bake Off continues to rise	The Guardian	23/10/2013
Haters, huggers and hunters	The Times	23/10/2013
Today's TV: SOAP UPDATE	Daily Mirror	22/10/2013
Documentary	The Daily Telegraph	22/10/2013
What's Hot To Watch Today	Daily Star	22/10/2013
Picks of the Day	Daily Express	22/10/2013
Viewing Guide	The Times	22/10/2013
Ones To Watch	Daily Star Sunday	20/10/2013
Documentary Fox Wars BBC1, 10.35pm	The Observer	20/10/2013
Tuesday; Today's Highlights	The Sunday Telegraph	20/10/2013
DON'T MISS...; We love BEST TV	Daily Mirror	19/10/2013
WHAT TO WATCH	The Daily Telegraph	19/10/2013
Ones To Watch	Daily Star	19/10/2013
The Top Ten; Our Pick of the Best Shows on TV This Week	The Sun	19/10/2013b
Brush Off!; Urban Foxes Have Driven Granny Janet To The Edge...	The Sun	19/10/2013a
Viewing Guide	The Times	19/10/2013
Zoos aren't, and can never be, the natural world; Animals in captivity	The Independent	17/10/2013
Curry favour if filthy foxes clean up act	The People	13/10/2013

Feeding leftovers to 'beautiful' urban foxes; Letters to the Editor	The Daily Telegraph	10/10/2013
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Ohio to Somerset: the National express; For brainy, bombastic rock the National can't be beaten-and this year Glastonbury is set to witness their OK Computer moment, says Will Hodgkinson	The Times	26/06/2010
Bleak view of Christine	The Sun	24/06/2010
AFTER THEIR ORDEAL, FOX ATTACK FAMILY SMILE AGAIN	Daily Mail	21/06/2010
FOX MAULS BOY, 3, IN SCHOOL PLAYGROUND; Toddler bitten and scratched in new attack horror	The Sun	21/06/2010
Rendezvous with Reynard	The Sunday Telegraph	20/06/2010
Utterly foxed by the animal rights brigade	Daily Express	19/06/2010
The Guide: THE POPULIST: THE COLUMN THAT'S PRAYING FOR GLASTO SUNSHINE	The Guardian	19/06/2010
TWINS IN FOX ATTACK ORDEAL ARE REUNITED	Daily Mail	18/06/2010
Return of the weekly rubbish collection; Most homes oppose two-week bin collections	The Daily Telegraph	18/06/2010
Simon Hoggart's sketch Lords in the pink over urban foxes	The Guardian	18/06/2010
THE TERRIFYING NIGHT I, TOO, WAS ATTACKED	Daily Mail	17/06/2010
When humans are the monsters we fear	The Daily Telegraph	16/06/2010
MIDNIGHT, OUTSIDE THE HOME OF THE TODDLERS MAULED	Daily Mail	15/06/2010
TO THE POINT; YOUR LETTERS	Daily Mirror	15/06/2010
FOX FAMILY GETS POLICE GUARD AFTER WEB ATTACKS	Daily Mail	14/06/2010
Animal rights activists threaten fox attack mother	The Daily Telegraph	14/06/2010b

Unusual deterrent to combat unwanted foxes	The Daily Telegraph	14/06/2010a
POLICE GUARD FOR THE MUM OF FOX TWINS; Fears grow over animal rights thugs	Daily Star	14/06/2010
Fox attack family under police guard after activist threat	Daily Express	14/06/2010
FOX MOTHER THREATENED	Mail on Sunday	13/06/2010
URBAN WILDLIFE: Foxes are only part of the rural exodus to the towns and cities	The Observer	13/06/2010
Fox cull would be a 'tragedy', claims Lumley; MANDRAKE	The Sunday Telegraph	13/06/2010
Oi, townies - stop treating Mr Fox as a cuddlesome pet	The Sunday Times	13/06/2010
AGITATED? I AM!	Sunday Mirror	13/06/2010
FOX VICTIM LOLA COMES HOME... BEARING HER AWFUL WOUNDS	Daily Mail	12/06/2010
Bandaged and scarred, but one fox attack baby is home; Nine-month-old twins Lola is allowed out of hospital, as more incidents come to light	The Daily Telegraph	12/06/2010d
The temptation to take revenge on urban foxes	The Daily Telegraph	12/06/2010c
Our slapdash society; Britain's once efficient government is buried under targets, needless laws and impossible expectations, says Dominic Sandbrook	The Daily Telegraph	12/06/2010b
OUTFOXED; As events this week have highlighted, urban foxes are bolder than ever, but rooting them out of our streets and gardens will be virtually impossible. Iain Hollingshead investigates the shadowy world of the city fox-hunter	The Daily Telegraph	12/06/2010a
Reynard has always had a mean streak	Daily Express	12/06/2010
National: Simon Hoggart's week: Plate of nibbles gives food for thought	The Guardian	12/06/2010
IN PURSUIT OF LONDON'S PUBLIC ENEMY NO.1; Andy McSmith finds a neighbourhood in shock following this week's fox attack	The Independent	12/06/2010b
It's galling when the rich tell us to tighten our belts; Notebook	The Independent	12/06/2010a
CRACKDOWN ON URBAN FOXES	Daily Mail	11/06/2010
Call-outs surge as urban foxes lose fear of humans; Fortnightly bin collection blamed by pest expert	The Daily Telegraph	11/06/2010d
Urban foxes are thriving because so much waste food is not in dustbins	The Daily Telegraph	11/06/2010c
Fancy rearing chickens? Get ready to watch the feathers fly; Urban poultryfanciers should beware of the not-so-fantastic Mr Fox	The Daily Telegraph	11/06/2010b
Foxes are losing fear of humans	The Daily Telegraph	11/06/2010a
They are not all so sweet and cuddly	Daily Express	11/06/2010b
Third fox caught at attack site	Daily Express	11/06/2010a
G2: The readers' room: What you thought of G2 this week. Mixed feelings about the World Cup, but fresh bread, coffee and a Bieber-free internet all won your praise	The Guardian	11/06/2010b

G2: Alexander Chancellor: There are calls for a cull of urban foxes - but it won't work unless townspeople learn to distrust them as much as country folk	The Guardian	11/06/2010a
DON'T LASH OUT AT FOXES; YOUR LETTERS	Daily Mirror	11/06/2010
I woke to find fox standing on my chest, says girl	The Daily Telegraph	10/06/2010d
Cub pictured on the patio as babies lay bleeding upstairs	The Daily Telegraph	10/06/2010c
Today at the AEGON Championships; MatchFocus	The Daily Telegraph	10/06/2010b
Don't be too hasty to condemn foxes to cull	The Daily Telegraph	10/06/2010a
Before a vengeful nation [...]	Daily Express	10/06/2010
The world won't stop to let Britain get off; The PM tells us that our way of life has got to change - but I fear his 'change' is about returning to the past	The Times	10/06/2010
ATTACK THAT HAS BAFFLED THE EXPERTS	Daily Mail	09/06/2010
London's nightlife is getting wilder than ever	The Daily Telegraph	09/06/2010c
Treating foxes as lovable animals means that they no longer fear humans	The Daily Telegraph	09/06/2010b
Deal with fox menace now, says mother of mauled twins; Family fears baby girls could be scarred for life as mayor backs calls to cull the urban scavengers	The Daily Telegraph	09/06/2010a
SHOULD URBAN FOXES BE CULLED?	Daily Express	09/06/2010e
Foxes are born killers that don't belong in cities	Daily Express	09/06/2010d
Twin girls mauled in cots by fox have 'life changing injuries'; FIRST PICTURE	Daily Express	09/06/2010c
If you want rid of foxes, guns cannot be banned	Daily Express	09/06/2010b
Fox warning proved right; OFF THE LEASH	Daily Express	09/06/2010a
OUR FOX TOTS ARE SCARRED FOR LIFE; DISTRAUGHT PARENTS ARE AT BEDSIDES	Daily Mail	09/06/2010
STILL ON THE PROWL	The Sun	09/06/2010c
SCARRED FOR LIFE; FOXES STALKING EVERY SUBURB ACROSS UK; Mauled twins' life-changing injuries	The Sun	09/06/2010b
STILL ON THE PROWL	The Sun	09/06/2010a
Most read at thetimes.co.uk	The Times	09/06/2010
FANTASTIC? NO, MR FOX IS A VICIOUS PEST	Daily Mail	08/06/2010
Cull foxes now before they attack again, say experts	The Daily Telegraph	08/06/2010b
It's time to clear foxes from our streets; The horrific mauling of two babies must herald an all-out offensive against these predators, says Clive Aslet	The Daily Telegraph	08/06/2010a
Urban foxes are a total menace	Daily Express	08/06/2010b
FOX ATTACK WAS LIKE A HORROR MOVIE; Mum's nightmare Twins covered in blood	Daily Express	08/06/2010a

G2: Invasion of the foxes: It's the noisy, scavenging pest that is now responsible for a shocking attack on two babies asleep in their beds. But how fair is our view of the urban fox - and is it actually any different from its country cousin?	The Guardian	08/06/2010b
Mother of twins in fox attack tells of 'horror film' injuries: Babies in cot covered in blood after being mauled Both girls remain in hospital after surgery	The Guardian	08/06/2010a
The curious incident of the fox in the night; The hunt is on for a fox that apparently attacked two baby girls in their bedroom. Andy McSmith reports	The Independent	08/06/2010
THE RISE AND RISE OF VULPES VULPES*; *THE RED FOX AND HOW IT HAS BECOME OUR TOWNIE NEIGHBOUR	Daily Mirror	08/06/2010
Fox started me out.. it would ot leave our poor girls; SAVAGED TWINS: PARENTS' NIGHTMARE FIND	The Sun	08/06/2010b
Wily beasts thrive in UK	The Sun	08/06/2010a
A brush with danger; Reports that an urban fox has mauled two babies in their cots don't surprise Janice Turner	The Times	08/06/2010b
Foxes: separating the facts from the fantastic	The Times	08/06/2010a
Baby twins mauled in bedroom by urban fox	Daily Express	07/06/2010
TWIN BABIES MAULED BY A FOX; GIRLS ATTACKED AS THEY SLEPT IN BED	Daily Mirror	07/06/2010
Fox attacks twin baby sisters sleeping in bedroom	The Times	07/06/2010b
Twin girls are mauled by a fox in upstairs bedroom	The Times	07/06/2010a
PASS ON THE GRASS	Daily Mail	05/06/2010
The persecutors of our birds of prey get off too lightly: The courts are far too lenient when passing sentence on cases of wildlife crime	The Observer	16/05/2010
Something For The Weekend	The Independent	17/04/2010
FURY AS CRICKET CLUB CALLS IN MARKSMAN TO GUN DOWN A FOX	Daily Mail	14/04/2010
Fox 'digs up grave'	The Sun	14/04/2010
DON'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YOU...	Daily Mail	29/03/2010
Culling plan would cause an outcry from the public	Daily Express	24/03/2010b
LETTER OF THE DAY - We have to tackle the fox menace	Daily Express	24/03/2010a
OUTFOXING PREDATORS IS NOT EASY	Daily Express	20/03/2010
YES, I MISS SPARKY AND SCRATCH BUT I FEAR FOR THE SANITY OF THOSE WHO GRIEVE FOR THEIR PETS AS MUCH AS THEIR GRANNY	Daily Mail	19/03/2010

Comment: Votes for dogs may appeal, but giving rights to animals ends in moral chaos: Better to assert the human qualities of kindness to all creatures and avoid unnecessary pain to any of them	The Guardian	19/03/2010
Subversion of the natural order	The Observer	14/03/2010
MORE THEATRE: More in languor than in sorrow: THE MAIN REVIEW: Coward's classic comedy sparkles and soars, a steely King Lear swirls with robust performances, and a spooky new play elicits a gasp from the stalls [...]	The Observer	07/03/2010
G2: Arts: Review of reviews: Film: The Wolfman: Dir. Joe Johnston	The Guardian	15/02/2010
On a slithery slope	The Sunday Times	14/02/2010
Fiction; in short	The Times	13/02/2010
Film & Music: Film reviews: Runt of the litter: Benicio del Toro gets bestial in this poor remake: The Wolfman 2/5	The Guardian	12/02/2010
The future is here... and it's not what we predicted: WHAT WE PREDICTED FOR THE CITY OF THE FUTURE: Twenty years ago, the Observer magazine predicted what London would look like in 2010. A team of experts foresaw futuristic travel, machines to [...]	The Observer	24/01/2010
Tributes to a furry fare-dodger; young times Chloe Lambert remembers a cat who preferred four wheels to four paws	The Times	20/01/2010
THE BOAR WAR; VILLAGE INVADED BY RAVENOUS WILD PORKERS	Daily Mirror	13/01/2010
FANTASTIC MR URBAN FOX	Daily Mail	14/12/2009
IS HE OFF TO BASIL-DON?	The Sun	08/12/2009
Reviews	The Daily Telegraph	18/11/2009
COUNTRY; DIARY	The Sunday Telegraph	15/11/2009
G2: Shortcuts: Pets: My quest to tame an urban fox	The Guardian	02/11/2009
Statesman or Salesman?; Election countdown The state of play Why his speech failed to inspire The Tories had a good conference - and appear set fair for the general election. But there are nagging doubts after the leader's address. Jane Merrick reports	The Independent on Sunday	11/10/2009
Online novel; Braving the wilds of The Mall; A taxi ride to Birdcage Walk and a stroll in St James's Park were, for William and Freddie de la Hay, every bit as exciting as a trip to Africa's unchartered Serengeti	The Daily Telegraph	10/10/2009
Townie; You're better off being a cat	The Times	26/09/2009
BRUSH WITH URBAN FOXES; WILDLIFE	Daily Mirror	23/09/2009
Urban foxes keep a higher profile than country cousins	The Times	23/09/2009
Yobs cut fox heads	The Sun	15/09/2009
Climb every mountain - and search for a store	The Times	07/09/2009
Townie; Learn to love all wildlife	The Times	05/09/2009

Reply: Letters and emails: Seagulls, the urban foxes of the skies	The Guardian	24/08/2009c
Reply: Letters and emails: Seagulls, the urban foxes of the skies	The Guardian	24/08/2009b
Reply: Letters and emails: Seagulls, the urban foxes of the skies	The Guardian	24/08/2009a
WORD ON; THE STREET; If you're buying, now's the time to negotiate hard	The Daily Telegraph	15/08/2009
Down on the farm - in leafy Surbiton; The latest trend is for homegrown honey, but why stop there? How about turning your garden into an urban farm, says Tom Whipple	The Times	06/08/2009
National: Hi honey I'm home - the new hobby that's creating a buzz in Britain's towns and cities: New plastic hive promises affordable beekeeping: Membership of local associations thriving	The Guardian	05/08/2009
National: Simon Hoggart's week: Duckworth and Lewis save the day	The Guardian	18/07/2009
Health and safety kills off children's sandpits	The Daily Telegraph	06/06/2009
Foxes spreading bug that kills dogs	Daily Express	25/05/2009
Clearing urban mess; Letters to the Editor	The Times	14/05/2009b
Clearing urban mess; Letters to the Editor	The Times	14/05/2009a
Trouble with foxes; Letters to the Editor	The Times	12/05/2009
Cherish your foxes as status symbols	The Times	09/05/2009
And you thought they were just our furry friends...	The Observer	26/04/2009
Spring has sprung - so make a clean sweep	The Times	14/04/2009
IN THEIR NATURAL AGYTAT	The Sun	07/04/2009
A tidal wave of schmaltz engulfs Mother's Day; new releases	The Times	13/03/2009
Are foxes digging up your bulbs?	The Daily Telegraph	09/03/2009
Pets? No, foxes should be driven to extinction	The Daily Telegraph	07/03/2009
URBAN; FOX COUNT; Brave city foxes curl up in the cat basket	The Daily Telegraph	06/03/2009
Have you got a 'hands-free pet' in your garden?; URBAN; FOX COUNT	The Daily Telegraph	05/03/2009
Fox mange can spread to pets	The Daily Telegraph	04/03/2009
Households call in fox trappers once a week	The Daily Telegraph	03/03/2009
City foxes thrive after cuts to litter collections; URBAN; FOX COUNT	The Daily Telegraph	02/03/2009
Foxes may be sly, but Telegraph readers will have their number	The Daily Telegraph	28/02/2009
We started a new life in Spain in just two weeks; Letting this family's six-bedroom home in Putney covers their mortgage and pays for renting a villa near Barcelona	Mail on Sunday	01/02/2009
Townie; Cool urban chicks	The Times	31/01/2009
Squatter otter sparks Dublin zoo chaos	The Sunday Times	18/01/2009

MEET YOUR NEW NEIGHBOURS; They're noisy, filthy, violent ... and they're moving into a street near you. No, not marauding teenagers, but the seagulls invading Britain's inland towns by their thousands	Daily Mail	10/01/2009
Don't fret! good to a worrier; As a survey reveals we waste 6 1/2years of our lives feeding anxious, one self- confessed neurotic says	Daily Mail	02/01/2009

Additional newspaper articles

Article title	Newspaper	Date
General Election 2015: YOUR chance to change the future of Britain and send the Tories packing	Daily Mirror	06/05/2015
Britain's Vital Choice	The Times	06/05/2015
David Cameron in move to relax ban on fox hunting	Daily Express	06/03/2014
Block this 'cynical' bid to weaken hunt legislation	Leicester Mercury	05/11/2013
Foxhunting season expected to attract hundreds of first-timers	The Guardian	01/11/2013
Cameron signals the return of fox-hunting	Western Morning News	15/10/2013
Call to allow packs of hunting hounds flush out foxes	Gloucestershire Echo	15/10/2013
Bring back fox-hunting: Owen Paterson reopens row over controversial 'sport'	Daily Express	21/03/2013
Stop hounding Britain's urban foxes	The Guardian	07/06/2012
Lebedev family buys Independent in deal to secure paper's future	London Evening Standard	25/03/2010
Legal rule helps hounds survive	The Guardian	09/09/2004
Barclay brothers buy Telegraph group	The Daily Telegraph	23/06/2004
407,791 voices cry freedom	The Daily Telegraph	23/09/2002
Duncan Smith to lead the Tory battalions	The Daily Telegraph	19/09/2002
Closing in for the kill	The Guardian	22/03/2002
Calf? I nearly died	The Observer	29/04/2001
Letters to the Editor: Questions unanswered by Woodward case	The Guardian	03/11/1997
Twitchy trigger fingers	The Guardian	18/11/1996
Alarm over urban foxes 'ill founded'	The Guardian	12/11/1996
Amateur Countryman	The Guardian	06/08/1994
Tails of the city	The Guardian	07/01/1994
A Country Diary	The Guardian	04/05/1990
Television/Radio: BBC-1: Wildlife on One	The Guardian	10/06/1981
An everyday story of the city fox	The Guardian	03/10/1978
Miscellany	The Manchester Guardian	15/02/1912

Online editions

Article Title	Newspaper	URL	Date published	Last accessed
Can shooting badgers be right if shooting foxes is wrong?	The Guardian	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/damian-carrington-blog/2013/jul/10/shooting-badgers-right-foxes-wrong	10/07/2013w	27/06/2014
Boy has finger torn off by urban fox: Animals stalk scene of baby savaging	Daily Mirror	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/boy-has-finger-torn-off-by-urban-fox-1680284	11/02/2013w	25/05/2013
Mother had to kick urban fox to stop it dragging her baby out of the house	The Daily Telegraph	http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/9861552/Mother-had-to-kick-urban-fox-to-stop-it-dragging-her-baby-out-of-the-house.html	10/02/2013w	25/05/2013
15st man mugged by a fox	The Sun	https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/432613/15st-man-mugged-by-a-fox/	08/03/2012w	25/05/2013
Sick urban foxhunters beat animal to death with cricket bat	Daily Mirror	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/sick-urban-foxhunters-beat-animal-239319	30/02/2012w	25/05/2013
Look out suburbia – it's the fantastic monster fox	The Sunday Times	http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/Environment/article496617.ece	2/02/2011w	25/05/2013
How urban foxes came to hunt us	Daily Express	http://www.express.co.uk/expressyourself/201462/How-urban-foxes-came-to-hunt-us	24/09/2010w	25/05/2013
Who are the real animals?	MailOnline	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1291353/The-animal-rights-fanatics-benefits-left-fox-attack-family-needing-police-protection.html	2/07/2010w	25/05/2013
Fox mauls boy in playground	The Sun	http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/3022078/Fox-mauls-boy-in-playground.html	21/06/2010w	25/05/2013
Twins reunited: Second fox attack sister returns home swaddled in bandages	MailOnline	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1287379/Twins-reunited-Second-fox-attack-sister-returns-home-swaddled-bandages.html	18/06/2010w	25/05/2013

The terrifying night I, too, was attacked by a fox in my home	MailOnline	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1287256/The-terrifying-night-I-attacked-fox-home.html	17/06/2010w	25/05/2013
Agitated about foxes? I am.	Daily Mirror	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/agitated-about-foxes-i-am-228258	13/06/2010w	25/05/2013
Foxes still on the prowl in Hackney, East London, where twins were attacked	The Sun	http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/3006016/Foxes-still-on-prowl-in-Hackney-East-London-where-twins-were-attacked.html	9/06/2010w	25/05/2013
Fox attack mother demands action against urban menace	The Daily Telegraph	http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/7810883/Fox-attack-mother-demands-action-against-urban-menace.html	8/06/2010w	25/05/2013
Fantastic? No, Mr Fox is a vicious pest	MailOnline	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1284836/Hackney-twins-fox-attack-Fantastic-No-Mr-Fox-vicious-pest.html	08/06/2010w	25/05/2013

APPENDIX 4. Documentaries

Programme Title	Channel	Airing Date
Urban Fox Attack	More4	03/07/ 2010
Foxes live: Wild In The City	Channel 4 and More4	30/04/2012– 09/05/2012
BBC Natural World: Unnatural History of London	BBC Two	18 /06/2012
Fox Wars	BBC One	22/10/2013
Autumnwatch	BBC Two	30/10/2013 and 01/11/2013

APPENDIX 5. SketchEngine Word Sketches over a two-month period following the attack on the twins, for tabloid and broadsheet subcorpora

fox (*noun*)
 KoupparisTabloid freq = 496 (17,042.91 per million)

object of 163 2.60	subject of 236 4.50	modifier 143 0.90	and/or 26 0.60	pp_obj by 26 12.50
kill 8 10.27	be 83 10.90	urban 73 13.20	blood 3 11.06	maul 11 11.98
see 8 10.17	have 30 10.79	more 5 9.78	gun 2 10.91	savage 3 10.82
say 9 9.87	maul 15 10.68	rural 4 9.78	yesterday 2 9.48	attack 3 9.97
chase 5 9.81	attack 12 10.32	other 4 9.57		kill 2 9.79
believe 4 9.48	do 9 9.72	Urban 3 9.26	pp_obj of 44 3.30	cot 2 9.37
trap 4 9.47	come 6 9.45	National 3 9.20	rid 3 10.85	
creep 4 9.46	enter 5 9.34	Edition 3 9.04	number 4 10.49	predicate of 18 7.20
catch 4 9.46	get 6 9.30	Third 2 8.82	plague 2 10.41	predator 2 10.60
think 4 9.42	savage 4 8.96	red 2 8.79	den 2 10.38	pest 2 10.47
maul 4 9.17	become 4 8.88	confident 2 8.74	problem 3 10.24	creature 2 10.27
photograph 3 9.15	live 3 8.52	old 2 8.69	life 3 10.06	problem 2 10.21
pose 3 9.11	strike 2 8.08	word 2 8.64	danger 2 9.85	
control 3 9.09	seem 2 8.06		picture 2 9.69	pp_obj with 8 2.30
find 3 9.02	eat 2 8.00	modifies 65 0.40	family 3 9.38	deal 3 12.77
take 3 8.91	bite 2 7.99	population 9 11.48		work 2 11.75
hate 2 8.61	kill 2 7.85	attack 15 11.11	pp_in 32 2.30	
involve 2 8.60	go 2 7.77	hunting 5 10.81	UK 4 11.50	pp_obj about 6 5.80
cull 2 8.60		problem 5 10.65	ALL 2 10.91	concern 2 12.29
destroy 2 8.59	adj subject of 21 4.30	cub 3 10.09	town 2 10.02	
scare 2 8.54	shy 3 11.67	bit 2 9.85	area 2 9.67	pp_obj on 5 0.70
give 2 8.52	worth 2 11.41	number 2 9.19	cot 2 9.28	expert 2 10.04
feed 2 8.49	beautiful 2 10.75	expert 2 9.06	garden 2 9.15	
watch 2 8.48	new 2 10.75	night 2 8.71	London 3 8.98	pp_obj as 5 2.70
bite 2 8.46	bold 2 10.60	people 2 8.63		cuddly 2 11.67
keep 2 8.46				
possessor 2 0.70				
Britain 2 11.30				
pp_obj if 2 7.40				
life-changing 2 12.29				

fox (noun)
KoupparisBroadsheet freq = 533 (12,036.76 per million)

object of	158	2.70
see	12	10.76
find	8	10.13
kill	6	9.94
film	4	9.59
feed	4	9.50
say	6	9.39
control	3	9.20
catch	3	9.16
believe	3	9.15
trap	3	9.13
like	3	9.05
want	3	9.02
keep	3	8.98
think	3	8.96
copulate	2	8.68
maraud	2	8.65
hate	2	8.65
scavenge	2	8.62
encourage	2	8.62
involve	2	8.62
beat	2	8.62
cull	2	8.60
describe	2	8.46
have	5	8.09
be	9	7.49

subject of	216	4.60
attack	16	10.74
maul	12	10.47
be	69	10.38
have	26	10.33
do	10	9.70
get	7	9.40
bite	5	9.35
enter	3	8.75
kill	3	8.57
find	3	8.39
tive	3	8.38
tend	2	8.20
savage	2	8.19
try	2	8.13
lose	2	8.04
make	2	7.94
take	2	7.76

adj subject of	20	4.50
unpopular	2	11.30

modifier	160	0.90
urban	93	13.29
country	4	9.35
Edition	3	8.62
rural	2	8.49
Urban	2	8.47
other	2	8.38
National	2	8.19
London	2	7.56

modifies	90	0.50
population	12	11.40
attack	18	11.37
control	4	10.09
cub	4	9.99
standing	3	9.89
behaviour	3	9.87
problem	3	9.72
department	2	9.44
number	3	9.41
bit	2	9.24
hunting	2	9.19
BYLINE	3	9.03
section	2	8.27

pp_obj of	50	3.00
cull	4	10.81
view	3	10.43
density	2	10.24
incident	4	10.23
rid	2	10.16
thousand	2	10.00
danger	2	10.00
number	2	9.30

pp_obj by	35	9.60
maul	8	11.42
attack	8	11.04
attack	5	9.94
bite	2	9.89
kill	2	9.75

pp_in	29	2.00
Britain	3	10.28
cot	3	10.24
area	3	10.14
night	2	9.64
garden	3	9.23
London	2	8.24

predicate of	13	6.00
reminder	2	11.14
animal	3	9.55

pp_obj with	11	2.80
deal	4	12.19
relationship	2	11.35

pp_obj about	10	7.90
complaint	2	11.75

possessed	7	1.20
diet	2	12.09

pp_obj after	5	6.80
blood	2	10.82

pp_of	4	0.20
Hackney	4	10.76

pp_to	3	0.50
death	2	11.91

pp_per	2	36.90
mile	2	13.00

pp_obj whether	2	12.30
ask	2	12.19

APPENDIX 6. SketchEngine Word Sketches over a two-month period following the attack on Denny Dolan, for tabloid and broadsheet subcorpora

fox (noun)
DennyTabloid freq = 220 (11,223.34 per million)

object_of 47 1.70	subject_of 111 5.00	adj_subject_of 9 3.70	modifier 71 1.00	modifies 28 0.40
find 6 11.54	attack 10 11.01	unheard 1 11.67	urban 42 13.34	population 10 12.25
see 6 11.20	get 8 10.63	frightened 1 11.54	adult 2 9.80	attack 8 11.12
picture 3 10.85	be 32 10.19	nervous 1 11.54	town 2 9.37	BYLINE 3 10.70
spot 2 10.32	savage 5 10.19	elusive 1 11.54	city-dwelling 1 8.82	behaviour 1 10.04
cull 2 10.24	drag 4 10.03	timid 1 11.41	kill 1 8.82	number 2 10.02
encourage 2 10.19	have 8 9.76	inbred 1 11.41	rustic 1 8.82	disease 1 10.00
kick 2 10.09	round 3 9.69	pathetic 1 11.30	feed 1 8.82	hunting 1 9.87
confuse 1 9.38	try 2 9.09	different 1 10.68	wonder 1 8.82	other 1 9.79
save 1 9.38	maul 2 9.08	wild 1 10.60	road 1 8.81	problem 1 9.35
stop 1 9.35	room 2 9.08		fearless 1 8.81	
hug 1 9.35	move 2 9.06		male 1 8.81	and/or 15 0.70
cover 1 9.35	live 2 8.93		suburban 1 8.79	car 2 10.95
warn 1 9.32	bite 2 8.76		feeding 1 8.79	thief 1 10.82
creep 1 9.27	make 2 8.74		thief 1 8.79	move 1 10.82
feed 1 9.27	say 2 8.49		feral 1 8.79	disease 1 10.75
control 1 9.24	do 2 8.33		rural 1 8.76	predator 1 10.75
tackle 1 9.21	mug 1 8.18		regular 1 8.76	Mugford 1 10.41
want 1 9.19	survive 1 8.18		brazen 1 8.75	other 1 10.41
fight 1 9.16	scent 1 8.18		hungry 1 8.73	beast 1 10.41
help 1 9.14	launch 1 8.18		most 1 8.69	coat 1 10.09
believe 1 9.12	stake 1 8.18		few 1 8.68	government 1 10.04
kill 1 8.93	evolve 1 8.18		wild 1 8.62	baby 3 9.48
think 1 8.89	penetrate 1 8.18		coat 1 8.57	yesterday 1 9.04
do 2 8.87	shake 1 8.16		country 1 8.57	
be 6 7.88	manage 1 8.13		little 1 8.55	
pp_obj_of 19 3.10	predicate_of 15 12.40	pp_obj_than 5 13.80	pp_obj_about 3 8.30	pp_obj_after 1 2.30
problem 5 11.96	pest 4 11.99	more 2 10.71	do 3 10.01	happen 1 10.91
load 3 11.94	opportunist 1 10.91	dog 1 10.04		
pair 1 10.68	nuisance 1 10.82	people 1 9.02	predicate 2 1.60	pp_at 1 1.10
rise 1 10.68	specimen 1 10.75	baby 1 8.00	second 1 13.00	party 1 10.68
talk 1 10.60	killer 1 10.75		collection 1 10.09	
killing 1 10.60	menace 1 10.41	pp_obj_for 4 2.20		pp_with 1 0.90
feeding 1 10.54	issue 1 10.41	easy 1 12.19	possessor 2 1.10	jaw 1 13.00
type 1 10.47	language 1 10.35	place 1 11.99	India 1 12.41	
thousand 1 10.41	neighbour 1 10.19	unusual 1 11.67	today 1 11.19	pp_off 1 4.80
lot 1 10.41	kind 1 9.91	reason 1 11.19		baby 1 8.04
sight 1 10.35	problem 1 9.79		pp_obj_to 2 0.80	pp_obj_off 1 4.80
cull 1 10.30	animal 1 8.98	pp_obj_from 4 3.70	be 2 6.38	chase 1 12.68
cull 1 10.00		attack 3 10.02		
	pp_in 9 1.80	finger 1 9.06	pp_obj_like 2 8.60	pp_obj_between 1 12.90
pp_obj_by 18 11.40	Britain 3 11.54		something 1 11.00	hand 1 9.16
savage 5 11.76	Bristol 1 11.54	pp_obj_if 4 17.20	baby 1 8.03	
maul 2 11.19	hall 1 11.41	know 3 12.06		pp_obj_alongside 1 19.40
attack 4 10.98	garden 2 10.32	happen 1 10.68	possessed 1 0.60	live 1 10.41
target 1 10.35	town 1 9.79		fang 1 13.99	
infant 1 10.35	home 1 8.98	pp_obj_with 3 2.70		
problem 1 9.67		over-populated 1 12.68	pp_on 1 0.50	
bite 1 9.14		trouble 1 12.41	human 1 11.83	
baby 2 8.86		problem 1 10.35		
attack 1 8.24			pp_obj_on 1 0.50	
			kill 1 10.60	

fox (*noun*) Alternative PoS: *verb* (4)
 DennyBroadsheet freq = 327 (14,368.57 per million)

<u>object_of</u>	<u>93</u>	<u>2.30</u>
feed	<u>8</u>	<u>11.04</u>
kick	<u>4</u>	<u>10.31</u>
believe	<u>3</u>	<u>9.81</u>
see	<u>3</u>	<u>9.61</u>
find	<u>3</u>	<u>9.61</u>
say	<u>4</u>	<u>9.45</u>
label	<u>2</u>	<u>9.42</u>
deter	<u>2</u>	<u>9.42</u>
slaughter	<u>2</u>	<u>9.39</u>
spot	<u>2</u>	<u>9.37</u>
fight	<u>2</u>	<u>9.35</u>
chase	<u>2</u>	<u>9.35</u>
shoot	<u>2</u>	<u>9.35</u>
study	<u>2</u>	<u>9.32</u>
know	<u>2</u>	<u>9.30</u>
describe	<u>2</u>	<u>9.28</u>
think	<u>2</u>	<u>9.28</u>
kill	<u>2</u>	<u>9.24</u>
be	<u>10</u>	<u>8.57</u>
have	<u>2</u>	<u>7.78</u>

<u>subject_of</u>	<u>136</u>	<u>4.50</u>
attack	<u>12</u>	<u>10.98</u>
be	<u>46</u>	<u>10.70</u>
come	<u>6</u>	<u>10.14</u>
live	<u>5</u>	<u>9.91</u>
bite	<u>5</u>	<u>9.81</u>
have	<u>9</u>	<u>9.75</u>
maul	<u>4</u>	<u>9.75</u>
go	<u>4</u>	<u>9.52</u>
try	<u>3</u>	<u>9.34</u>
become	<u>3</u>	<u>9.17</u>
reach	<u>2</u>	<u>8.85</u>
savage	<u>2</u>	<u>8.79</u>
enter	<u>2</u>	<u>8.76</u>
do	<u>3</u>	<u>8.76</u>
lose	<u>2</u>	<u>8.76</u>
drag	<u>2</u>	<u>8.74</u>
move	<u>2</u>	<u>8.74</u>

<u>modifier</u>	<u>113</u>	<u>1.10</u>
urban	<u>65</u>	<u>13.28</u>
rural	<u>4</u>	<u>10.08</u>
other	<u>3</u>	<u>9.48</u>
lb	<u>2</u>	<u>9.14</u>
adult	<u>2</u>	<u>9.12</u>
large	<u>2</u>	<u>9.06</u>
bold	<u>2</u>	<u>9.00</u>

<u>modifies</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>0.40</u>
bit	<u>3</u>	<u>10.70</u>
number	<u>4</u>	<u>10.55</u>
alert	<u>2</u>	<u>10.54</u>
urine	<u>2</u>	<u>10.47</u>
cull	<u>4</u>	<u>10.30</u>
attack	<u>5</u>	<u>10.20</u>
population	<u>2</u>	<u>9.61</u>
BYLINE	<u>2</u>	<u>9.50</u>

<u>and/or</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>0.60</u>
incident	<u>2</u>	<u>10.35</u>

<u>pp_obj_of</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>2.30</u>
number	<u>4</u>	<u>10.81</u>
cull	<u>4</u>	<u>10.51</u>
problem	<u>3</u>	<u>10.45</u>
population	<u>3</u>	<u>10.45</u>

<u>pp_obj_by</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>7.40</u>
maul	<u>4</u>	<u>11.75</u>
attack	<u>6</u>	<u>11.24</u>
savage	<u>2</u>	<u>10.95</u>
arm	<u>2</u>	<u>10.71</u>
bite	<u>2</u>	<u>9.91</u>

<u>pp_in</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>2.00</u>
cot	<u>3</u>	<u>11.19</u>
area	<u>5</u>	<u>11.13</u>
bedroom	<u>2</u>	<u>10.21</u>
garden	<u>3</u>	<u>9.95</u>

<u>predicate_of</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>7.60</u>
pest	<u>2</u>	<u>11.04</u>
animal	<u>2</u>	<u>9.34</u>

<u>pp_obj_for</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>2.70</u>
unusual	<u>2</u>	<u>11.83</u>

<u>pp_from</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>4.00</u>
home	<u>2</u>	<u>9.69</u>

<u>possessor</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1.50</u>
Dublin	<u>2</u>	<u>11.83</u>

<u>pp_obj_as</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4.60</u>
many	<u>2</u>	<u>11.54</u>
rare	<u>2</u>	<u>11.14</u>

<u>pp_at</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3.00</u>
home	<u>2</u>	<u>9.71</u>

<u>part_off</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>8.50</u>
fight	<u>3</u>	<u>13.12</u>

<u>pp_by</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1.00</u>
nature	<u>2</u>	<u>13.00</u>

<u>pp_obj_after</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3.70</u>
life	<u>2</u>	<u>11.24</u>

<u>pp_obj_if</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>29.70</u>
work	<u>2</u>	<u>11.83</u>

<u>pp_after</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2.50</u>
baby	<u>2</u>	<u>9.34</u>

<u>pp_obj_against</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>11.90</u>
backlash	<u>2</u>	<u>13.41</u>

APPENDIX 7. Categories of external voices in the two-month period after the attack on the twins

Category	Voices
Authorities	Hackney council, police / Scotland Yard, hospital, Boris Johnson, Baroness Sharples, Lord Greaves, Joe Lobenstein, Croydon council, Kate Hoey MP, Meg Hillier MP, the government, the Leader of the House of Commons, Lord Lea of Crondall, Lord Marlesford, Lord Geddes, Lord Henley, Bristol City Council, Chartere Institute of Environmental Health
Celebrities	Joanna Lumley, Brian May
Fox defenders	John Bryant, Martin Hemmington, Trevor Williams, RSPCA, Steve Bachelor, League Against Cruel Sports, The Fox Project, 'animal welfare groups'*, London Wildlife Trust, 'animal rights extremists'*, Libby Anderson
Scientists	Dr Roger Mugford, 'animal experts' (context dependent), Prof. Stephen Harris, 'experts' (context dependent), 'nature experts' (context dependent), Veterinary Association of Wildlife Management, Bristol University's Mammal Research Unit, Dr Phil Baker, Marina Pacheco (Mammal Society)
Fox killers	Peter Crowden, pest controllers, Ricky Clark, farmer, Bruce Lindsay-Smith, Toby Khanna, fox control experts, Jim Barrington, Countryside Alliance, John Pugh, 'Urban Foxhunters', William Moore, 'wildlife experts' (context dependent), 'nature experts' (context dependent), 'experts' (context dependent)
Public	Neighbours, readers, Ken Lennox, Michael Parra, city residents, previous generations, the public,
Victims and their families	Pauline Koupparis (mother), Zoe Koupparis (grandmother), Nick Koupparis (father), Dave Watson (uncle), family member, Lily Jago Briggs, Lily Jago Briggs's parents, Natasha David, Fatma Kabay,

**Extremist' and 'welfare' are highly contested labels and should not be taken at face value (Best and Nocella 2004). They are included here as they appear in a number of newspaper items, although the relevant newspapers provide little qualification or clarification for these labels.

APPENDIX 8. Media frames 1 January 2009–1 January 2014

Stage	Frame	Key elements
Impact	Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: incident must serve as 'wake-up call'; 'something must be done' claim: there has been a tipping point and a new kind of harm powerful signifier: child victims authorities speaking out and police acting as primary definers
Propagation	Invasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: foxes are 'coming in' in large numbers and are unable to resist the pull of the city claim: foxes don't 'belong' in urban environments borrowed from tabloid discourse of immigration main proponents: pest controllers, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>Daily Express</i>
Propagation	Infestation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: there has been a population explosion, evidenced by a surge in call-outs to pest controllers claim: 'unmanaged' wildlife will breed out of control borrowed from discourse of wildlife management main proponents: pest controllers, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>Daily Express</i>
Propagation	Rural Exodus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: foxes have been driven out of the countryside through industrialisation and habitat destruction main proponent: <i>The Observer</i>
Propagation	Population Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: fox populations are naturally self-regulating claim: there has not been a drastic increase in the population features scientific language and statistics main proponents: fox ecologists, <i>The Guardian</i>

Stage	Frame	Key elements
Propagation	Indigenous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: foxes have inhabited cities for a long time and have adapted well to urban environments main proponents: fox ecologists, <i>The Guardian</i>
Propagation	Diminished	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: urban foxes are mangy, disease-ridden and hunger-crazed claim: their diminished health compared to rural foxes is evidence of their not belonging in urban environments urban foxes portrayed as vagrants and squatters main proponents: pest controllers, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>The Times</i>, <i>The Independent</i>
Propagation	Brazen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: urban foxes are unpredictable, defiant, fearless and even insolent, evidenced by their transgression of human boundaries and their willingness to return to the 'scene of the crime' claim: their behaviour has escalated and now poses a serious physical threat to humans main proponents: pest controllers, London mayor Boris Johnson, most newspapers but particularly <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>Daily Mirror</i>, <i>Daily Express</i> and <i>The Times</i>
Propagation	Predator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: foxes are natural killers and they attack children with the intention of eating them claim: urban foxes do not rely on their natural diet main proponents: pest controllers, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>Daily Mail</i>, <i>Daily Express</i> and <i>Daily Star Sunday</i>

Stage	Frame	Key elements
Propagation	Gangster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: urban foxes are shadowy, sinister creatures that stalk their prey and launch calculated attacks frequent use of words implying menace: 'skulking', 'sneaking', 'prowling' decontextualized images of yawning foxes displaying sharp teeth and blurry photographs of foxes 'stalking' urban neighbourhoods main proponents: <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>The Times</i>
Propagation	Rogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: fox attacks are committed by out-of-control problem individuals prominent in the immediate aftermath of a fox attack main proponents: <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>The Times</i>, <i>The Sun</i>
Propagation	Resourceful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: foxes are highly adaptable and can thrive in urban environments main proponents: fox ecologists, <i>The Guardian</i>
Propagation	Inquisitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: foxes are naturally curious and may be attracted to new smells claim: their curiosity is not sinister (<i>The Guardian</i>) main proponents: fox ecologists, humane wildlife deterrence specialists, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>The Guardian</i>, <i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>Daily Mirror</i>
Propagation	Self-defence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: foxes may attack in self-defence or may be protecting their young main proponents: animal welfare organisations, television naturalists, fox ecologists, human wildlife deterrence specialists, <i>The Guardian</i>
Propagation	Scapegoat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: foxes are often incorrectly blamed main proponents: television naturalists, fox ecologists, humane wildlife deterrence specialists, <i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>The Sunday Times</i>

Stage	Frame	Key elements
Propagation	Monster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: urban foxes are larger than rural foxes claim: urban foxes have been able to grow to an 'unnatural' size due to the abundance of food claim: larger foxes seek out larger prey main proponents: fieldsports organisations, farmers, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>The Sunday Times</i> and <i>Daily Mail</i>
Propagation	Extremist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: animal rights activists are misguided lunatics and a menace to society main proponents: <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>Daily Express</i> and <i>Daily Mail</i> (media act as primary definers)
Propagation	Scrounger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: fox defenders are almost all unemployed, living on state benefits, lazy and fecund claim: fox defenders are like urban foxes ('city scroungers', 'scavengers', 'feral chavs') main proponent: <i>Daily Mail</i> (media act as primary definers)
Propagation	Innocence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: babies are pure and innocent claim: the victims' parents are innocent of any blame (particularly <i>Daily Express</i> and <i>The Sun</i>) features detailed descriptions of the victims and their families evident across all newspapers
Propagation	Direct Feeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: feeding has caused foxes to overcome their fear of humans claim: feeding is a component of treating foxes as pets claim: RSPCA are wrong for advocating feeding (only <i>The Independent</i> and <i>Daily Mail</i>) main proponents: pest controllers, fieldsports organisations, animal behaviourists, fox ecologists, humane wildlife deterrence specialists, all newspapers (particularly the broadsheets)

Stage	Frame	Key elements
Propagation	Indirect Feeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: careless waste disposal and the advent of fortnightly bin collections result in an abundance of food waste, which attracts urban foxes and increases the carrying capacity of an area claim: human slovenliness is to blame for an increase in the urban fox population main proponents: pest controllers, <i>Daily Mail</i>, <i>Daily Express</i>, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>The Guardian</i>, <i>The Sun</i>, <i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>The Independent</i>
Propagation	Food Deprivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: hungry urban foxes may come closer to humans in a desperate search for food main proponents: animal rescue organisations, <i>Daily Mail</i>, <i>The Sunday Times</i> and <i>The Sun</i>
Propagation	Sentimentalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: urban residents ('townies') don't understand the 'truth' about foxes and have failed to 'get tough' with them claim: television programmes and books are to blame for an anthropomorphic misunderstanding of foxes; people have been 'seduced' by their beauty and think they're cute and cuddly claim: sentimental 'foxites' are the same people who deny that rural foxes pose a threat to farm animals; they are to blame for the hunting ban claim: the hunting ban is to blame for the urban fox problem frequently features a mocking tone and 'we told you so' attitude main proponents: fieldsports organisations, pest controllers, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>Daily Express</i>

Stage	Frame	Key elements
Propagation	Inaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: local councils have ignored residents' complaints and failed to act to take control of the urban fox problem claim: council inaction stems from a misplaced concern for animal welfare; councils have been seduced by 'vulpine propaganda' main proponents: urban residents, pest controllers, <i>Daily Mail</i>, <i>Daily Express</i>, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>The Times</i> and <i>The Sun</i>
Propagation	Vindication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: fox attacks are a vindication of earlier warnings; local authorities should have acted sooner main proponents: <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>Daily Express</i>
Propagation	Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: fox attacks will happen again if action isn't taken main proponents: London mayor Boris Johnson, politicians, pest controllers, victims' families, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>The Sun</i> and <i>Daily Star</i>
Propagation	Rarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: fox attacks are rare main proponents: animal welfare associations, anti-bloodsports organisations, humane deterrence specialists, fox ecologists, local councils, London mayor Boris Johnson and all newspapers
Propagation	Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> claim: reaction to risk from fox attacks is exaggerated; fox attacks are much rarer than dog attacks features calls for calm and frequent use of statistics main proponents: fox ecologists, humane deterrence specialists, celebrities, <i>The Guardian</i>, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>The Sunday Times</i> and <i>Daily Mirror</i>

Stage	Frame	Key elements
Reaction	Cull: Centralised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • claim: a centrally organised cull is needed to reduce the urban fox population • claim: without a cull, the urban fox population will continue to grow out of control • features language of order and belonging • main proponents: pest controllers, London mayor Boris Johnson, victims' families, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>Daily Express</i> The obvious solution; the hard decision that has to be made; anything else is pseudo-science or washing your hands of the problem
Reaction	Cull: Localised (Denny Dolan only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • claim: a local cull of urban foxes is needed to reduce numbers OR remove 'problem individuals' • claim: centralised culling in urban areas is not feasible and different neighbourhoods have a different tolerance of risk • main proponents: pest controllers, urban residents, some local councillors, London mayor Boris Johnson, all newspapers except <i>The Guardian</i>
Reaction	Overcome Sentimentalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • claim: urban residents need to learn to distrust foxes and resist anthropomorphism • calls for literature and films that overly sentimentalise foxes to be 'banned' (<i>The Daily Telegraph</i> and <i>Daily Mail</i>) • features common oppositions: rational/emotional, urban/rural • often itself features anthropomorphic and moralistic language • main proponents: pest controllers, fieldsports organisations, London mayor Boris Johnson, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, <i>Daily Mail</i>, <i>The Sunday Times</i> and <i>The Guardian</i>
Reaction	Bring Back Hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • claim: the 'vulpine defence league' were wrong and the hunting ban needs to be repealed to manage the fox population • main proponents: fieldsports organisations, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> and <i>Daily Express</i>

Stage	Frame	Key elements
Reaction	Humane Deterrence & Coexistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• claim: coexistence with urban foxes is possible• claim: human behaviour change and deterrence methods need to be adopted• claim: culling could be counter-productive• main proponents: fox ecologists, humane wildlife deterrence specialists, animal welfare campaigners, anti-bloodsports organisations, local councils, <i>Daily Mirror</i>, <i>The Guardian</i>, <i>Daily Mail</i>, and <i>The Independent</i>

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