Discourses on Foxhunting in the Public Sphere: a Q methodological study

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Abstract

The foxhunting debate conjures up dichotomies on party politics, rural/urban divide, class, animal welfare, animal rights and the right to hunt them. In the lead-up to the 2004 hunting ban animals themselves became peripheral in political debates. This paper presents a contemporary analysis of shared viewpoints on hunting that highlights the centrality of animals to debates over foxhunting. I use Q methodology to identify four discourses on hunting in public debates. Liberal progressives are against hunting on the basis that it is cruel, unnecessary and outdated. Critical-radicals oppose hunting from a structural perspective, encompassing critiques of power and class. Countryside managers support hunting as a form of wildlife management and emphasise the differences across animals. Sporting libertarians support hunting as a legitimate sport. These findings demonstrate the complexity of the hunting debate in the public sphere that is simplified and exaggerated in mainstream media and Westminster.

Keywords

Introduction

Hunting wild mammals using more than two dogs has been illegal for over a decade in England and Wales, yet foxhunting remains the most controversial animal issue in British politics. In this paper I provide a contemporary analysis of the hunting debate using Q methodology to identify discourses on

hunting. This presents a nuanced view of the hunting debate and demonstrates that hunting is not only a party political trope but centres around divergent discursive representations of animals.

The Hunting Act 2004 banned the practice of using a pack of dogs to chase *and* kill foxes and certain other wild mammals. In the time preceding the bill and the following decade, hunting has remained a divisive political issue. In 2002 thousands marched at the 'Liberty and Livelihood' protest to highlight the plight of rural Britain, but ostensibly in protest of the proposed ban. In the years since, lobbying has continued; the Countryside Alliance (CA) to repeal the ban and the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) and Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) to monitor and prosecute illegal hunting. The 2010 Coalition Agreement and 2015 Conservative Manifesto both stated that the government would find Parliamentary time to debate hunting again.

Although hunting is an animal issue, animals themselves have become peripheral in the debate. In the lead-up to the ban, hunting was increasingly politicised and campaigners took overtly political routes to mobilise a support base. The CA - despite forming from an amalgamation of field sports societies (Toke, 2010: 207) – became the self-appointed representative of rural Britain. Playing on the very real challenges facing the British countryside at the time, they appealed to a perceived rural/urban divide (Anderson, 2006: 722) and emphasised the importance of hunting to rural economy and identity (Curchin, 2017). Through the 'Vote OK' campaign, the CA continued to canvas against anti-hunting Parliamentary candidates using rural issues to win wider appeal (Toke, 2010: 209).

The hunting debate also became increasingly politicised in Westminster debates (Plumb and Marsh, 2013). Over time positions on hunting came to reflect party political divisions more than animal protection concerns. Foxhunting infamously took up over 700 hours of Parliamentary time in comparison to the seven hours debating the invasion of Iraq (Plumb and Marsh, 2013: 313). Throughout this time hunting became increasingly party-driven, with higher party cohesion seen particularly within the Conservatives. There was a noticeable shift away from animal protection towards the party political. This is symptomatic of the marginalisation of animals in politics. Michael Woods (1998; 2000), in his analyses of political representations of rural British animals, notes that

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'although animals are central to these debates, they are also voiceless and powerless and remain marginalised from political processes' (1998: 1219).

This Q methodological study was carried out in 2015 and identifies four discourses on hunting. Whereas previous research has focussed on the cultural practices of hunting (e.g. Marvin 2003; 2007) or the debate around the time of the ban (e.g. Anderson, 2006; Curchin, 2017; Plumb and Marsh, 2013; Toke, 2010), this study provides a contemporary insight into the hunting debate in the public sphere through the viewpoints of campaigners, hunters, interested citizens and animal protection professionals. The resulting discourses illustrate a complex picture that is not currently represented in media and Westminster depictions of the hunting debate (see Parry 2017). The disjuncture between discourses in the public sphere and in Westminster indicates a discursive democratic deficit, whereby the range of viewpoints in public debate fail to 'trickle up' to debates in Westminster.

The paper proceeds as follows. An introduction to Q methodology highlights its suitability for analysing the hunting debate. This is followed by the research design and analysis. Four discourses on hunting are then presented in narrative form. I conclude with a discussion of the discursive representation of animals and the implications of the study.

Q methodology

Q methodology is a rigorous method of understanding human subjectivities (Brown, 1980; Dryzek, 2005: 40). It was first described by William Stephenson in a 1935 to *Nature* as an inverted form of factor analysis that correlates individuals as variables, rather than tests or questions as variables (Stephenson 1935a; van Exel and de Graaf 2005, p1). The easiest way to introduce Q methodology is by using this as a point of departure, as Stephenson did. In a survey, questions are strategically constructed by the researcher. On occasion a Likert scale is similarly determined by the researcher. When we answer a survey question we conform to this linear, bipolar scale. However, this does not account for how respondents *interpret* the scale or the question.

Q aims to understand individual subjectivity and the relationship between different subjective viewpoints, but does not seek to explain causal relationships (Jeffares and Skelcher, 2011: 1257). A Q study involves an individual sorting a set of items (usually statements) into an order that is significant to them (Brown, 1980: 6). Items are open to interpretation by the participant; the manner in which they are arranged is meaningful to that person. Participants sort the items in a holistic manner (Brown, 1997; van Exel and de Graaf, 2005: 3); prioritising the items means participants must compare different aspects of their own opinion. Each item in the matrix only makes sense relative to the placement of other statements. The completed arrangement – the 'Q-sort' - comprises a subjective 'map' of that individual's viewpoint. Factor analysis produces clusters of viewpoints which are then interpreted using additional qualitative data into discourses. The viewpoints that emerge from a Q study are not pre-determined by an externally imposed scale or definition (Cross, 2005: 211), though factor analysis does by necessity impose some unity on the resulting viewpoints.

William Stephenson held doctorates in both physics and psychology, and originally described his inverted factor technique as 'a new tool to the aid of psychology' (1935b: 17). Since then, Q method has been applied across a range of disciplines to study subjectivity; including non-exhaustively political science, sociology, education and psychology (McKeown and Thomas, 2013: x), covering equally diverse subject matter. Within political science, Q has been used to construct democratic discourses (Dryzek and Berejikian, 1993), to study the effect of deliberation on subjective preferences (Niemeyer, 2011) and to explore views on network governance (Jeffares and Skelcher 2011), amongst others.

The factors that emerge from Q methodological analysis are defined as 'the way a particular individual, in particular circumstances and at a particular time, relates to, and forms conceptions of, certain aspects of the world' (Barry and Proops 1999: 338). This resonates with Dryzek's (2005: 9) definition of a discourse as

> a shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe
>
> to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts.

Discourses construct meanings and relationships, helping to define common sense and legitimate knowledge.

Unpacking the hunting debate requires the depth and nuance that Q provides, able to 'highlight disjunctures and contestations across the subjective beliefs of actors' (Ercan et al 2017: 9). It has been applied to animal issues including debates over wildlife management and conservation (Byrd 2002; Chamberlain et al 2012); attitudes towards animals (Kalof 2000) and narratives on specific species (Sickler et al 2006). Q can illuminate a debate that has been dominated by polarisation as is the case for many conflicts over animals (Brown 1996) and can reveal perspectives more complex than the typical dichotomies (Chamberlain et al 2012: 33).

The purported dichotomy between animal welfare and animal rights features prominently in the hunting debate. The RSPCA has received condemnation from the pro-hunting lobby and mainstream media for allegedly betraying its animal welfare tradition and transforming into an animal rights organisation. Animal rights, according to this account, is closely associated with a political agenda and comprises 'so-called animal lovers who are, in truth, nothing of the kind' (Western Morning News, 2015). The propagation of the welfare/rights binary is indicative of the politicisation of debates on animal issues generally. No animal issue can be resolved without addressing the concomitant 'people issues' that inevitably surround them. Regarding Grizzly Bear conservation in Canada, Chamberlain et al (2012: 2) point out that although scientific understanding is sufficient to address the issue, it remains controversial due to conflicting human values. It is therefore essential to explore the values and beliefs that structure different perspectives on hunting. Q methodology can 'clarify the details of ideological positions…often revealing distinctions not present in media and other public accounts' (Brown, 1996: 17).

Research Design

The aim of this particular study was to identify the existing discourses around hunting in the UK. To do this, I first developed the 'concourse' - the landscape of debate and perspectives on the topic

(Brown, 1986). Typically, the concourse is textual. There are a variety of methods for collating perspectives for the concourse including drawing from academic literature or media and other texts (Dryzek and Berejikian, 1993; Stevenson, 2015). For this study, I conducted a set of ten semi-structured interviews where participants were asked about their views on hunting and various aspects of the practice and the debate covering the people, places, animals and politics of hunting. Interviewees were invited to take part on the basis of their interest or involvement with hunting and included animal protection professionals, people who took part in countryside sports or who had experience of hunting. Interviews were transcribed and thematically coded in NVivo to identify key themes. From this 248 statements were extracted to form the concourse.

The next step is to refine these statements into a workable number of items for participants to sort onto a matrix with a quasi-normal distribution and scale from most agree to most disagree (see Table 1). Duplicate statements were amalgamated and synthesised into single statements. For example, the statements 'it's a sort of a natural way of predator control; it removes the sick and the old and the infirm' and 'the argument that they take only the old and infirm foxes is actually not the case' can be consolidated into a single positive statement that participants can either agree or disagree with to varying extents. Non-committal statements such as 'I'm not 100% disapproving of fox hunters' were removed because although this is a valid viewpoint, participants should be able to express this by placing other more strongly worded statements like 'there is no place for hunting in a modern civilised society' towards the centre of the scale to indicate their neutral stance.

<insert Table 1: Sorting Distribution>

The final set of statements (the Q-set) aims to be as representative as possible of the range of relevant perspectives. The suggested number ranges from 40-80 (Watts and Stenner 2012: 61). However, the greater the number, the more demanding the task for participants with the possibility of experiencing 'statement fatigue' (Stevenson 2015). With this in mind, 248 statements were reduced to a final set

of 52 for sorting. The study was piloted with six colleagues who were interested in either hunting or animal issues. The aim of the pilot was to check the clarity of the statements, ensure that the full range of viewpoints were included in the study, and to practice the sorting procedure so that instructions would be clear to participants. Minor edits were made to some statements following the pilot based on feedback about clarity of the wording. Table 2 shows the list of statements in truncated form.

<Insert Table 2: List of statements with factor array scores>

Participant numbers in a Q study are small and selected strategically to reflect a diversity of viewpoints. In Q method, the set of statements is representative of the debate and the participants carefully selected, in an inversion of survey approaches. The aim is to identify shared perspectives within a group (Brown,1980; Ramlo, 2016) and not to identify specific groups who share those views, or to generalise those viewpoints to a wider population. The type of generalisation that Q aims for is generalisability of the discourses themselves, not who might subscribe to those discourses (Dryzek and Berejikian, 1993: 52). In accordance with this approach, demographic details of the participants were not collected as Q method does not endeavour to make any claims about which types of people hold certain views. Even if this were the case, the participant sample is small and strategically selected, placing severe limits on generalisable claims of this kind.

Participants were invited on the basis that they had an 'interesting, informative and relevant viewpoint' (Watts and Stenner, 2012: 71). The aim of this strategic sampling is to ensure a diversity of viewpoints within the sample, rather than diversity in demographic terms. Invitations were sent by email to British animal protection organisations, lobbying groups on both sides of the debate, farming associations, organised hunts and individuals known for their views on hunting. Out of 69 people and organisations invited, 33 participated in the Q study and interview. Participants came from a range of backgrounds and included those who took part in drag hunting, shooting and other countryside sports, animal protection professionals and organisations, former activists, individuals with a farming or rural

background who had direct experience or strong views on hunting, and members and staff of organised hunts. Many participants requested anonymity and others who worked on hunting professionally took part in a personal capacity. Participants were provided with a range of anonymity options and conditions for participation and anonymity has been retained for all participants in this paper. Requests for anonymity and the contentious nature of the hunting debate provide further motivation for anonymity and forgoing demographic information. Seeing as Q method focuses on *what* is said, rather than *who* said it, the lack of background information of participants is entirely commensurate.

Q-sorting was carried out in person. Unstructured interviews were carried out alongside the Q-sort and participants were asked why they had placed certain statements at +6 and -6. Participants also had the opportunity to talk about any other statements that they felt were significant. Thirty-three completed Q-sorts were entered and analysed in a specific software package designed for Q, PQMethod (Schmolck, 2014). Statistical analysis in Q method entails a 'by-person, or by Q-sort' factor analysis (Watts and Stenner, 2012: 180) since the individual Q-sorts are variables. Four factors were extracted and rotated and the final solution explains 55% of the total study variance. Thirty-two out of thirty-three participants were significantly associated with one or more of these factors, with significance at $p<0.01$ calculated as ≥ 0.36. Participants who load significantly on a factor are those who have sorted the statements in a similar fashion – suggesting that they have a similar outlook on the topic at hand (Stenner et al, 2003: 164).

PQMethod enables both Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and Centroid Factor Analysis. The latter is preferred by most Q methodologists as it results in greater indeterminacy than PCA (Brown, 1980; Ramlo, 2016). This approach is commensurate with the view that Q is in essence an interpretive methodology in which factor analysis provides a robust foundation for interpretation (Stevenson, 2015: 5). A range of statistical criteria can be used to determine how many factors to retain for the final solution (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Factors with an Eigenvalue (EV) of greater than 1, and two or more significant (≥ 0.36) loadings were retained, as well as considering the amount of variance in

the study explained by each factor. The factor analysis was run several times retaining up to seven factors for Varimax rotation each time before the final four factor solution was chosen. Following Varimax rotation, manual rotation was also applied. The use of manual, or judgemental rotation, is uncommon in R factor analysis but is employed in Q studies, particularly when the research is interested in revealing nuanced or marginalised viewpoints (Watts and Stenner, 2012: 123). Following the advice of Watts and Stenner, (2012: 126) I employed Varimax rotation followed by a small amount of manual rotation to obtain the final solution. The four factors retained also met the statistical criteria outlined above.

The final step in the analysis is the production of the factor arrays seen in Table 2. A factor array can be thought of as an idealised Q sort: if a participant was to be 100% aligned with that factor, this is how they would sort the statements. PQMethod produces factor arrays based on participants 'flagged' with an X by the researcher as indicated in Table 3. This makes it possible to select participants who load particularly highly on the factor or who, during interview, exemplified that factor. Factor arrays, along with interview material, form the basis for interpretation from factor to discourse.

<insert Table 3: Rotated factor matrix. Sorts marked with X indicate a significant (≥0.36) factor loading>

<insert Table 4: Correlations between factors>

Whilst the final four factors are all distinct, factors 1 and 4 are highly correlated at 0.76, with 11 participants loading significantly on both factors (see Tables 3 and 4). Although statistically similar, close interpretation supplemented by interview data highlights subtle distinctions between the two viewpoints. The factor interpretations below unpack each of the four viewpoints. Factors 1 and 4 are first outlined together and then interpreted separately. Parentheses indicate statement number, and factor array score for that statement.

Four discourses on hunting

Two anti-hunting discourses: liberal-progressive and critical-radical.

Factors 1 and 4 are highly correlated at 0.76. Together they account for 30% of the total study variance and 17 participants load significantly on one or both of these factors. Both positions uphold that people should respect animals as sentient beings that can suffer and feel pain (S29, +6, +6). Hunting does not replicate the natural 'survival of the fittest' relationship (S24, -5, -4) and hunting with dogs is not the most effective way of controlling the fox population (S23, -6, -6). Both views are scathing of cultural justifications of hunting, especially the suggestion that hunting is an important British tradition (S3, -5, -5):

> What is a British tradition? Slavery was a British tradition. Our involvement in slavery and empires and colonialisation were also British traditions but we kind of stopped being involved in them for particular reasons. You know, traditions are human constructions...so to defend something as tradition, it reifies it…and it treats it like it's always been kind of like that whereas traditions can be modified, adapted in particular kind of ways... (P24)

Neither viewpoint thinks the hunting community should have more of a say in deciding rural policies (S33, -3, -3). They do not subscribe to the stereotype of hunting people as posh, upper-class types shouting 'tally-ho!' (S27, -1, -1), although it's not something they feel strongly about.

Liberal Progressive

Factor 1 has an EV of 5.93 and explains 18% of the study variance. 17 participants are significantly associated with Factor 1. Out of these, 10 are also associated with Factor 4, suggesting that these participants subscribe to both discourses in varying degrees. Liberal progressives have a liberal tendency in their view that all opinions should be valued in debate and that people are entitled to their own opinion. They also emphasise what modern civilised society (S50, +5) should look like: hunting is an outdated throwback that has no place in modern Britain.

The liberal-progressive position holds animal sentience and respect for animals (S29, +6) in high esteem. This attitude is generalised to 'all the other animal abuses you might miss, like the way they're slaughtered and everything else' (P23). It is morally permissible to use animals under certain circumstances, dictated by necessity and humane treatment. Concomitantly liberal-progressives disagree that there is no nice way to kill an animal (S12, -2) because there are 'more humane ways of killing animals…it's OK to slaughter an animal, providing it's done humanely, providing it doesn't suffer, and also it's done on a needs basis' (P15). Hunting wild animals is justifiable if you need to do it to survive (S44, +2) because there is a big difference between killing for food and killing for sport (S40, +3). Pro-hunting arguments around wildlife management are rejected because of 'the scientific evidence that it's cruel, the scientific evidence that it doesn't work' (P14). Scientific evidence is also utilised to try to look at hunting issue from the animals' perspective (S46, +3):

> I'm a specialist in animal behaviour, so I'm that kind of zoologist that always tries to look from how the animal would look at it...so the question of what do they feel, can only be answered if you try to learn it from the animal's perspective (P10).

Liberal progressives do not think that it is silly to say that animals share some human characteristics (S47, -3). All animals should be treated equally (S37, +5) although this leads to divergent interpretations. For some, equal treatment means weighing up different animals' welfare consideration equally. For others this extends to becoming vegetarian or vegan as a matter of consistency.

Hunting is nothing more than inflicting gratuitous cruelty on animals for the sake of entertainment (S22, +3) and there is no place for hunting in a modern, civilised society (S50, +5) because

as with other modern attitudes, particularly 21st century, we've moved into a different place of

awareness as regards animal life…there is no place for taking pleasure in hunting another species,

particularly where there's no necessity involved in it…apart from gaining pleasure (P23).

Liberal progressives do not reject pro-hunting arguments *prima facie*, but give them due consideration because they believe in the value of diverse and open debate (S40, +4). From this perspective, everyone can bring something valuable to the hunting debate and the notion that people who live in urban areas haven't really got a clue about how rural life works (S30, -4) is rather insulting – 'some of them read books!' (P32). This is reflected in a distaste for how arguments over 'rural life' are used as tools in the hunting debate: 'it's a fallacy, it's the assumption that you can only understand a thing if you are a part of that world… It's a lie, as far as I'm concerned' (P18).

The liberal-progressive viewpoint comprises a pragmatic opposition to hunting based on a rejection of standard pro-hunting arguments. There is a desire for a more rational, evidence-based debate on hunting that should include all relevant perspectives. Liberal-progressivism is open to considering alternative viewpoints. The anti-hunting stance is indicative of attitudes towards other animals and is underpinned by an animal welfare ethic.

Critical-Radical

The critical-radical stance shares a great deal with the liberal-progressive perspective but is conceptually distinct. The primary differences are in the critical-radical indifference to open debate (S51, 0), and an emphasis on the role of structural and political factors in the hunting debate. Factor 4 has an EV of 5.06 and accounts for 15% of the study variance. 11 participants are significantly associated with this position; 10 of these are also associated with factor 1.

Critical-radicals not only reject pro-hunting arguments about wildlife management, but also reject that the fox population needs to be controlled in the first place (S39, -4) because 'they're territorial, they produce more young than the territories available…the population numbers [sic] is controlled solely

by the breeding territories available' (P11). Moreover, the protection of livestock from fox depredation is a bone of contention because farming interests should not be a priority in deciding rural policies (S15, -3). This reflects a critical view of the farming industry, wherein farmers are 'thinking of the monetary value they're going to lose… not because of their poor little baa-lambs getting slaughtered' (P3). Rather, farming has a detrimental impact on wildlife and the rural environment:

> What are you trying to achieve through that management you know, the management that's going on isn't for the sake of wildlife. I don't buy this stuff about custodians of the countryside...a huge swathe of farming practices are you know, quite destructive... (P16).

The critical-radical viewpoint has a structural view of the hunting debate. The class structure favours hunters (32, +4). That hunting remains controversial at all reflects the powerful position that the community occupies. Critical-radicals reflect on the historical power structures that hunting symbolises:

> There was place for hunting in previous civilised societies…and there was a huge hierarchical structure where hunting played part of it...we are in a democracy, that hierarchy doesn't exist anymore, hunting remains one of the few relics of the medieval times where people still use the terms such as master and servant...it's a relic of a time when values were very different… (P10)

Power relations still shape the hunting debate today because hunting 'involves key elements of the upper echelons of society shall we say, to put it politely' (P3). The police are more interested in pursuing anti-hunting campaigners than people hunting illegally (S34, +2) and some people in the hunting community have a really arrogant attitude that they can do what they like (S31, +2). Critical-radicals connect this attitude to the treatment of animals:

I have a very clear memory of being ridden down by the then Sheriff of Northamptonshire shouting "Get out of my fucking way you bloody peasant!"...and this myth about them caring about their horses and caring about their dogs, the vast majority of dogs used in hunting never make the grade, and are brutally killed...I've seen huntsmen laughing at the side of the road whilst their horse is being put down…I don't see how they can be so heartless about other living creatures, but then I suppose if that's the environment you've grown up in, and that's all you've known... (P3)

Critical-radicals, in contrast to liberal progressives, suggest that we should give animals the same moral consideration as humans (S41, +3). There is no nice way to kill an animal (S12, +3) in this view, because 'there's just no nice way to take a life' (P17). The critical-radical opposition to hunting is political and structural in nature. It is critical of the structures that enable hunting and the system that continues to protect them. The arrogance of privilege in hunting is tied to a lack of respect for animals.

Countryside Management

Factor 2 has an EV of 4.31 and accounts for 13% of the study variance. Ten participants are significantly associated with this factor, two of whom are also associated with factor 3. Whilst this position is conceptualised as pro-hunting, not every participant who loaded on this factor self-identified as pro-hunting.

Countryside managers strongly disagree that there is no place for hunting in a modern, civilised society (S50, -5). The fox population needs to be controlled (S39, +3), but hunting is not *just* a form of pest control (S20, -3), but a combination of sport, management and pest control. Hunting is an effective way of controlling the fox population (S23, +2) and replicates the natural 'survival of the fittest' relationship (S20, +3). Hunting is an important social activity for people living in the countryside (S21, +2) and being out in the countryside is important for countryside managers (S17, +4). The British countryside isn't entirely natural (S8, +3); it exists in its current state because of man's[1] investment and management of it (S9, +3):

…wherever you want to go in the countryside, it's not natural, you'll see…oats, barley, wheat, you'll see a ploughed field; you'll see maize, you'll see grass….the countryside is a working countryside. If we left the countryside entirely on its own, we'd be looking at a jungle (P7).

Countryside managers argue that intervention in nature is necessary for a variety of reasons, not only for the benefit of wild animals (S14, -4). Wildlife can actually be worse off without human intervention (S13, -2) as 'there are plenty of times when conservation gets out of balance, because there is an overburden of one thing over another' (P12).

Countryside managers consider themselves animal lovers (S25, +6) and point out 'the suggestion is that people who go hunting are not animal lovers, but I think every one of them will tell you that they are' (P25). It vehemently disagrees that hunting is a form of gratuitous cruelty for the sake of entertainment (S22, -5) because 'it's just not what they're all about' (P5). It also rejects the upper-class stereotype of hunting people (S27, -3); 'I can guarantee I'm not posh. I can guarantee I don't go around the countryside shouting tally-ho, and I can guarantee that's a load of nonsense, that statement!' (P7). They also reject the implication of violence and aggression around hunting (S11, -4). Countryside managers believe the hunting debate is highly polarised and people do not think rationally about it (S4, +5). There is a desire for a diverse debate including a range of viewpoints (S51, +5) but 'people have very preconceived views of hunting' (P25). One participant talked about wanting to have a debate based on reasoned argument (P6). He did not see arguments such as the class structure as favouring hunters (S32, -3) as *arguments* against hunting, but superficial reactions to *people* who go hunting. Countryside managers suggest that people are against hunting because 'the majority of people don't understand it' (P33). They disagree that if hunts listened to their local communities they would see that the majority of people are against it (S5, -4), because 'they're fully aware of listening to people…and…I think they know they're right' (P33).

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This discourse presents an argument that being 'soft' about animals and wanting to cuddle them all the time is not really in an animal's best interests (S48, +2). People who work with animals have a different attitude than those who have animals as companions (S7, +4). In relation to hunting, 'animals in the wild have to be viewed differently to animals under our control, 'cause [sic] they are in the wild, so you have to deal with disease, number control, injured animals, in a different way' (P33). It is problematic when people have the same attitude to foxes as they do to their pet dog at home (P6). There is not a big difference between killing animals for food or sport (S40, -2) because 'killing is killing' (P5). People should treat animals with respect as sentient beings (S29, +2) but we should not give animals the same moral consideration as humans (S41, -3).

The countryside management viewpoint encompasses a stewardship approach to the British countryside and wildlife. Hunting with dogs is part of the manager's toolkit. Countryside management loves animals and the countryside but this has a specific meaning that is very different to animal protectionists.

Sporting Libertarian

Factor 3 has an EV of 2.87 and accounts for 9% of the total study variance. The discourse provides a defence of hunting as a legitimate sport rather than one of wildlife management. There is also a distinct libertarian streak in that proponents of this discourse express the view that hunting should be allowed even if others strongly disagree.

Sporting libertarians believe that farmers have a duty to protect their livestock from predators (S1, +5). This involves controlling foxes because the population does need to be controlled (S39, +3) and farmers' interests should be a priority in rural policies (S15, +2). However, sporting libertarians are not entirely convinced that hunting with dogs is the most effective way of controlling foxes (S23, -1). Several participants discussed more effective ways of killing foxes and pointed out that 'the hunt, they might get one, they might get two foxes on a day, which is nothing... people who go out shooting the

foxes, they can have like six, seven foxes in a night' (P29). Nonetheless, hunting is not simply inflicting gratuitous cruelty on animals for the sake of entertainment (S22, -6):

> I've done a lot of hunting in various forms, and at no point have I ever thought about deliberately inflicting suffering and injury and stuff to an animal. Yeah, they get killed, we all die and everything else…but I don't go out and think about being as painful and as cruel as possible…I was more wrapped up in the whole process of how things worked… for me, hunting's not about creating pain, misery or anything else…it's a sport. And I think it's one of the most natural sports that we do…and it's one of the things that we spend too much time suppressing and not doing… (P20)

This view argues that that hunting is a legitimate sporting activity and should be allowed to continue. It is not the most effective way of controlling foxes, but it does contribute and 'we do it for the farmers. We're not going out to terrorise round the country' (P8). Sporting libertarians vehemently disagree that there is no place for hunting in a modern, civilised society (S50, -5). It is 'utter bullshit' (P20) and 'there is a place for hunting, I think that's like saying there's no place for football in a modern society…it's a sport that not everyone agrees with. I don't like football, doesn't mean there's no place for it in a modern society' (P21).

Sporting libertarians view the human population as out of control (S49, +6). Humans are destructive and selfish, and have a detrimental impact on the countryside (S6, +4). Being out in the countryside is really important to sporting libertarians (S17, +5) but 'it's slowly disappearing…the human demand on housing…is taking it further and further away, and killing a lot of habitats for animals' (P9). Like critical-radicals, sporting libertarians agrees that wildlife is better off without human intervention (S13, +4) because we should 'let them sort theyselves [sic] out naturally' (P29). It is not a good idea to re-introduce higher predators like wolves to the UK (S42, -4). This is not only 'completely bizarre and stupid!' (P9) but it is another way of interfering with wildlife. Concomitantly, sporting libertarians maintain a distance between humans and animals and do not look at things from the animal's

perspective (S46, -2). Sporting libertarians, like critical-radicals, are cautious about describing themselves as animal lovers (S22, +2). For some, the term is associated with being soft about animals, which is not in their best interest (S48, +2). Sporting libertarians also care about the other animals involved in hunting and had the most experience of working with both horses and dogs in their day-to-day lives.

Sporting libertarians do not think that we should give animals the same moral consideration as humans (S41, -3) because 'human rights outweigh all animals, full stop. Why? Not a clue. I don't know why, because we're no more than an animal' (P20). There is no nice way to kill an animal (S12, +3) but killing is an inevitable fact of life.

Sporting libertarianism does not think that the class structure favours hunters (S32, -4). In fact, an inversion of the class argument is given – 'it is funny in't [sic] it. I think the emphasis on fox hunting, is all to do with class. It's this bloke with his red jacket on, people can't stand it, they can't stand the thought of it' (P20). From this perspective, some people are anti-hunting because they dislike the upper-classes, although this line of thought is not central to the discourse and was only expressed by two participants. Sporting libertarianism rejects the posh upper-class stereotype (S27, -2). It points out that 'some of them…are at the other end of the…social spectrum…it's quite a wide variety of people, especially in the countryside. I don't think I've ever heard anyone shout tally-ho, unless they were taking the mickey' (P28).

The sporting libertarianism discourse supports hunting with dogs as a legitimate sport. Although it does help control fox numbers there are far more effective ways. There is fatalist seam running through this viewpoint, with the condemnation of spreading populations and damage to the environment seen as an inevitable result of the human condition.

Discussion

These discourses provide an insight into the complexities of the hunting debate. They demonstrate the complexity of views on hunting beyond the pro/anti dichotomy. Importantly, for animal

protectionists at least, they indicate the extent to which animal welfare and animal rights perspectives are intertwined. Nonetheless, there are some subtle distinctions in how the two conceptualise animals. There are more fundamental differences in the way in which both countryside managers and sporting libertarians represent animals, in comparison to the anti-hunting perspectives. Analysis of these differences brings animals back into the centre of this debate. It serves as a reminder that hunting is not only a party political or class-based argument, but also encompasses some fundamentally divergent representations of animals.

It is possible to see liberal-progressivism as animal welfare and critical-radicalism as animal rights: liberal-progressivism emphasises the difference between killing animals for food and for sport; food is perceived as a necessity whereas sport is not. Critical-radicalism does not see much of a distinction – it is still taking a life. In this sense it has a surprising overlap with the sporting libertarian who maintains that 'killing is killing'. Of course, the two then part ways considerably over whether killing is acceptable or not. Despite these differences, the liberal-progressive and critical-radical positions have more in common than not. The majority of participants loading on these two factors subscribe to both in different measures. They share most similarity against pro-hunting discourses over a distaste for hunting beyond disagreeing with it for functional reasons. This gives reason to be cautiously optimistic about the animal protection movement overcoming the perceived dichotomy between animal welfare and animal rights. The considerable overlap between the two perspectives demonstrates that for the study participants at least, the two are not easily distinguishable. This is important for the anti-hunting movement as the pro-hunting lobby often seeks to divide and conquer; carving up animal welfare and animal rights, with the latter portrayed as a dangerous political agenda. One commentator describes the RSPCA's 'drift towards angry veganism, animal rights militancy and vengeful authoritarianism' (Purves 2015) as opposed to the organisation's roots as an animal welfare organisation. On this view, animal welfare and animal rights are mutually exclusive. My findings indicate that this is not the case, and that the two positions have more in common than not.

There are significant differences in the way in which pro- and anti-hunting positions represent animals. Both liberal-progressive and critical-radical discourses base representation in the argument that animals are sentient beings that can suffer and feel pain. This terminology is less salient for countryside management and sporting libertarianism. In both anti-hunting positions, interviewees also used stories and personal experience to build an affective argument for animal sentience. Several participants cited childhood experiences that had shaped their views from a young age:

> It goes back to my childhood and my uncle's slaughterhouse, and seeing the terror in their eyes, the screams, that drove home to me very clearly that animals do suffer, they do feel emotions, and again seeing - growing up in the countryside and seeing cows crying for their calves that had been taken away, yeah....it's very clear to me that animals do suffer, they do feel pain, fear, terror...and a lot of emotions that we do as well. It's something that's haunted me for much of my life (P3).

The first-hand experiences recounted by participants are important elements of these two discourses because they serve to build empathy with non-human animals and represent them as capable of pain and suffering: characteristics in common with humans.

All four positions portray nonhuman animals as moral patients in some way; due some kind of moral obligation from humans. This is seen most explicitly in the anti-hunting positions in their endorsement of sentience as a morally relevant characteristic that affords animals the status of moral patient. The liberal-progressive position also maintains that respect for sentience should be applied equally to different animals (S37, +5). By contrast sporting libertarians think that different animals should be treated differently:

> Your persona has to be different when you're dealing with a prey animal or a predator…if you approach a predator the same way you approach a prey animal, you're going to get two totally

different responses from them....you can't dominate a horse like you can dominate a dog, because the prey animal's mentality is different (P20).

Proponents of the countryside management position likewise argue in favour of differences across animals: prey and predator; wild and domesticated. These differences require different treatment because 'wild animals don't share the same characteristics exactly as domestic animals...otherwise they'd be traumatised every hour of the day, and they probably wouldn't last very long' (P33). The underlying argument is that wild animals do not feel fear in the same way as domesticated animals or humans. Thus they do not suffer the level of trauma that anti-hunting campaigners claim they do during the hunt (Countryside Alliance 2012). However, the ascription of moral patiency to animals in general is still present in pro-hunting discourses because 'they deserve to be looked after' (P7). Though the sporting libertarian position is less than enthusiastic about the concept of an 'animal lover', proponents do acknowledge that animals are due *something*, morally speaking: 'not so much as loving the animal, as giving the animal respect and basically giving it what it deserves, what I think it should have' (P22).

This leads us to another key difference in the discursive representation of animals: respect. All four viewpoints discuss their respect for animals but come to different conclusions. For liberal progressives and critical-radicals, respecting an animal means not hunting because 'that word respect, means politeness, love, caring...if you're polite loving and caring you don't rip apart somebody else' (P26). For both countryside management and sporting libertarianism, respect can mean killing an animal, but doing it properly: 'you can go and shoot a fox out in the park if you want, but they should be treated with respect really' (P7). From this perspective, hunting with dogs is a more respectful way in which to kill a fox. This view bears out Michael Woods' (1998; 2000) analyses of representations of the fox and the notion of 'fox as sporting foe' where the fox is represented as 'an equal and cunning contestant' (2000: 184) in a sportsman-like relationship between hunter and hunted.

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Another representative take on the fox is as vermin (Woods, 2000). This is also exemplified in the countryside management and sporting libertarian belief that farmers have a duty to protect their livestock from depredation by foxes. Here, livestock animals are due protection from their human custodians, for two reasons. For some, it was about 'when you see what a fox or a badger can do to animals' (P29), articulating the view of the fox as vicious vermin. Others however discussed the importance of protecting livestock for instrumental reasons - 'that's their [farmers'] living, that's their income, that's their life' (P21). The latter view is, as discussed above, met with criticism from the critical-radical take on farming and highlights a first-order disagreement between this position and pro-hunting viewpoints. Whilst the liberal progressive might cede that farmers need to protect livestock in some way, the critical-radical response is that 'farmers don't have a duty to keep livestock in the first place' (P16). Further first-order disagreement also exists over whether the fox population needs controlling at all. This makes agreement over the method of control unlikely, as there is disagreement over the very nature of the issue, as well as what to do about it. As such there is no consensus across the four perspectives on the terms of the hunting debate; it is not simply a question of *how* humane the hunting method but a fundamental disagreement over *what* the issue is in the first place.

Conclusion

Through focusing on the debate in the public sphere, this study articulates a debate more complex and nuanced than seen in media debates. Notably, party politics do not feature prominently in any of the four discourses, despite the study being conducted during the 2015 election campaign. Despite changing political conditions, the underlying beliefs and values represented here are not underpinned by party politics. The 'Tory toff' stereotype that has been perpetuated by both sides of the debate in Westminster was considered by participants but ultimately not taken seriously, with no viewpoint giving that notion a positive score in the Q study (see Table 2). However, previous analyses of the hunting debate in Westminster (Plumb and Marsh 2013) suggest that the debate is highly politicised,

increasingly along party lines. This indicates a possible disjuncture between the constellation of discourses in the public sphere and in the decision-making arena whereby the distillation of discourses in the public sphere are not represented in empowered debates. Future investigation should examine the ways in which discourses are transmitted between public and empowered spheres to understand how and why certain viewpoints fail to 'trickle up' (e.g. Boswell 2016).

The discourses produced by Q represent a best-possible estimate of a shared viewpoint. Factor analysis is by necessity a data reduction technique and a factor cannot represent the combined complexity of all the individuals who are associated with it. Although Q methodology does not claim to account for the range of individual views on a topic, there remains the possibility that certain viewpoints were unintentionally excluded. A small number of people invited declined to participate and it is possible that their opinions could comprise a distinct, additional viewpoint not accounted for by the four discourses described. However, given that saturation was reached during the study suggests that the full range of *shared* viewpoints have been included. Moreover, the results I present add complexity to a debate characterised by polarisation in more ways than one. Beyond the pro/anti-hunting dichotomy, the high correlation between the critical-radical and liberal progressive viewpoints supports the notion that individuals may subscribe to a number of viewpoints at any one time (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008).

By identifying and analysing the range of discourses on hunting, this paper provides a more nuanced view of the hunting debate, which over the years has increasingly been defined by party politics and polarisation. In addition, it shifts focus from headlines and Westminster debate to the public sphere and to animal themselves. Examining discursive representations of animals in this debate reveals fundamental disagreements over what animals are due in terms of moral consideration. However, despite the deep disagreement that we might expect in the hunting debate, this study also finds significant convergence between two perspectives often typified as mutually exclusive: animal welfare and animal rights. The high correlation of these positions, and the fact that many study participants subscribed to both in varying degrees, could serve to strengthen animal protection arguments against

hunting, and demonstrate a united front in the face of a pro-hunting lobby that seeks to divide and

conquer.

List of tables and figures

	Most disagree										**Most agree**		
Value	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
Frequency	1	2	3	4	5	6	8	6	5	4	3	2	1

Table 2: List of statements with factor array scores [page 6]

Statement number	Shortened Statement	Factor array scores			
		1	2	3	4
1	Farmers have a duty to protect their livestock from predators	0	+4	+5	0
2	Hunting is dangerous for the horses	+1	-1	+4	+2
3	Hunting is an important British tradition	-5	+1	+1	-5
4	The hunting debate is polarised and can be irrational	0	+5	+1	-1
5	The majority of rural communities are against hunting	+1	-4	-3	+1
6	Humans exploit the countryside for selfish reasons	+3	+1	+4	+3
7	People who work with animals have a different attitude to them	0	+4	+2	0
8	The British countryside isn't entirely natural	+1	+3	0	+1
9	The British countryside only exists because of man's investment	-2	+3	-2	+3
10	People hunt because they're adrenaline junkies	-1	0	-1	-1
11	There's a violent undercurrent around hunting	+2	-4	-4	+1
12	There's no nice way to kill any animal	-2	+1	+3	+3
13	Wildlife is better off without human intervention	0	-2	+4	+4
14	Humans should only intervene in nature if it is for the animal's benefit	0	-4	0	0
15	Farmers' interests should be a priority in rural policies	-1	+2	+3	-3
16	Everything people enjoy about hunting can be done with drag hunting	+1	-1	+3	+1
17	Being out in the countryside is really important to me	+2	+4	+5	0

No.	Statement				
18	During a hunt, the dogs cause damage and disruption	0	0	0	0
19	Drag hunting is less disruptive for the local community	+1	-1	+1	0
20	Hunting is just a form of pest control	-4	-3	-3	-4
21	Hunting is an important social activity and supports the rural economy	-3	+2	+1	-2
22	Hunting is a gratuitous form of cruelty on animals for the sake of entertainment	+3	-5	-6	+5
23	Hunting is the most effective way of controlling the fox population	-6	+2	-1	-6
24	Hunting with dogs replicates the natural 'survival of the fittest' relationship	-5	+3	0	-4
25	I consider myself to be an animal lover	+4	+6	+2	+2
26	I think the way the dogs are kept for hunting is cruel	0	-2	-5	1
27	I see posh, upper class types shouting 'tally-ho!' when I think of hunting people	-1	-3	-2	-1
28	Most people on a hunt are at the back and never see the animal being killed	-1	+1	0	-1
29	People should respect animals as sentient individuals	+6	+2	0	+6
30	Urban people haven't got a clue about rural life	-4	-1	-1	-2
31	People in the hunting community think they can do what they like	+1	0	-1	+2
32	The class structure favours and sustains hunting	+2	-3	-4	+4
33	The hunting community should have more of a say in deciding rural policies	-3	0	-1	-3

34	The police would rather catch anti-hunters than illegal hunters	-1	-2	0	+2
35	Worse things for animals than hunting should have been banned first	-2	0	+1	-2
36	My main concern about hunting is how the animal is killed	+2	0	-1	-2
37	All animals should be treated equally	+5	0	-1	+1
38	Hunting is very difficult to regulate	+1	0	+1	-2
39	The fox population needs to be controlled	-2	+3	+3	-4
40	There's a big difference between killing animals for food and for sport	+3	-2	+2	-1
41	We should give animals the same moral consideration as humans	0	-3	-2	+3
42	We need to re-balance the ecosystem by re-introducing wolves to the UK	-2	-1	-4	+1
43	I think the huntsmen do respect the foxes	-3	+2	-3	-5
44	Hunting wild animals is only OK if you need to do it to survive	+2	-6	-2	0
45	Anti-hunting campaigners get worked up about the wrong things	-4	+1	+1	-3
46	I try to look at hunting from the animals' perspective	+3	+1	-2	+2
47	It's silly to say that animals share human characteristics	-3	-1	0	-1
48	Being soft about animals is not really in their best interests	-1	+2	+2	-1

49	The only population out of control is us humans!	-1	-2	+6	+4
50	There is no place for hunting in a modern, civilised society	+5	-5	-5	+5
51	The hunting debate should include a wide range of people and viewpoints	+4	+5	+3	0
52	Terrier work is a particularly cruel and unfair practice	+4	-1	-3	+3

Table 3: Rotated Factor Matrix [page 9]

	FACTOR LOADINGS			
Q SORT	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
1	0.67X	-0.29	-0.03	0.42
2	0.27	-0.25	-0.10	0.29
3	0.39	-0.11	-0.16	0.69X
4	0.61X	0.04	-0.02	0.39
5	-0.05	0.63X	0.20	0.19
6	-0.08	0.70X	0.06	-0.20
7	0.05	0.54X	0.33	-0.34
8	-0.17	0.36	0.52	-0.44
9	0.10	0.30	0.65X	0.12
10	0.45	-0.07	-0.14	0.65X
11	0.39	-0.22	0.04	0.71X
12	0.14	0.54X	0.11	0.04
13	0.39	0.00	0.22	0.61X
14	0.65X	0.23	0.18	0.09
15	0.79X	-0.01	0.00	0.20
16	0.53	-0.34	-0.10	0.66X
17	0.43	-0.33	0.05	0.67X
18	0.70X	-0.07	-0.03	0.17
19	-0.09	0.58X	0.26	0.02
20	-0.21	0.43	0.54X	0.09
21	0.01	0.26	0.62X	0.07
22	-0.13	0.07	0.63X	-0.09
23	0.61X	0.01	0.01	0.48
24	0.69X	-0.21	-0.19	0.34
25	-0.04	0.67X	0.28	-0.36
26	0.49	-0.28	0.06	0.45
27	0.57X	0.03	0.02	0.36
28	0.12	0.47	0.43	0.00
29	0.02	0.07	0.60	-0.02
30	0.13	0.16	0.11	0.56X
31	0.72X	0.10	-0.20	0.27
32	0.49X	0.01	-0.01	0.33
33	-0.13	0.78X	0.11	-0.07

Table 4: Correlations between factors [page 9]

	1	2	3	4
1	1.00	-0.17	-0.09	0.76
2	-0.17	1.00	0.51	-0.32
3	-0.09	0.51	1.00	-0.08
4	0.76	-0.32	-0.08	1.00

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[1] The terms '*man*-made' and similar are used here because they reflect the language used by advocates of this position, exemplified by the Countryside Alliance: 'The British countryside has been created by man over centuries to meet human needs. In this man-made environment wildlife has to be managed. Mankind cannot abdicate its responsibility for the ongoing management of the countryside it has created' (Countryside Alliance 2012).

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