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# Ideological Coyotes: A more-than-human geography of landowners' discourse in the Foothills Parkland Region of Alberta, Canada

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Ideological Coyotes: A more-than-human geography of landowners'  
discourse in the Foothills Parkland Region of Alberta, Canada

by

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A THESIS

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## **Abstract**

This thesis presents a critical animal geography analysis of human-coyote relationships in the Foothills Parkland Region of Alberta, Canada. Concerned by large-scale reports of coyote killing in rural parts of North America, this thesis reveals discursive themes in interviews of landowners living alongside coyotes in the study area. Previous studies in North America have predominantly focused on why killing predators is not sound ecological practice. While some studies have begun to address human dimensions of perceived wildlife conflict, research has not attended directly to the discourse and ideologies behind the perceived conflict with coyotes. In this thesis, I identify that coyote management practices appear sociocultural and ideological rather than ecological in reasoning. In the more-than-human landscape of the Foothills Parkland Region, where livestock industry abounds, coyotes are discursively framed as pestilant and threatening bodies to many agricultural landowners. Yet, as the region has developed, becoming more heterogenous, views on coyotes are increasingly divided and polarized. This research explores how coyotes become social, cultural, political, and ideological creatures. While, overall, I find practices regarding coyotes are dictated by speciesism, my discourse analysis also identifies that ideologies of rurality, masculinity, and capitalism influence the human-coyote relationship. The Foothills Coyote Initiative provided 47 audio interviews which I transcribed, coded, and analyzed, identifying emergent discursive themes in landowners' reported relationships with coyotes. Bringing together disciplines of rural geographies and critical animal geographies, this thesis reveals the ideologies that sustain the practice of killing coyotes, offering insights on anti-predator attitudes across North America.

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I would like to thank the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksiká, Piikáni, and Káínai First Nations), the Tsúüt'íná First Nation, the Stoney Nakoda (Chiniki, Beaspaw, and Wesley First Nations), and the Métis Region 3 whose historical land I occupied throughout my master's degree. My studies and the Foothills Coyote Initiative Data all took place on their ancestral lands.

I am grateful for Dr. Dianne Draper of the Department of Geography at University of Calgary. As a collaborator of the Foothills Coyote Initiative, experienced qualitative researcher and second reader of this thesis, your advice and perspective were invaluable. Your thoughtful questions, suggested readings and time were invaluable.

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Alexandra Boesel

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to the beings of the Foothills Parkland Region, the moles, the gophers, the cats, the dogs, the deer, the elk, the cows, the lynx, the wolves, the cougars, and of course, the coyotes and the humans, in all their diversities and relations.

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## **Epigraph**

“How are the oppressions linked? Through the multiple processes of identity and hierarchy creation bolstered by the dualisms of human-animal, civilization-wilderness, society-nature, male-female, mind-body, white-black, and so on. To use Donna Haraway’s terms, ‘Western dualisms reflect the One’s domination of the Others: women, lower class people, nonwhites, and all those whose task is to mirror the unitary self’ (1991, page 177). What it means to be human can never be determined without the animal other. Who we are, and who and whether they are, are mutually reinforcing. As the last link in the ‘great chain of being’ (which begins with the privileged white male), their fates are not separable from our own. Thus, the contest over ‘nature’ is a fight over who we (human beings) are and will be”

Excerpt from *Are you man enough, big and bad enough? Ecofeminism and wolf eradication in the USA*, Jody Emel (1995)

## **Chapter 1: Introduction & Background**

Analyzing discourse produced from the Foothills Coyote Initiative (henceforth referred to as FCI, section 1.1), this thesis finds that coyotes in the Foothills Parkland Region of Alberta (FPR) are a species that have been imbued by humans with ideological significance. I examined interviews of local agricultural and rural residential landowners as they discussed living alongside coyotes, employing critical discourse analysis to identify common discursive patterns. I found that relationships between humans and coyotes are more complex than they seem; decisions regarding how to manage coyotes on agricultural and rural residential properties are informed by more than just ecological concern. In my analysis, I find FCI participants rely heavily on speciesist knowledge, with prejudices against coyotes that are informed in part by experiences, but more often by more-than-human ideologies. In interviews, I observed ideological discourses of rurality, capitalism, and masculinity emerge as prominent in forming human-coyote relationships.

This chapter introduces the methods and theory I used to come to these findings. It is organized into sections containing background information describing FCI and the interview data used in this thesis (section 1.1), the study site of the FPR (section 1.2), the ethics (section 1.3), and a statement of contribution (section 1.4). From there, I turn to my thesis focus (section 1.5), outlining my research question and objectives. Supporting my analysis, I provide key theoretical framework, describing my research paradigm (section 1.5) and use of discourse (section 1.6). I then describe my analytical methods (section 1.8). I complete this first chapter with a positionality statement (section 1.9), acknowledging my personal politics and role as researcher, and finally end the chapter with a brief conclusion (section 1.10). This chapter provides key information regarding this thesis, including the data I used, my analysis, and my positionality.

### **1.1 The Foothills Coyote Initiative**

FCI is a research project designed and carried out by Dr. Shelley Alexander, the principal investigator, and collaborator Dr. Dianne Draper. FCI used mixed methods to reveal how humans in the FPR relate to coyotes. Recognizing the complexity of perceived human-coyote

conflict, Alexander and Draper purposed this study to capture: 1) human dimensions, 2) landscape ecology, and 3) resource selection by coyotes, and to conduct a mixed-methods analysis of the previous elements. In my thesis, I focus on the qualitative data from interviews to reveal social and political ideologies informing human-coyote relationships.

### **1.1.1 FCI Background**

FCI explored how human experiences, perceptions, beliefs, sentiments, and actions intersect and inform outcomes for coyotes in the FPR (Alexander and Draper 2019a, 2019b). Underscoring the research are broad questions of the identification of worldviews, situated knowledge, and the interplay of the built environment with human perceptions. The research responded, in part, to calls from diverse fields for enhanced social science research in regard to socioenvironmental crises (Demeritt 2001; Kaika 2018; Pooley et al. 2017; Redpath et al. 2017). Environmental sciences broadly, and certainly disciplines of conservation sciences and animal geographies, have been slow to recognize the sociocultural and political-economic drivers behind wildlife management decisions (Peterson et al. 2010; Philo and Wilbert 2000; Pooley et al. 2017; Redpath et al. 2017; Wolch and Emel 1995). FCI responds to these numerous calls (Alexander and Draper 2019a; 2019b), providing a unique methodological framework for exploring human engagements with coyotes.

FCI collected data on human attitudes towards coyotes in a province where coyotes are offered little to no protection. In fact, it appears to me that provincial discourse stemming from policy documents suggests that killing coyotes may be inconsequential (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry 2017; Province of Alberta 2020). Albertans are not required to report killing coyotes. In fact, when an area would be perceived to be ‘overpopulated’ with coyotes, local governments sponsor coyote killing—paying bounties for evidence of each dead coyote body (Proulx and Rodtka 2015). In these actions, and others, the government of Alberta has made its stance clear on coyotes. They are officially labeled a ‘nuisance’ species (Province of Alberta 2020), and unofficially considered a pest throughout North America (Flores 2016; Kim 2015). It is clear from media analyses covering coyotes in Canada (Alexander and Draper 2019b; Alexander and Quinn 2012), that these legal and social discourses have material consequences

for coyote lives; it is legal to (and counties certainly do) host ‘coyote killing contests’ in which contestants are awarded financial prizes for killing coyotes (Marriot 2015).

In rural communities in the United States and Europe, where hunting is prevalent and livestock industries abound, killing predators seems to be commonplace and socially accepted (Emel 1995; Flores 2016; Skogen and Krange 2003). While this perhaps makes logical sense, it seems in fact to not only be bad for coyotes, but also possibly bad for business. Research indicates that killing coyotes may increase litter sizes, fertility, and the likelihood of transient coyotes moving in (McManus et al. 2015; Treves, Krofel, and Mcmanus 2016). Despite this research, the killing persists, suggesting that hunting coyotes may be more complex than a practical agricultural practice; instead, it appears to be a more persistent and enduring social and cultural tradition.

To understand why this paradigm persists, FCI’s research design centres the perspectives of rural residential and agrarian landowners to reveal the situated knowledges of rural residents living alongside coyotes in the FPR. FCI used multiple methods (some examples in Alexander & Draper 2019a; 2019b). In my thesis, I focus on qualitative data collected in the semi-structured interviews. Because FCI’s questionnaire constrains the data I use for analysis, I briefly outline the methods and design FCI researchers used in the following section.

### **1.1.2 FCI Methods**

Interviews began in August of 2015. Purposive sampling was used to identify the primary participants. Two contacts (one rural residential landowner and one agricultural landowner) were identified based on longstanding connections with the community. Three other key interview subjects were established when participants responded to a FCI media release (television, radio, and newspaper outlets) that called for participants. Subsequently, purposive snowballing (Dunn 2016) was used to gain more participants (initial participants recommended further participants). Engagement was always fully voluntary as per Research Ethics Board standards (see section 1.6.1).

Interviews largely took place in participants’ homes; only one participant opted to meet at a local café. Interviews took between 45 minutes and 90 minutes, with one exception that lasted over two hours. Interviews were semi-structured, following a pre-prepared questionnaire,

but allowing participants to take the interview in new directions. The interviews were comprehensive, collecting information on landscape changes on the property; the landowners' sentiments, experiences, and emotions regarding interactions with coyotes; and biodiversity and the implications for coyotes' resource selection.

## 1.2 Study Site

Research was conducted in the Foothills Parkland Natural Region of Alberta (Parks 2015). This natural region extends from the southern point of the town of Turner Valley to 100km north of the town of Sundre. From east to west, the region encompasses the most eastern city limits of Calgary to the Ghost River Dam at the base of the Rocky Mountains (see Figure 1;

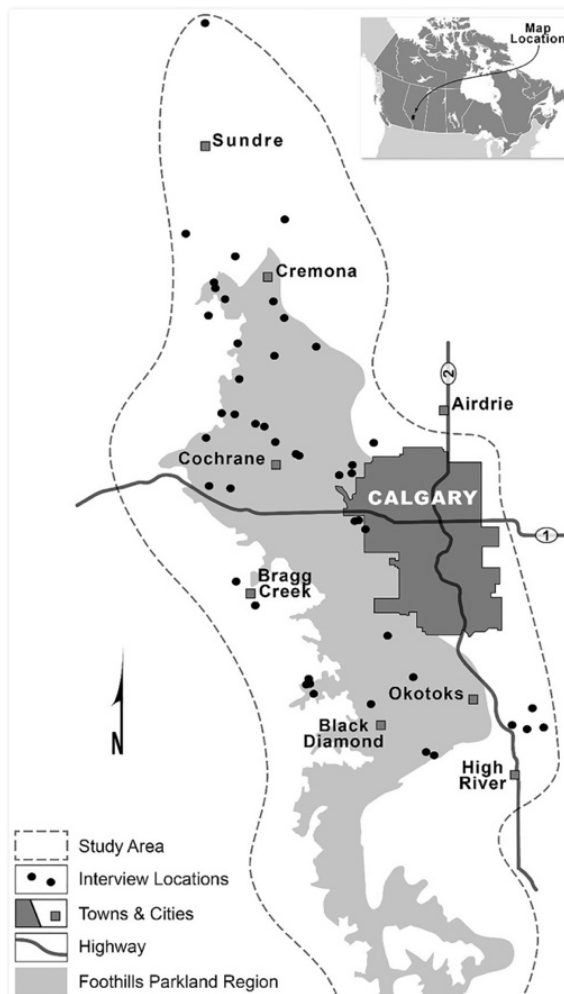


Figure 1 FCI Participant Interview Map (Alexander & Draper 2019b)

Alexander & Draper 2019b). This area is located on the ancestral lands of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksiká, Piikáni, and Káínai First Nations), the Tsúút'íná First Nation and the Stoney Nakoda (Chiniki, Beaspaw, and Wesley First Nations) and the Métis Region 3. These Treaty Seven lands (Epp 2008; Her Majesty the Queen and Blackfoot and Other Indian Tribes 1877) have undergone extensive modification, making the FPR one of the fastest developing areas of Canada (Ghitter and Smart 2009).

Development is characterized by the rapid growth of metropolitan Calgary and the diminishing agricultural mosaic of the Foothills (Ghitter and Smart 2009). Long populated by a European agrarian 'settler' population (Epp 2008), the landscape continues to transform as wealthy urbanites move into the surrounding rural areas to the west of Calgary (Epp 2008; Ghitter and Smart

2009). Former agricultural lands are now large rural residential developments.

These changes to the FPR since colonization were, in part, the inspiration for FCI. An objective of FCI analysis was to explore worldviews (2019b) and experiences of those who have superimposed themselves on the landscape (the worldviews, experiences, perceptions of the colonists), because it is this European conception of human-nature divide that is germane to the objectivization and killing of coyotes.

The FPR is, of course, a more-than-human landscape, replete not just with coyotes but wolves, grizzlies, black bears, cougars, caribou, moose, lynx, bobcats, chickens, sheep, cows, dogs, cats, ravens, magpies, mice, bees and more; all species play a role within the larger socio-political landscape (Philo and Wilbert 2000; Yarwood and Evans 2000). While less than 1% of the region is government protected, over 60% of it is used for grazing (Alberta Wilderness Association n.d.), and employed widely by wildlife residents. Providing food, companionship, sporting entertainment, capital, and more, nonhuman animals are essential to the ecosystem and industry of the FPR (Ghitter and Smart 2009). These more-than-human interactions are elaborated upon further in Chapter 3 (see sections 2.1 and 3.4).

### **1.3 Ethics**

My thesis evaluates interview data collected with research ethics approval from the University of Calgary in 2015 (Research Ethics Board Approval: REB14-0369).

### **1.4 Statement of Contribution**

Per the Faculty of Graduate Studies recommendations and requirements for ‘manuscript-style’ theses, this ‘Statement of Contribution’ will outline the ways in which other researchers, in this case Dr. Shelley Alexander and Dr. Dianne Draper, have contributed to this thesis.

Most centrally, FCI, which generated all the data analyzed in this thesis, was designed and carried out by Dr. Shelley Alexander, with support from Dr. Dianne Draper. Together, Alexander and Draper designed the FCI objectives, theoretical framework, and mixed-methods approach. Dr. Alexander secured a SSHRC (Social Sciences and Human Research Council) grant

which funded FCI, and as part of that, my graduate thesis. Dr. Alexander and Dr. Draper were also responsible for getting ethics board approval for FCI. After receiving approval, Dr. Alexander, often accompanied by Dr. Draper, performed in-situ in person interviews at 48 properties, collecting audio recordings of semi-structured interviews, field notes of interview responses, demographic surveys, and land parameters.

After the data collection was complete, Alexander and Draper analyzed the qualitative data in two manuscripts entitled *The Rules We Make That Coyotes Break* (2019a) and *Worldviews and Coexistence with Coyotes* (2019b).

My contribution is in transcribing the interviews, doing an in-depth analysis of the discourse that was produced from them, and writing this thesis to describe and discuss my results. I focus on concepts of more-than-human relationships and dynamics of speciesism to frame my critical discourse analysis of the FCI data. This discourse analysis is discussed in the third chapter (and manuscript), in which I outline emerging themes from the data. The manuscript, along with the rest of this thesis, has been reviewed by my advisor, Dr. Alexander. Drs. Alexander and Draper both serve on my supervisory committee, guiding this thesis, as my advisor and internal committee member.

## **1.5 Thesis Focus**

This thesis focuses on the human dimensions of the FCI dataset. I chose to focus on the interviews and how FCI participants described their relationships with coyotes, through adjectives, stories, and metaphors. Focusing on this discourse, I hope to better understand the ideologies behind human-coyote interactions in the FPR.

I give broad contextual information for my thesis in this section, stating my research questions and objectives. This research focus is supported by sections reviewing my choice in research paradigm (1.6), the fields of more-than-human and critical animal geographies (2.1) and rural geographies (2.3), and, finally, research on speciesism (2.2), which outline the key theoretical concepts employed in my analysis of FCI data.

### **1.5.1 Research Question**

The diversity of cross-sectional data that Alexander and Draper (2019a; 2019b) collected created multiple, rich areas of inquiry. And the pressure to produce a “good” research question is always high (Agee 2009; Stratford and Bradshaw 2016). As qualitative research expert Jane Agee maintains, “Good research questions do not necessarily produce good research, but poorly conceived or constructed questions will likely create problems that affect all subsequent stages of a study” (2009, p. 431). She further qualifies that qualitative studies, in particular, require an iterative process of questioning which becomes integral to the understanding and unfolding of others’ lives and perspectives (Agee 2009).

Luckily, I had the opportunity to listen to the interviews before selecting a question, giving me freedom to continually question what was important to understand about the perspectives of FCI participants in relation to coyotes of the FPR. The time I spent with the data also allowed for a more grounded process, my questions changing and evolving the more I became acquainted with the data (Charmaz 2017). Nonetheless, I initially struggled to distill and define my study focus.

Returning to the readings that have inspired me in multi-species works (Dave 2014; Govindrajana 2018; Hartigan 2017; Ogden 2011; Parreñas 2018) and in the overlapping field of critical animal geographies (Blue and Alexander 2017; Collard 2012; Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg 2015; Haraway 2008; Kim 2015; Sundberg 2011), I found one concept to be central, yet also flexible enough, to describe the vast diversity of human perspectives towards coyotes that the FCI dataset encompasses. Covering the broad spectrum of possible human-animal interactions, the concept of “relation” (rather than conflict, interactions, or encounters) acknowledges a more intimate relationship between human and nonhuman animals than the Western (and colonial) human-animal duality has acknowledged (Nadasdy 2007). However, research has also led me to believe that these relationships cannot be understood in isolation—they are inherently political (Darimont et al. 2018; Hobson 2007; Lopez 1978; Skogen and Krangle 2003). Thus, asking, “**How are landowners’ relationships with coyotes in the Foothills Parkland Region ideological?**”, I observe how politics and ideologies of speciesism, as well as ideologies of rurality, masculinity, and capitalism, inform human-coyote relationships in the FPR. I expand on the political nature of coyotes and other nonhuman animals in “2.1 More-than-human/animal geographies” and “3.5 A case study of speciesism”.



## 1.5.2 Research Objectives

Stemming from my research question, I have two research objectives:

1. To document FCI participants' evaluations and assumptions regarding coyotes and other nonhuman animal species; and
2. To identify ideologies that support ongoing violence towards coyotes and other nonhuman animals in the FPR.

The first objective, documenting evaluations of nonhuman animals, informs my analysis of how humans relate to various species within the sociocultural, political, economic, and ecological context of the FPR. This question specifically aims to detect the presence of speciesism, or the social hierarchy which assumes that nonhuman animal species can be valued differently based on their usefulness to humans (see section 2.2; also Bekoff 2013; Kim 2015).

The second objective, to identify ideologies that support ongoing violence towards nonhuman animals, is designed to reveal sociocultural, political, and economic social ideologies that reproduce violent practices towards coyotes. Identifying emerging themes in the ways that participants describe practices with coyotes, I document how species assumptions are formed in part by ideologies such as rurality, masculinity, and capitalism (see section 2.3 and Chapter 3). This research builds on Alexander and Draper's (2019b) analysis of worldviews, by discussing how participants' sociopolitical identities and ideologies inform their relationships with coyotes. This objective also follows in the footsteps of Emel's (1995) study of violence towards wolves in America (see section 2.1) and Krangle and Skogen's body of research on anti-wolf social alliances in Norway (see section 2.3; also Figari and Skogen 2011; Krangle and Skogen 2007; 2011; Skogen 2015; Skogen and Krangle 2003), by identifying sociocultural, political, and economic ideologies which support anti-predator attitudes. Analyzing discursive themes in FCI interviews, I argue that there are social, cultural, political, and economic influences which inform human-coyote relationships in the FPR.

These research objectives are supported by my research paradigm and key theoretical concepts discussed in the following sections (see sections 1.6, 1.7, 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3). I begin with a discussion of critical realism and discuss what it is and why I believe it is the best choice in research paradigm for this thesis. I follow this with reviews of significant more-than-human

geographies and speciesism literature, which have informed my process and inspired me throughout this thesis. I conclude with a review of what discourse is and its importance as it relates to my analysis of the FCI dataset.

## 1.6 Research Paradigm

Selection of research paradigm is essential (Winchester and Rofe 2016). Research paradigm, or a set of ‘values, beliefs, and practices’ (Hay 2016), which guides an academic’s approach to making sense of the world, dictates what questions we as researchers ask, what methods we use, and what conclusions from the data that we derive (Chalmers 2015; Livingstone 1992; Rosenberg 2011). Commitment to said research paradigm is critical to ensuring rigour in qualitative analysis (Winchester and Rofe 2016). Directing epistemology and ontology, research paradigms dictate many of the early choices in research questions and design, and inform results through the very final steps of analysis. Considering the FCI methods and resulting data, as well as my personal inclinations as an academic, I have committed to a critical realist perspective throughout this thesis.

Critical realism, per Andrew Sayer (2015), “argues that the natural and social worlds we study exist largely independently of the researcher, and that there is necessity in the world which enables and constrains what can happen” (p. 277). However, unlike more traditional realists, critical realists take a ‘bolder’ ontological stance, recognizing the existence of social constructions (Pratt 1996; 2009). ‘Social constructions’ are understood to be the ‘knowledge’ produced by various ideologies (Pratt 2013). Because not all ideologies are understood to be equally valid (i.e. sexism versus feminism), a basic tenant of critical realism is that knowledges are not necessarily equally ‘true’ or ‘valid’ (Newman 2020; Sayer 2010; 2015).

Critical realists, like poststructuralist thinkers, understand all knowledge to always be ‘theory laden’ (Sayer 2015). Following this, researchers are not understood to be impartial analysts, for they, too, can never escape certain discursive understandings (Sayer 2015). While critical realists acknowledge that the “world can only be understood in terms of available discourses” (p. 277), they are unlike poststructuralists in asserting that there is *more* to the world structurally than discourse. This understanding of both the materiality and the socially constructed nature of the world, Sayer (2015) and others (Stratford and Bradshaw 2016) argue,

makes critical realists uniquely positioned to take on ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel 1972) such as socioecological crises.

My thesis (and FCI more broadly it seems) employs a critical realist perspective to tackle the ‘wicked problem’ of human violence towards coyotes in the FPR (Alexander 2020). The semi-structured interviews and the sections that I focus on (named “experiential”, “sentimental” and “perceptual” in FCI questionnaire) reveal social practices and the cultures of landowners in the FPR (Newman 2020; Pratt 1996; 2013). I analyze the interviews and the practices the individuals describe, linking these to larger underlying ideologies within FPR society. I employ concepts of ‘social constructions’ to describe ‘commonsense knowledge’ concepts which stem from particular ideologies. For example, coyotes are socially constructed as a ‘nuisance’ in FPR policy discourse (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry 2017; Pest Management 2021; Province of Alberta 2020), which I argue is knowledge derived from speciesist ideology.

Human geographer David Demeritt writes more extensively on the different understandings of social constructions of ‘nature’ amongst various research paradigms (2002). He broadly finds that there are two ways in which researchers use social constructions of ‘nature’ in their methods (Demeritt 2002). These are ‘construction-as-refutation’ and ‘construction-as-philosophical-critique’ (Demeritt 2002). Demeritt (2002) claims that positivists, realists and critical realists use ‘construction-as-refutation’ to deride certain knowledges; more ‘radical sorts’, he argues, use ‘construction-as-philosophical-critique’, questioning the “culture/nature, subject/object and representation/reality dualisms that provide the conventional philosophical foundation for distinguishing true conceptions of nature from false ones” (p. 67). Ironically, I find the dualism that Demeritt (2002) creates between these two uses of constructionism both handy and problematic. While these categories help an early career researcher (such as myself) identify their own theoretical framework, this dualism also masks the complexity of critical realists’ understanding of ontology (Pratt 2013; Sayer 2015). Fortunately, Demeritt (2002) elaborates, adding that critical realists acknowledge that concepts of nature (and dualisms such as society/nature or human/animal) are socially constructed, but “insist on upholding ‘the difference between the acts of material construction and the acts of construing, interpreting, categorizing or naming’” (Sayer 1997 quoted in Demeritt 2002; p. 780). Following Demeritt (2002), critical realism provides the ideal understanding of social construction. The paradigm recognizes bolder

ontologies than positivism does while still thinking critically about constructions of nature in congruence with the epistemology they stem from.

Believing that the social and natural worlds that we researchers study are fairly stable entities (Pratt 2009; Sayer 2010), critical realists use their understanding of constructionism to refute ‘bad science’ and/or other problematic knowledges (Demeritt 2002). Demeritt (2002) writes that in using constructionism to refute certain knowledges critical realists deviate from post-structuralists, who maintain that all discourses are equally valuable and truthful. I, however, agree with human geographers like Andy Pratt (1996), who claim that post-structuralist and constructivist views are not as at odds with critical realists as Demeritt (2002) and others suggest. Pratt (1996) argues that critical realism *does* take language seriously, analyzing discourses in tandem with the ideologies they are related to. Advising geographers against the pitfalls of a naïve realist approach which takes words simply at face value, Pratt (1996; 2009; 2013) argues for discourse analysis, a method most commonly associated with Foucault and post-structuralism (Graham 2005; McLaren 2009), in reference to rural geographies. Pratt (1996) claims,

*it can be argued that those studying, or living within and without, rural localities constitute them in particular ways through language. Whilst one may accept that there are thus a multiplicity of meanings all of ‘equal’ value what is significant here is power. Though we may not be able to point to a ‘true’ rurality, it may be possible to identify certain discourses about rurality that serve to enable and support the reproduction of particular uneven social relations, economic distributions and social stratifications. (p. 69-70)*

This critical realist perspective, which recognizes the role of discourse in constructing localities, yet also examines discourses differently given the power that produces them, is essential for my thesis discourse analysis. Attempting to deconstruct violence towards coyotes, I identify the discourses that serve to reproduce hierarchical social structures between humans, coyotes, and other nonhuman animals. Unlike a post-structuralist, I do not view these discourses as ‘equal’, but rather as knowledge that often stems from a problematic and oppressive ideology, speciesism (see section 2.2). Utilizing critical realist approaches to both social constructionism (Demeritt 2002) and discourse (Pratt 1996), my thesis attempts to identify hegemonic ideologies and illustrate their impacts on coyotes in the FPR.

Following this discussion of critical realism, I next provide a brief literature review on the concept of ‘discourse’. Because this term is used so broadly, and with different implications

between critical realism and post-structuralism, a review that contextualizes my use and understanding of discourse is critical. This next section (1.7), reviews preeminent scholars' works on the matter and present how I employ the concept.

## 1.7 Discourse

Discourse, as Cresswell (2009) notes, is a term used with high frequency but with little consistency. Personally, I like the definition given by Diamond and Quinby (1988) who state that discourse is “a form of power that circulates in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance” (p. 185). Materially, discourse can vaguely and broadly describe both written and spoken language, while in other contexts it refers more specifically to representations, with specific theoretical significance stemming from post-structuralism and, often, the philosophy of Michel Foucault (Cresswell 2009).

Foucault, a leading philosopher of the post-structuralist movement, found that discourses were productive of power and that all truths and knowledges emerge from particular discursive formations, and thus dictate what is possible to say, think and do (Cresswell 2009). Problematizing notions of ‘truth’ as simply a powerful discourse, Foucault found that discourse even recreated divisions of what was socially normal and abnormal, such as sexuality (Berg 2009; Foucault 1977; 1990). Foucault popularized the concept that discursive processes are productive; as Cresswell (2009) writes, “Objects and subjects are not external to this process but are thoroughly constituted through it” (p.211). In his pronouncement of the societal import of discourse, Foucault’s name will likely forever be associated with the methodology of discourse analysis. However, Foucault’s understanding of discourse is not without its critics and alternatives (Steady et al. 2016).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), for example, serves as an alternative to Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. Based in a critical realist framework, Fairclough’s CDA attempts to ascertain the ideologies behind what becomes construed as ‘commonsense knowledge’ (Steady et al. 2016). The goals of CDA are counterhegemonic, attempting to disrupt “‘ideological and political effects of discourse’, as well as the social identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge it prescribes” (Steady et al. 2016; p. 167).

In this way, CDA serves as a strong alternative to post-structuralist Foucauldian discourse analysis which has been critiqued for its antirealism. For example, an advocate of Foucault, Ian Hacking, has written extensively to promote that there is a difference between a ‘tramp’ and a ‘waterfall’ (Cresswell 2009). His efforts are necessary because a ‘strong’ reading of Foucault might suggest that there is nothing beyond discourse. To take this critique a step further, as Cresswell (2009) has done, if there is nothing more ‘real’ than discourse, than how do we judge truths that discourse has constructed? Are homophobic or racist discourses valid?

Not strongly tied to the existence of anything beyond ‘discourse’ (Cresswell 2009), Foucault’s ontological instability makes this type of discourse analysis a less appealing choice for researchers interested in more transdisciplinary work. Multiple scholars have noted the fact that geographers must learn to work across disciplines in order to affect meaningful change (Castree et al. 2014). But, as Alexander (2017) notes, this will be impossible if we do not have the common language and understandings to do so. A post-structuralist understanding would not allow animal geographers to connect with the entirely realist (and positivist) research of biologists and ecologists (Alexander 2017; Parathian et al. 2018). While still challenging, CDA allows us a common understanding of the natural world at least—enough to start a conversation.

Critical realism’s focus on ideologies producing discourse also offers us a counterhegemonic path forward. We are not stuck in the same position as Hacking trying to defend within a poststructuralist paradigm that a tramp and a waterfall are different (Cresswell 2009)—we know this. As critical realists, we can recognize that a tramp (or a pest for that matter) is a social construction, made up through certain ideological practices, and that there is materiality and reality about a waterfall that cannot all be described through discourse. As animal geographers, while we attempt to demonstrate socially constructed differences in the human-animal dualism, we also recognize material heterogeneity within the animal kingdom. We, as researchers dedicated to making material differences for animals, need to reckon with the real social constructions of discourse *and* a reality beyond it. Analyzing ideologies—like speciesism—which create certain discursive patterns, and reproduce certain powerful social structures and cultural practices, gives us a starting point for social change.

In this thesis, I treat the FCI interviews as discourses. While the FCI participants are not powerful producers of discourse in the traditional sense (Sharp and Richardson 2001), as landowners in a more-than-human geography, I argue that they are influential producers of

discourse. Powerful producers of situated knowledges, the FCI participants' discourse is related to their actions in relationships with coyotes. Their discourse, which arises from responses to questions posed in the FCI interviews, can be indicative of whether a coyote (or any other nonhuman animal) might live or die on any given property. If this is not power, I am not sure what is.

While I treat all interviews with a feminist ethic of care, listening to, transcribing, and analyzing interviews with compassion (Eubanks 2009; TallBear 2014), I also take a critical stance against some discourses. To me, some of these discourses appear intimately intertwined with ideologies of speciesism, sexism, and sometimes even colonialism. I have the utmost respect for the FCI participants and also believe that some of their discourse produces false knowledge which stems from flawed ideologies (i.e. speciesism) and analyze their discourses as such.

In the following section, I have outlined my choices and steps in analyzing these discourses to the best of my ability. Many scholars have acknowledged that discourse analysis is not a method with clear framework or steps to follow (Berg 2009; Lees 2004). I would agree, adding that clear methods are challenging to outline when it is so much the positionality of the analyst and their choice of discourse that dictates the course of the methods (Steady et al. 2016). I have tried to outline my process clearly, as well as state my own motivations and positionality clearly in section 1.9.

## **1.8 Methods**

In this section, I outline my methods used to analyze existing FCI data, beginning with the transcription of 47 interviews (the audio recording for one of the 48 interviews was not collected). I then turn to my analytical process, including coding methods and a practice of keeping a reflexivity journal. While qualitative methods (particularly discourse analysis) are often described in generalities, as there is no 'one way to do it' (Araujo, do Carmo, and Fraga 2019; Hajer and Versteeg 2005; Steady et al. 2016), I have attempted to lay bare my methods, choices, and positionality in this analysis.

As researchers have identified, analyzing large qualitative data sets can be challenging (Cope 2016); one has to be organized and methodical to “make sense” of the data (Cope 2016). This was certainly true for my experience as an early-career scholar sorting through the large and comprehensive FCI dataset.

An expert in human geography methods, Meghan Cope (2016) maintains that despite the vast and diverse forms that qualitative methods are taking, several principles remain valuable, namely “organizing and reducing data to manageable chunks, identifying themes, and paying attention to rigorous interpretation” (p. 374). Following Cope’s (2016) recommendations, these principles have been central to my methods throughout this thesis.

### **1.8.1 Memos and Data Reduction**

I first received the 47 audio recordings of the interviews in early 2020. I started by listening to several interviews, making memos noting recurring themes or questions within the FCI questionnaire that tended to yield more elaboration from participants. Quick and informal, these memos were my casual analytical space for noticing emerging themes and deciding which sections of the interviews I would include and exclude. Reducing my overall data and beginning to identify themes was a critical step in “making sense” of the data (Cope 2016).

These decisions to exclude parts of the interview from my analysis were not all made at once. While initially listening to interviews and making memos, I decided to exclude the responses to the section “Emotion Research” (see Table 1). In this final section of the interview, participants were shown a photo of a coyote in various contexts and asked to select from a range of emoticons, indicating how they felt when they considered the situation. I decided to exclude this data for several reasons. First, I did not have immediate access to the hardcopies in which the participants marked their emotional selection. Second, while listening, I found that this section of the questionnaire was not producing as much audible discourse. Third, I had realized early on that to complete my masters within a two-year period, I would need to reduce the data that I was working with. FCI produced an immense amount of interview data for a qualitative study (with 48 in-depth interviews; see Table 1 for final list of inclusions and exclusions).

The next section of data I decided to exclude was the “Biodiversity Checklist”. Aimed in part at providing further context for coyotes’ resource selection (Alexander and Draper 2019a),



this section also delivered fascinating discourse for how participants saw other species in the FPR. Excluding this section was a challenging decision to make—with some participants, the discourse produced was minimal, including mostly “yes” and “no” responses. However, other participants shared an interesting and complex hierarchy of species’ evaluations. There is certainly a wealth of information to be analyzed in this section of the interviews.

The final data reduction choice I made was to not include the researcher’s (usually Drs. Alexander or Draper) audio in the transcription. I made this decision for several reasons. First, the questions remained relatively unchanged from interview to interview, and thus did not warrant transcription. If additional questions were asked, I found that I could abbreviate the question in shorthand (and in brackets) right before transcribing the participants response, conveying relevant context. Second, while I acknowledge that interviewer’s communication style and identity does certainly impact the responses from the participants (Dunn 2016; Waitt 2016), analyzing the researcher’s role and responses was outside of the scope of my master’s research and not relevant to my analysis.

<b>Section of FCI Questionnaire</b>	<b>Included</b>	<b>Excluded</b>
Situational		X
Experiential	X	
Sentimental	X	
Perceptual	X	
Biodiversity Checklist		X

*Table 1 FCI questionnaire inclusions and exclusions for discourse analysis*

Finally, as many qualitative researchers choose to do (Dunn 2016), I did not transcribe the interview preamble and introduction, as well as parts of the “Situational” section. Dr. Alexander often introduced the research (and herself) while giving participants a small gift (usually a tin of maple syrup) before beginning the interview. Because I was not transcribing Dr. Alexander’s participation in the interview, this was excluded. I then chose not to include the “Situational” section because the answers were typically quite short and quantitative in response. I took notes on this section; additionally, answers to situational questions had also already been recorded in an excel sheet by Dr. Alexander.

## 1.8.2 Transcribing

Once initial decisions were made on which data to include, I began transcribing in NVivo 12 (QSR International Pty Ltd 2020), which is a popular transcription program for qualitative studies (Araujo, do Carmo, and Fraga 2019; Cope 2016). As other scholars have noted (Dunn 2016; Fraser 2004), the process of transcribing was productive; I found that this slow, repetitive work provided an opportunity for me to become intimately acquainted with the participants and interviews over several months. This process provided an initial opportunity for me to observe themes, using memos to record any emerging patterns in data (Charmaz 2017; Cope 2016). The time spent transcribing was not always easy; some participants expressed violent experiences and feelings. I used the same journal in which I kept my notated memos of interviews to also document my own personal experience of the interviews, acknowledging that my positionality as a researcher is intimately entangled in my analysis of these interviews (Eubanks 2009; McLaren 2009; Steacy et al. 2016). I elaborate on this more in methods section 1.8.4.

I transcribed the interviews in NVivo12 rather than using a transcription software because of privacy and ethical concerns. Many transcription software systems require that data is uploaded to the provider's website before they can transcribe. This presents multiple privacy concerns. First, uploading participants' audio recordings was not part of FCI's informed consent agreement. Second, many transcription service providers are based in the United States and their servers there store their uploaded audio recordings and transcriptions. Data stored within the United States is subject to the Patriot Act, allowing the government access to it should it be deemed necessary, thus presenting another privacy and ethical concern.

In contrast, NVivo12 allows you to download software onto your computer and transcribe directly on your computer. No transcriptions are uploaded to any servers, minimizing risk for data breaches. Furthermore, interview data on my computer was kept anonymized. Interviews were only identifiable by number; no names or addresses were linked to the files.

More information is, however, provided with sections of transcriptions in Chapter 3 to give appropriate contextual information. Gender information and time in situ (number of years spent in the FPR) are provided to give the reader relevant context. To maintain participants anonymity throughout this analysis, interviews are still identified by number in the discourse analysis in Chapter 3. In the discourse analysis, when referring to the participant associated

which each interview, I continue use of the interview number (i.e. Participant 1 in reference to interview 1). The interview numbers were essential in both anonymizing the data, yet also allowing readers to have some information regarding the positionality of the FCI participant.

### **1.8.3 Coding**

Coding is an essential process in most forms of qualitative analysis (Saldaña 2021; Waitt 2016). Methods expert Gordon Waitt (2016) notes that it is a critical tool for qualitative geographers—especially for discourse analysis. While coding, the researcher both organizes and analyzes source materials (Waitt 2016). According to expert grounded theorist, Kathy Charmaz, codes provide a “critical link” between data collection and the results that are drawn (Saldaña 2021 c.f. Charmaz 2001).

My experience with coding certainly aligned with the experiences presented by the aforementioned qualitative researchers. First, I began with an initial round of manual (handwritten) coding. This first round, as many researchers describe, is often essential for organization and codebook development (Cope 2016; Saldaña 2021; Waitt 2016). I read through all my recently transcribed interviews and in a notebook, noted the interviews, and the transcribed audio that seemed most interesting to me. These informal notes, or analytic memos (Cope 2016), served as the basis for what later became, codes, and then themes in my thesis analysis (Saldaña 2021).

The first cycle of coding, as other scholars have noted (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014; Saldaña 2021), employed (and generated) a mix of different types of codes. I employed in vivo coding (noting of regular phrases used; i.e. “live and let live”), emotion coding, value coding, and more (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014; Saldaña 2021). These codes, respectively, organized what participants said by common phrasing, emotions, and values, attitudes, and beliefs (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). This initial round of coding, done both manually, and subsequently in NVivo12, a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (or CASDAQ), helped to identify commonalities amongst discourses (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). Once this initial cycle of coding was complete, I spent time revising, renaming, and reorganizing codes (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). This was a vital step in helping me conceptualize how some of these codes were related or relevant—or not.

Once this revision and reinterpretation of codes was complete, I felt ready for second cycle coding, which involved more complex analysis, linking codes to theory, such as pattern coding and versus coding (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014; Saldaña 2021). Pattern coding, as Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) identify, consists of four elements which are often related. These are 1) categories or themes; 2) causes or explanations; 3) relationships; 4) theoretical concepts or social constructs. To further illustrate this point, I give an example of one of my first cycle in vivo codes and how it became a pattern code. An in vivo code is created to capture phrases or ideas that are commonly said (Cope 2016; Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014; Saldaña 2021). In the FCI interviews, a commonly mentioned concept was that coyotes had a ‘place within the ecosystem’. This became one of my initial in vivo codes. Later, I came to recognize larger concepts of ‘place’ that linked to theories that are common in third wave animal geographies (see following section “2.1 More-than-human/animal geographies”). Thus, ‘place’ became a pattern code that was a theme, a potential cause for perceived human-coyote conflict, and a ‘critical link’ between the data and my theoretical framework.

Versus coding, or coding which identifies socially constructed binaries or polarities (as outlined by Saldaña 2021), also became a critical part of second cycle coding. For instance, I developed value codes during the first cycle for many different nonhuman animal species (i.e. coyotes, cats, dogs, cattle, chickens, etc.). These value codes later became interpreted as part of a dualism, humans versus animals. Due to pervasive speciesist ideologies, nonhuman animals are often valued as less than (as elaborated on in “2.1 More-than-human/animal geographies” and “2.2 Speciesism”), and thus coding for this hegemonic dualism was a key step in my analysis. Another example of versus coding was ‘rural vs. urban’. Participants often had strong values attached to their either ‘rural’ or ‘urban’ political identity. Building their political identities through discourse (Gee 2011), participants expressed strong feelings about the ‘other’ in the FPR. For more urban-identifying participants, the rural ‘other’ were “rednecks”, a slang term often used pejoratively to describe white-working class people in rural locations (Morris 2008). For rural-identifying participants, the more urban/suburban ‘other’ were ‘acreage people’ or ‘city people’.

My experience with versus coding was extremely helpful for linking emergent patterns in the data with theory. As Saldaña (2021) notes, versus coding is particularly helpful “for policy studies, gender studies... critical discourse analysis... and qualitative data sets that suggest

strong conflicts, microaggressions, polarization, or competing goals within, among, and between participants” (p. 174). This was certainly true in its application to the FCI dataset; versus coding illustrated the dualistic political identities that people construct, which further support social hierarchies between humans and animals, urban and rural, and men and women (Gee 2011; Saldaña 2021).

Coding was essential to my synthesis and analysis of this large qualitative dataset. It was an emergent and iterative process; while names such as ‘first cycle’ and ‘second cycle’ coding (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014; Saldaña 2021) suggest something more linear, this process was in fact repetitive and circular, as new codes emerged with even the third review of the data. The fourth review of the data revealed no new first cycle codes and only minimal revisions to second cycle codes, leading me to decide that the coding process was complete.

#### **1.8.4 Reflexive Journaling**

In alignment with a critical realist and feminist tradition, I do not see my position as researcher to be one of all-knowing objectivity, or the ‘god trick’ as Haraway coined it (1991). Rather, I see my positionality as situated, formed by my embodied knowledge (Cope 2016; Waitt 2016). Knowing that my lived experiences feed and inform my responses to this data (Eubanks 2009; Steacy et al. 2016), I believe it to be essential to my research process to annotate my own emotional experience of sifting through this data. To critically reflect on my own positionality, I kept the practice of reflexive journaling throughout my coding process. I also wrote a positionality statement to attempt to locate and make clear my political identity and lived experience as it pertains to my research. My positionality statement in the following section begins with an autoethnographic moment which reflects on my own first experience with coyotes (mirroring a question asked of FCI participants).

### **1.9 Positionality Statement**

When I was young (maybe five years old), my family went on a vacation to Palm Springs. My father worked days at a conference, while my mother, younger brother, and I toured around the

desert. A young family, my parents would save money on vacations by tagging along to my father's paid work trips, enjoying the excitement of motels, rental cars, and new cities.

In Palm Springs, in our rented sedan, in the heat of the summer afternoon sun, my mother drove my brother and I around the desert. Along a two-lane road, my mother slowed the car. Two coyotes sauntered in front of us. With our car windows rolled down, the coyotes lifted their heads, their noses catching the smells of the roast beef sandwiches my mother had packed for the day.

Perceiving the coyotes to be hungry and quite thin, my mother tossed the roast beef sandwiches from the car as the coyotes approached. From the back seat, my brother and I watched, in awe and amazement, as the wild canids accepted the roast beef sandwiches, eventually trotting off to enjoy their spoils. Turning to us in the backseat, she told us that we should never feed wildlife. Remembering this event, she now says it was a “do what I say, not what I do” kind of parenting moment. While I understood this multi-species meeting to be magical, intimate, and perhaps generous (we were after all sharing our lunch), my mother indicated that it was more complicated.

I am not sure I understood the consequences of such a meeting fully until I was much older. After working in multiple wildlife hospitals and seeing indirect and direct anthropogenic harms to wildlife firsthand, the memory was recoded with new knowledge. Rather than being magical and rare, an intimate meeting of human and wild animals, the memory was complicated with remorse. I came to understand that the coyotes, who had approached the car quite willingly, had likely been fed before. They had learned the behavior of tourists and with their new knowledge, acquired bravery around humans. They were ‘habituated’, putting the coyotes at high risk for perceived conflict with humans. Not showing fear towards humans, as many of our participants say, is a reason to kill a coyote (Alexander and Draper 2019a).

I share this story for two reasons. First, I wanted to share an answer to one of the questions asked of our participants, regarding their earliest encounter with a coyote. They were honest and vulnerable in their stories and feelings, sharing instances of regret, and I hope in this anecdote to have done the same. Second, I hope this story illuminates (perhaps indirectly and vaguely) some aspects of my positionality, introducing my childhood experiences and subsequent values.

When considering my positionality, I believe there are several key elements that are important to share with respect to this research. First, I grew up white and privileged. Second, I was socialized to be a girl, and later a woman, in a society that is still patriarchal in design. Third, I am now a researcher, and as such, have an immense amount of power and responsibility in my analysis.

Growing up white and in a safe suburb of the Bay Area in Northern California, I had an idyllic childhood. Spending my days hunting for insects, caring for our chickens, chasing after our cat, and later being chased by our family dog, I was sheltered from most pain and suffering. While my mom worked when I was young, making enough to buy my family home while my father was a non-profit consultant, she left the work force when I was five. My dad had secured a full-time job and my mother, having worked long hours at a start-up company while facing relentless misogyny in the workplace, decided she was ready to stay at home for a while and enjoy raising her children.

While my childhood was happy and uncomplicated, puberty brought with it growing pains. Maturing from girl to woman, I increasingly felt aware of societal expectations. As a young woman, I learned that my body was no longer merely an extension of my wants and dreams, good for finding bugs, playing with animals, reading, and more, but also an object of desire for the male gaze (Beltrán 2018). Through puberty, I began to learn acceptable rules for womanhood. Rather than hunting for bugs, I learned fear of spiders. Rather than wrestling with my younger brother, I learned to sit quietly, cross my legs, wear mascara and eyeliner, and fasten an underwire bra. Instead of boasting about my most recently finished trilogy of mythical novels, I began to watch *America's Next Top Model*, and *The Bachelor*, learning the rules of how to be a desirable woman to men, later dreading the validation of this.

My story is not one of intersectionality of oppression (Crenshaw 2003). Yet, my gendered experience in this life (and the stories of my mother's and grandmothers' lives) has given me a subaltern perspective (Haraway, 1991). It has informed my interest in power and oppression. It has informed my desire to affect change and to challenge hegemonic systems. It likely has even informed my interest in persecuted species like coyotes. After all, gender is just one of many synergistically related social hierarchies, like race, species, sexuality, ability, and more (Kim 2015).

While my gender informs my perspective, so does my privilege. In the context of this thesis, my most privileged position is my role as a researcher. As critical scholars have become increasingly aware, our own individual positionalities are inextricably intertwined with the research we produce (Elwood 2006a; Eubanks 2009; Wakefield 2007). This, in turn, produces certain ‘knowledge politics’ (Elwood 2006a), which can produce uneven social practices (Sheppard 2005; TallBear 2016; Tuck 2013). At its worst, researchers can produce or reproduce knowledge and dynamics that further stigmatize and marginalize vulnerable groups (TallBear 2016; Tuck 2013). In the context of my thesis, while the FCI participants are not significantly vulnerable—they are all white and for the most part, appear to be financially stable—it seems critical to both the spirit of the larger FCI research project and to my academic praxis (Wakefield 2007) to treat participants’ recorded experiences and reactions with care and understanding (Eubanks 2009; TallBear 2016). For ultimately, I believe that systems of oppression will only be dismantled with tools of care, rather than the violence and judgement that were used to construct them (Lorde 1984).

Increasingly, scholars have highlighted that with our power, we have the ability to affect positive social change (Cahill 2007b; Finney 2014); we can be scholar-activists (Pulido 2008; Wakefield 2007). These scholars have inspired me. I, too, aim for social change—working towards dismantling speciesist and other socially constructed and oppressive hierarchies. By identifying discourse that is harmful, that is based in harmful ideologies that produce damaging knowledge, I hope to challenge the violent status quo between humans and coyotes in the FPR.

## **Synthesis 1.10**

In this chapter, I have presented key background information. I described FCI, and the interviews which I had the benefit of analyzing. I discussed the study site, the FPR. I briefly touched on the history of these lands, which I expand on more in section 3.4. I present the ethics approval and provide a statement of contribution, giving credit to the principal investigator, Dr. Shelley Alexander, and her co-investigator, Dr. Dianne Draper, who collected the FCI interviews upon which this thesis is based. I put forward my thesis focus, both in my research questions and my research objectives. I discussed my research paradigm, critical realism, and provided a brief literature review on discourse. My understandings on both topics are essential to the way that I



approached and analyzed the FCI participants' interviews. I provide my methods for data reduction, transcribing, and coding. To be consistent in my dedication to a critical realist perspective, I feel it is important to acknowledge my own politics and positionality as a researcher, and thus included in my methods a practice of reflexive journaling, which was followed by a positionality statement in this thesis.

This chapter has provided key information on the data I used, my thesis focus, my theoretical framework, my methods and my positionality. The next chapter provides an in-depth and focused literature on more-than-human and animal geographies, as well as key ideologies that emerged in the data. These first two chapters provide the necessary background to support my analytical claims in this thesis.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In this chapter, I provide the relevant literature review to support my claims in this thesis. I begin with a review of more-than-human and animal geographies, framing this thesis as part of the newer, third wave of critical animal geographies (section 2.1). I proceed with a discussion of ideologies which emerge from FCI data as significant in informing landowners' practices with coyotes. The discussion of emergent ideologies begins with a review of speciesism (section 2.2). In this thesis, I find that humans' treatment of coyotes in the FPR is dictated by a systemic speciesism. FCI participants describe valuing coyotes extrinsically (for social, political, and economic reasons) rather than intrinsically. I also find that participants' discourses are influenced by ideologies of rurality, masculinity, and capitalism. To support these claims, I pull on studies from rural geographers (section 2.3), who write on the relevant topics of rural identities (section 2.3.1), rural masculinities (section 2.3.2), and rural capital (section 2.3.3). This section supports my claims by reviewing literature from these fields and, in particular, identifying research that is relevant to human-predator relationships.

### **2.1 More-than-human/animal geographies**

Environmental geographer Jamie Lorimer defines more-than-human as “an approach to geography and the social sciences... that is open to the agency of nonhumans and recognizes the material and affective interlinkages that cross between humans and nonhumans” (2009, p.344). These approaches *can* certainly focus on nonhuman animals, as critical animal geographies do (Gillespie and Collard 2017; Urbanik 2012; Wilbert 2018; Wolch and Emel 1998), or, like many multi-species ethnographies, can also attend to other ‘nonhumans’, such as plants (Miller 2019), fungi (Tsing 2015), cheeses (Paxson and Helmreich 2014), and more (Dave 2017; Ogden 2011; Ogden, Hall, and Tanita 2014). This thesis is a more-than-human geography which, while attending to the landscape at points, focuses on coyotes' relationships with humans.

Following Lorimer's (2009) definition of more-than-human geographies, this thesis recognizes the agency of coyotes and other nonhuman animal species in the FPR. Furthermore, this thesis recognizes the entanglements between humans and nonhumans, which have been

traditionally analyzed as separate and distinct entities, located on separate sides of constructed binaries between human/animals and nature/society (Lorimer 2009; Philo and Wilbert 2000; Sundberg and Dempsey 2009). The theory put forth by more-than-human geographers (and critical animal geographers specifically) has been instrumental to my research; it is their work that I attend to in this section.

The literature that I refer to throughout this section is representative of a newer generation in the lineage of animal geographies, bringing critical theory into animal studies (Gillespie and Collard 2017); animal geographer Julie Urbanik (2012) refers to this literature as the “third wave” of animal geography. The first wave of animal geography was constituted by zoogeographers and, according to scholar Chris Wilbert, emerged from ‘distinctly geopolitical concerns’ (Wilbert 2009). Preoccupied with the mapping, distribution and spatial patterns of animals (Philo and Wilbert 2004), Wilbert claims that the field’s focus was indicative of the times; zoogeography developed during the nineteenth century, at a time of “unheralded exploration, colonial conquest and Empires” (2009; p.22).

The second wave of geography, per critical animal geographers Rosemary-Claire Collard and Kathryn Gillespie (2017), emerged as a subset of cultural geography during the twentieth century. Interested in how animal populations were impacted by human actions (such as domestication of certain species and introduction of foreign species), second wave geographers, aided by the advancements of evolutionary theory, began to study human-animal relationships on topics such as domestication and extinction (Urbanik 2012).

These first two waves of animal geographies were critically different from the third, current wave (Collard and Gillespie 2017). Collard and Gillespie (2017) identify that animal geographers of the first and second wave reinforced the human-animal binary as an order of “both matter and meaning” (p. 7). The first and second wave animal geographers’ works not only asserted that humans were separate from the rest of the animal kingdom, but that they were also superior (Collard and Gillespie 2017; Kim 2015). This human-animal divide was thoroughly questioned as ecofeminism emerged (Gaard 1993; Plumwood 1993). Ecofeminist Val Plumwood referred to the human-animal, male-female, nature-culture and other binaries as ‘dualisms’ (Collard and Gillespie 2017; Plumwood 1993). These dualisms both construct false difference and superiority, while simultaneously masking important heterogeneities. For example, the human-animal dualism suggests that humans are somehow separate and distinct (and superior)

from *all* other nonhuman animals, while also cloaking the vast diversity both within humanity and within the rest of the animal kingdom. Ecofeminists' research, which began to challenge these dualisms, set the stage for the third wave of animal geography (Wilbert 2009). Their research is still regularly cited throughout third wave animal geography.

In the 1990s, third wave of animal geography ushered in challenges to the human-animal duality, recognition of animal subjectivity, and desire to reconfigure political and spatial relations with nonhuman animals (Collard and Gillespie 2017; Urbanik 2012). While these elements were present in all third-wave geographies, geographers took different approaches. Wilbert (2009) divides the third wave of animal geography into three subfields which he defines as sociocultural animal geographies, political-economic animal geographies, and more-than-human, or hybrid, animal geographies. Wilbert (2009) sees these three subfields (sociocultural, political-economic, and more-than-human/hybrid) as having different empirical and theoretical approaches, though notes their divisions are quite 'porous' as the field is still developing.

Sociocultural animal geographies, per Wilbert, tend to focus on animals' roles in the constructing "and ordering of culture and individual human subjects, and wider links between human and animal identities in particular times and places" (2009; p. 124). Later ecofeminist analyses often fit within the field of sociocultural animal geographies (Radel 2009), illustrating entangled social hierarchies between human and nonhuman populations which resulted in shared oppressions (Emel 1995; Gaard 1993; Plumwood 1993). Jody Emel (1995), an early third wave animal geographer (who is quoted in the epigraph of this thesis), identifies instances of shared oppressions, drawing explicit connections between white masculinity and the genocide of wolves and Indigenous peoples:

*Wild animals, and particularly predators such as the wolf, have represented longings, needs, and urges that were suppressed in the particular construction of masculinity that dominated during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They have been targets for hatred, the same hatred that launched armies and lynch mobs against human 'others'. A Massachusetts law of 1638, for example, stated that 'Whoever shall shoot off a gun on any unnecessary occasion, or at any game except an Indian or a wolf, shall forfeit 5 shillings for every shot' (Lopez, 1978, page 170). (Emel 1995; p. 720-721).*

Emel's (1995) research is an example of sociocultural animal geographies, making explicit links "between race, gender, class, and certain animal practices in modern or late-modern spaces", just as Wilbert defines it (2009; p. 124). However, Emel's (1995) work is also an

example of how these divisions between sociocultural and political-economic animal geographies are porous. Wilbert (2009) maintains that political-economic animal geographies “have utilized political-economic analysis [which has] mainly been found in rural and agricultural geographies. Such studies have at times focused on the development of certain intensive food production regimes as emblematic of current structures of capitalism” (p. 124). Aspects of Emel’s (1995) analysis certainly fit Wilbert’s (2009) definition as well. Citing political-economy of rural geographies, Emel (1995) writes:

*There were stories from ranchers who insisted that wolves were destroying 500,000 cattle annually on the western ranges. Sheep ranchers estimated that hundreds of thousands of dollars were being lost on account of wild animals. Much of this was never documented, but the ranchers got taxpayers to bear most of the costs for predator control. In Montana, ranchers made money on killing wolves; they succeeded in getting the legislature to pass a law requiring the state veterinarian to inoculate wolves with scarptic mange and then turn them loose. Cattlemen collected \$15 for every wolf trapped for the program. (Emel 1995; p. 715)*

This sociocultural and political-economic approach to predator-human relations is familiar. Like Emel, themes of *who* was engaging in violence towards coyotes in the FPR became evident (often rural, masculine and white identities), as did themes of *why*. Wolves, like coyotes, were discursively framed as a pest and threat to animal livestock capital, and thus, more broadly, the rural, settler way of life on the frontier. Thus, eliminating their threat became a social and cultural act of solidarity and masculinity (Emel 1995). In this thesis, I assert that coyotes, like Emel’s (1995) wolves, are a species that have taken on human political significance. Threatening young small livestock, coyotes, I argue, have come to symbolize a threat to rural ways of life in some communities within the FPR.

Wilbert’s final subdiscipline of third wave animal geography is “more-than-human or hybrid” animal geographies (2009). He suggests that this field has “sought to problematize the use of orthodox social categories in their theoretical and empirical approaches to the spatialities of human-nonhuman relations, encounters, and co-productions of spaces” (p.125). This approach, which is often also referred to as a ‘post-humanist’ or ‘relational’ approach (Collard 2012; Durand and Sundberg 2019; Lorimer 2009), brings two bodies of work to mind: Rosemary-Claire Collard’s *Cougar-Human Entanglements and the Biopolitical Un/making of Safe Space* (2012) and Juanita Sundberg’s *Diabolic Caminos in the Desert and Cat Fights on the*

*Río: A Posthumanist Political Ecology of Boundary Enforcement in the United States-Mexico Borderlands* (2011). Taking seriously the agency and action of nonhuman animals, these researchers assert that animals alter human conceptions of various spaces (Collard 2012; Sundberg 2011). Like Emel, both researchers have been influential in forming my own theoretical framework.

Fitting into Wilbert's description of a "more-than-human or hybrid" approach, Collard (2012) centres nonhuman relations, encounters and co-production of space, while also challenging the use of an orthodox social category ('cougar'). Invoking Foucault's theory of 'biopower', Collard (2012) argues that human-cougar relationships are biopolitical. Central to this assertion is the idea that "space is not a preexisting, static box that entities move through or not. Rather, spaces are produced within dynamic, heterogenous, and often precarious assemblages of entities that are not all human" (p.25). Employing actor-network theory, as many "more-than-human" animal geographers do (Wilbert 2009), Collard (2012) explores how spaces are co-produced by the cougars and humans that inhabit these spaces. Collard (2012) also problematizes the use of species, an 'orthodox social category', just as Wilbert (2009) suggests. Collard (2012) writes:

*It is important to note at the outset that the category 'cougar', like the category 'animal', houses a 'heterogeneous multiplicity of the living' (Derrida, 2008, page 40:cf Lulka, 2009). No cougar is identical to another. But humans nonetheless sought to order cougars in multiple ways... the scientific name for cougars, Puma concolor, and the behavioral and biophysical characteristics ascribed to them, place cougars in a biological taxonomy, a 'field of visibility' (Foucault, 1970, page 132) that brings into focus particular observable qualities of a phenomenon. Classifications necessarily engender exclusions, with each classification framing the world differently—valorizing some points of views and silencing others (Bowker and Star, 1999; Ritvo, 1997) p. 25*

In Sundberg's more-than-human study, she also uses actor-network theory to understand how nonhuman actors are 'constitutive of' boundary or border making. Yet unlike Wilbert (2009), who suggests that more-than-human approaches "ditch... many aspects of political-economy approaches" (p. 125), Sundberg (2011) embraces political-economy in her research, making (related) political ecology central to her research. Sundberg asserts that central to political ecology is the understanding that "all socio-political projects are ecological projects and vice versa" (2011 citing from Harvey 1996; p. 74). Armed with this understanding of conjoined

political and ecological systems, political ecologists, per Sundberg, are aligned in “their framing of human and nonhuman communities as contingent constructions that emerge from continuous interactions” (p. 321). While Wilbert’s point that these three subdisciplines rely on different theoretical frameworks is well taken (2009), I disagree with his suggestion that the borders are porous between the three because the field is young. It seems to me that scholars, such as Emel and Sundberg, quite skillfully and intentionally borrow from various fields to help further our understanding of power relations amongst human and nonhuman agents.

Following in these third wave animal geographers’ footsteps, my analysis of human-coyote relationships in the FPR borrows from the theory of all three of Wilbert’s animal geography categories. In summary, the coyotes of the FPR, like Emel’s wolves (1995), are entangled with certain sociocultural groups and traditions, providing an opportunity for a sociocultural study. As with Emel’s and Sundberg’s animal geography analyses, themes of capital are prominent in the FCI participants’ discourse. I frame parts of my analysis within both the fields of political ecology and rural economy, making this thesis, at points, a political-economic study as well. As with Collard’s (2012) and Sundberg’s (2011) more-than-human analyses, coyotes’ and other nonhuman actors’ agency are seen as central to co-producing spaces in the FPR. The three fields of third wave animal geography, defined by Wilbert (2009), each lend theory to deconstructing discursive themes in landowner-coyote relationships in the FPR.

## **2.2 Speciesism**

Speciesism is the evaluation of (animal) lives based on their species category. While not often written about explicitly, this hierarchy is central to third wave animal geographies. The human-animal dualism discussed in ecofeminism and more-than-human geographies is productive of not just false dichotomies and difference, but also socially constructed hierarchies (Collard and Gillespie 2017; Plumwood 1993), resulting in speciesism. Perceiving ourselves as different and superior from the rest of the animal kingdom, we hardly recognize ourselves as a part of it, promoting what Haraway (2008) has dubbed “human exceptionalism” (Collard and Gillespie 2017). Speciesism, and the human exceptionalism that stems from it, are products of human cultures and society (Haraway 2008). Materially and discursively, speciesism, preserved in law,

enables the legal, political, ethical, and social oppression of nonhuman species (Collard and Gillespie 2017; Kim 2015).

Speciesism has also licensed the oppression of various races and cultures, by suggesting certain peoples are subhuman (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Kim 2015; Pachirat 2011; Plumwood 1993). The field of geography even played a historical role in producing speciesism, namely by attempting to ‘dehumanize’ certain races, suggesting that they were past the bounds of humanity, and part of the decidedly ‘other’ and less-than animal realm (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; 1998b; Kim 2015). Geographers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries commonly asserted that certain races were more or less evolved due to environmentally-determined factors (Radcliffe et al. 2010). While, with the rise of constructionism and post-modernism, racial differences are increasingly understood to be socially constructed, the dehumanization of marginalized races is ongoing. A recent psychological profile of the alt-right political movement demonstrated that beliefs that other races are sub-human persist (Forscher and Kteily 2020).

This ‘dehumanizing’ of marginalized groups is clearly problematic, perhaps more obviously for non-white human groups, but also for non-human animals. Dehumanizing continues (or worsens) the marginalization of certain races or cultures. Additionally, it entrenches the speciesist assumption that to be anything other than human is to be less than human (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Kim 2015), further legitimizing the abuse and oppression of nonhuman animals. Providing a long line of historical dehumanization of marginalized racial groups, drawing comparison to nonhuman animals, Kim (2015) asserts that speciesism has been *central* to racism in the United States.

Some geographers are noting that, while dehumanizing certain groups simply based on their race is increasingly societally unacceptable, policing animal practices may be a new frontier for producing racial and cultural differences (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Kim 2015). In *Le Pratique Sauvage: Race, Place and the Human-Animal Divide*, Glen Elder, Jennifer Wolch, and Jody Emel (1998) illustrate cases of harsh policing of animal practices when carried out in “inappropriate places” by marginalized human groups, maintaining that animal practices are in fact the new political site for reasserting a national identity and producing racial and cultural difference. Political scientist Claire Jean Kim’s research echoes Elder, Wolch and Emel’s conclusion, maintaining that racism and speciesism are synergistically related. In her media and



legal discourse surrounding the fight to close San Francisco China Town's live markets, Kim (2015) identifies that the live markets exist in two places: the lucrative, politically powerful, and white establishments at Fisherman's Wharf, and China Town, poor and full of recent immigrants. The animal activists in her research were aware of this too and chose the fight that seemed most politically viable; China Town with its immigrants and cultural animal practices was a much more vulnerable target. Building on this observation on the synergy between both speciesism and racism, Kim argues, "our interpretive success depends on our ability and willingness to engage with these two taxonomies of power, race and species, at once—and to understand their *connectedness*" (p. 15). Third wave animal geographers echo this argument (Boesel and Alexander 2020; Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Yarbrough 2015).

In an era of increasing awareness of societal oppressions, there seems to be hope for challenging speciesism. Emel and Wolch (1998) assert that the concern and activism for animals once valued only as food demonstrates increasing "erosion of lines that historically divided the animal world into those worth protecting because they were seen as either part of nature (wildlife) or the human community (pets), and those not worth protecting because they were neither (farm animals) and constituted sources of value" (p.14). Kim (2015) echoes this assertion. As humans debate openly whether we should treat animals the way we do, Kim (2015) builds on the concept of 'anxious' anthropocentrists (Fudge 2002), claiming that society has increasingly become 'ambivalent' in its commitment to anthropocentrism. Whether it is 'anxious' (Fudge 2002) or 'ambivalent' (Kim 2011) anthropocentrism, there seems to be increasing societal pressure to challenge violent traditions towards nonhuman animal species, potentially providing opportunities to challenge socially constructed power dynamics between human and nonhuman animals.

Increasingly, academics from other fields are taking up the concept of speciesism to begin to challenge the status quo (Bekoff 2013). Biologist Marc Bekoff (2013) has written extensively on challenging the speciesist notions that underpin conservation. He argues that speciesism is at the core of the decisions that are made between which species are valuable or invaluable (and therefore get to live or die), the assumptions we make regarding higher and lower cognition in certain species, often based in their 'closeness' to humanity, and our own presumed supremacy, in our assertions that we can objectively know and manage the rest of the animal kingdom (Bekoff 2013). Bekoff (2013) argues that no species should be beyond moral

consideration, asserting that the very idea that humans are so separate and unique from the rest of the animal kingdom is simply “bad biology” and contrary to Darwin’s theory of evolution, which suggested that we animals were different in degree rather than in kind.

Yet, grouping, ranking, and ordering seem to some to be central to human nature. Philo and Wilbert (2000) reference Foucault, noting that the “conceptual playing of animals in the wider ‘scheme of things’... reflects an impulse with deep roots and wide cultural diversity” (p.6). Some scholars have researched how these groupings and rankings of animals have even changed over time, with evolving cultures and technologies, emphasizing their socially constructed nature (Franklin 1999). More-than-human geographies offer us a new line of thought—questioning whether species labels are even productive (Collard 2012; Wilbert 2009). This thesis furthers this conversation of species constructions and rankings from a critical realist perspective, observing and analyzing how they play out in human-coyote relations in the FPR.

## **2.3 Rural Geographies**

Listening to and coding FCI interviews, I grew increasingly aware of the importance of rurality, specifically, how the politics of rurality could shape human-coyote relationships. In this section, I begin with a broad discussion of rurality. I proceed with the relevant literature review which supports my analysis, speaking to the field of rural geography more broadly and then focusing on emergent themes from my analysis of FCI data including rural identity, rural masculinities and rural capital. Later, in Chapter Three, I present FCI discourse demonstrating how rurality shapes human-coyote relationships.

Rural geographies, a field that has evolved immensely over the past century, attends to how ‘rurality’, as a social construct, “is produced, reproduced, and contested” (Woods 2009b; p.429). In the past few decades, rurality itself has come to be understood as not singular or fixed, but rather multiple and varying depending on the sociocultural context it is embedded within (Pratt 1996; Woods 2009b; 2010). Loosely, according to rural geographer Michael Woods (2009b), ‘rural’ is a “term that describes nonurban geographical areas and the social and economic activities, lifestyles, cultures, etc. associated with them. Rural areas have traditionally been identified with agriculture, but the precise definition and delimitation of ‘rural’ is heavily

debated” (p. 429). This broad and intentionally vague description of rurality encompasses the social, cultural, and political constructions which shape the identity, gender, and capital conceptions I discuss in this section.

Before entering this more focused discussion, I want to acknowledge how rural geographers have come to think of space. Rural geographers offer us conceptions for how to think about space and how humans relate to it—a concept which researchers have realized is integral to understanding human-coyote relationships as well (Alexander and Draper 2019a; Alexander and Lukasik 2017). Rural geographers urge us not to consider rural spaces to be wild or untamed, but rather immensely organized (Philo 1992). In a pivotal essay (Woods 2009b), Philo (1992) asserted that rural lands were, in fact, over-ordered, reflecting:

*rural children are one of the human groupings who are most disadvantaged by this zealous ordering of ‘rural space’, along with gypsies and other travelers, precisely because so many of the small and hidden places crucial to their everyday lives... are found in those patches of common and waste ground that are being ripped out of the contemporary rural scene by both private ownership and rational planning. (p. 197)*

Centring the concerns of coyotes rather than children, this reimagining of rural spaces as ‘zealously ordered’ seems paramount to understanding human-coyote relationships. A group of beings who in my opinion, and the opinions of others (Paquet and Alexander 2018), are quite ‘disadvantaged’ by habitat loss, who depend on the ‘small and hidden places’ (Philo 1992), coyotes’ lives in the FPR and other rural locales are likely immensely impacted by the efficiency with which humans have commodified rural spaces.

This commodification of space is thought to be a result of rural restructuring (Philo 1992), a process in which rural areas’ social and economic structures were reshaped from the late 1800s through the 1900s (Woods 2009b). Rural restructuring has been understood to have resulted from entangled processes including multiple factors, such as counterurbanization—migration from cities to rural areas (Woods 2009b). Development in the FPR is changing amid counterurbanization and rural restructuring, which is increasing heterogeneity of social groups and land use, and with that the potential for regional tensions (Ghitter and Smart 2009).

To understand the heterogeneity that increasingly exists in rural locales, scholars such as Edensor (2006) and Woods (2010) have noted that it is important to examine and identify the variety of conceptions of rurality, rather than focusing on what they have in common. As

Edensor (2006) notes, rurality is performed “on different stages by different actors” (p. 484), often in spaces identified as ‘wilderness’ and involving animal actors, like the “dramatized rituals of grouse and pheasant shoots” (p. 486).

Employing nonhuman animal actors, various performances of ruralities (Edensor 2006; Woods 2010) have the potential to materially impact coyote lives from property to property. In this thesis, I identify how rurality is practiced and performed by FCI participants in their described relationships with coyotes. I assert that the social tensions that result in part from rapid rural restructuring and counterurbanization may have implications for coyotes as well. While coding, I found three emergent discursive themes in my analysis, which are as follows: rural identities, rural masculinities, and rural capital. Based on these discourses, I have assembled a review of relevant literature of rural geographies to support my analysis in the following chapter. I begin with a review of how rural identities are highly political, and often formed in contrast to ‘urban’ identities and politics (section 2.3.1). I follow this with a discussion of constructed gendered roles and identities in rural landscapes (section 2.3.2). Finally, I conclude with an outline of how farming and ranching practices shape rural conceptions of capital, directing human relationships to land and other more-than-human entities (section 2.3.3).

### **2.3.1 Rural identities**

Because rural places are increasingly changing and evolving, and the definition of ‘rurality’ is increasingly vague, rural identities are increasingly understood by rural geographers to be produced in everyday practices of people who live and work in the countryside (Edensor 2006; Woods 2010). These rural identities can be produced in a myriad of ways, but in this section I focus on how rurality can be performed in relation to non-human animal species (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Gillespie and Narayanan 2020; Kim 2015).

In previous studies, researchers have focused on how rural politics and identities are built through relationships with wolves, both in the United States (Emel 1995; Lopez 1978) and Scandinavia (Bye 2003; 2009; Krange and Skogen 2011; Skogen and Krange 2003). While rural politics are evident in research in the United States, both Lopez (1978) and Emel (1995) foreground an analysis of masculinity. Lacking equivalent studies in North America, in this

section I focus predominantly on studies from Norway (Bye 2003; 2009; Krange and Skogen 2011; Skogen and Krange 2003).

Ketil Skogen and Olve Krange (2003) offer a strong starting point for conversation in their essay *A Wolf at the Gate: The Anti-Carnivore Alliance and the Symbolic Construction of Community*. They note that while large carnivore conservation movements have been on the rise in Europe and North America, many people in surrounding rural communities feel strongly that these animals do not belong there (Skogen and Krange 2003). While the issues that people raise in these communities are often the same (livestock depredation, attacks on pets and potentially people, competition for game animals), Skogen and Krange (2003) assert that there are perhaps more subtle but powerful social rifts at the basis of rural communities' 'anti-carnivore alliance'. Specifically, Skogen and Krange (2003) pronounce that "economic and cultural modernization, urban-rural tensions and conflicts between hegemonic and subordinate forms of knowledge" (p. 309) are at the core of human-wolf conflict. Skogen and Krange (2003) assert, however, the true social tensions may be between disparate sociopolitical groups, with diverging imaginations for rural landscapes.

The researchers note that adversaries of wolves have produced an image of their human opponents—specifically, the wolf advocates (Skogen and Krange 2003). Leaflets, internet sources, and local media identify the wolf advocates to be "urban people, who are described as romantics who have lost touch with the basic facts of human existence, or... [representatives of the state], which shows no compassion for rural people, and is essentially preoccupied with accommodating urban middle-class interests" (Skogen and Krange 2003; p. 310). In this way, being anti-wolf is not about conservation or welfare, but rather about politics and solidarity with rural communities (Bye 2009; Skogen and Krange 2003).

While, as mentioned earlier, rural communities are not monolithic in their composition; researchers, like Bye (2009) and Skogen and Krange (2003), have found rural communities, politics, and identities were constructed to effectively close ranks on issues pertaining to carnivores. Having experienced rural restructuring and counterurbanization, rural social communities are actually more complex and diverse than ever, hosting a myriad of peoples with various cultures and politics (Skogen and Krange 2003; Woods 2009a). To counter this, Skogen and Krange (2003) argue rural solidarity, with a seemingly singular politic, is constructed and

performed with strict boundaries (Skogen and Krangle 2003). They describe rural community as the following:

*The idea of community demands that 'inside' and 'outside' are clearly separated. This draws attention to the place where the two spheres meet, that is to say, to the boundary. Boundaries do not simply exist; they have to be constructed. In some cases, they may be easy to see, even for outsiders, whereas in others they may be almost imperceptible to all except the members of the community itself. Since the boundaries are social constructions, they must be demarcated symbolically. Community itself is a symbol that fills this function of upholding boundaries. (Skogen and Krangle 2003; p. 312)*

Rural geographer Linda Marie Bye (2009) asserts that to close ranks, and effectively 'draw boundaries' to preserve (and perform) rural solidarity, an anti-carnivore politic is critical. Invoking Cresswell's (1996) framework of place (further explained in "3.3 Context" in reference to Alexander and Draper's [2019a] research), she asserts that rural men must take a certain pro-snowmobile and anti-carnivore position in Norway to be 'in-place' and accepted in rural societies (Bye 2009).

*Today there appears to be a growing anti-carnivore 'movement' in many rural communities which is making it hard for young rural men to accept the presence of carnivores... When describing the 'enemy', the men often imply 'city people' and 'extremists' who have a romantic view of an untouched nature. The carnivore conflict is thus closely related to the notion of 'the stranger' and those having theoretical knowledge. Hence, in investigating the young men's narratives about living in a rural community the carnivore debate clearly represents an important space for opinions through which loyalty to place is confirmed. By taking part in the carnivore debate in a rurally acceptable way, the rural man and his loyalty to the rural community is confirmed. p. 285 (Bye 2009)*

Skogen and Krangle (2003) note that in this construction of a rural community, narratives regarding who is posing a threat to the community are also created. Environmentalists and urbanites who are understood to support wolf conservation, for example, are constructed as an enemy to rural communities by conserving wild predators on rural landscapes without understanding the dangers they present. Playing out in Alberta, Alexander and Draper (2019b) noted similar tensions; they reported an instance in which landowners reported retaliating to scientist coyote advocacy by killing even more coyotes. Perceiving academics, environmentalists, and urbanites to be overreaching in their politics, rural communities may

construct coyotes, wolves, and other political species as a local intermediary representative of larger social rifts (Figari and Skogen 2011; Skogen and Krange 2003).

After all, many rural communities are experiencing significant social change and thus meaningful challenges to the ‘rural way of life’. Facing “economic modernization, cultural diversification and increased social and spatial mobility [which] weaken the basis of traditional rural communities that were built around agriculture and resource extraction” (Skogen and Krange 2003; p. 312), rural communities are responding to these trends by closing ranks, reconstructing rural solidarity and boundaries. Anti-predator alliances are just one way to do so (Bye 2009; Skogen and Krange 2003; Krange and Skogen 2011). Considering how these rural politics might play out in rural Alberta, I analyze emergent discourse on rurality from FCI interviews and analyze how they impact human-coyote relationships (see section 3.6).

### **2.3.2 Rural masculinities**

As I examined FCI interviews, gender emerged as both an explicitly and implicitly-important factor in human-coyote relationships. Some interviewees explicitly referred to the nature of men. They would, for example, link masculinity to violence or, more specifically, towards defending the private land and livestock. Others expressed the importance of gender more implicitly, saying they would call their son for help rather than their daughter (see section 3.7). To inform my analysis of this gendered discourse, I once again turn to rural geographies, which offer a plethora of research on rural masculinities.

Gender has come to be understood as a socially constructed phenomenon separate and distinct from biological sex (Magliozzi, Saperstein, and Westbrook 2016). Rural geographers during the 1990s came to view gender as a social construct (Little 2002). Specifically, researchers identified that analyzing how gender was performed within rural contexts was critical (Little 2002; 2009). These geographers found that rural landscapes were often the site of hegemonic and traditional performances of masculinities in particular (Bye 2009; Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2006; Little 2002). They note that rural masculinities are often produced through relationships with the natural environment—specifically in dominating it (Little 2002; Woodward 2000).

Jo Little (2002), a rural geographer who has written extensively about gender, asserts that the rural idyll, or romanticized assumptions about the idyllic nature of the countryside, may serve to valorize traditional gendered roles and relationships. Little (2009) maintains that heteronormative assumptions that underly the rural idyll help to form and reproduce expected gendered roles in rural households. Hunting, specifically, is an activity that researchers have noted is primarily reserved for men and has been employed to perform traditional rural masculinities in the modern day (Bye 2003; Krange and Skogen 2011; Littlefield 2010). Hunting becomes even more of a masculine performance when the targets are predator species (Bye 2009; Emel 1995; Lopez 1978). In reference to killing wolves, Emel (1995) describes the heteronormative man presented in rural idylls of Western movies, writing, “If a man showed sentiment or indulged in ‘excessive or unnecessary feeling’ then he would be ‘soft, womanish, emotional, the very qualities the Western hero must get rid of to be a man’” (p. 723). Following this, Emel (1995) asserts that during the late 1800s and early 1900s in the United States, “hunting and killing fierce animals was one of the highest forms of sport—an indicator of virility and prowess” (p. 723).

In a more recent example, Bye (2009) finds that to be a ‘real man’ in modern rural Norwegian society, one must meet “the physical and emotional ‘tests’ of the hunt” (p. 282). While Bye (2009) notes that trophy hunting animals is not societally accepted in these communities, one can also not be pro-carnivore. In fact, she asserts that to be anti-carnivore is to take “part in the carnivore debate in a rurally acceptable way, [and thus] the rural man and his loyalty to the rural community is confirmed” (p. 285).

Entangled in the constructions of rural masculinity, a certain anti-carnivore stance seems consistent across recent and more historical literature in both the United States (Emel 1995; Lopez 1978) and Norway (Bye 2009; Krange and Skogen 2011). Picking up in rural Alberta, I identify modern lineages of masculinity in the FPR and consider how they impact human-coyote relationships in section “3.7 Coyotes and masculinity”.

### **2.3.3 Rural capital**

Capital emerged as another important theme FCI participants’ interviews. This theme emerged in two ways: participants either expressed concern for animal livestock (and thus their livelihoods



as ranchers) or, conversely, mentioned that coyotes dead bodies were valuable, as they could be turned into local municipalities to collect bounties. In this section, I review literature discussing predators' threat to livestock capital and then follow that with an examination of research on harvesting coyotes for bounties.

Predator species have been understood by many rural communities to be an economic threat to the 'rural way of life' (Emel 1995; Skogen 2015; Skogen and Krange 2003). While wolves, coyotes, and other predators present material threats to livestock animals, the greater conflict between rural people and wolves is understood to be a social one (Figari and Skogen 2011; Krange and Skogen 2011; Skogen 2015; Skogen and Krange 2003). Many rural areas are experiencing a dominant narrative of economic scarcity, with dwindling opportunities in and perceived challenges to resource-based extraction economies as conservation efforts strengthen (Skogen 2015). Skogen (2015) explains this dynamic well in his essay, *The Persistence of an Economic Paradigm: Unintended Consequences in Norwegian Wolf Management*:

*The dominant narrative among people with cultural ties to the resource-based economy is one of economic decline... Importantly, this happens in a time when a conservation ethos has achieved a prominent position in the public discourse, and manifests itself in practical land management. Some social groups interpret these changes in the valuation of nature as driving forces behind the decline in resource industries, and as a threat to a traditional rural lifestyle that rests on a resource economy and entails forms of outdoor recreation based on harvesting (Krange & Skogen, 2011). P. 318*

In this essay, Skogen (2015) concludes that efforts to mitigate human-predator conflict by reimbursing for depredation may actually aggravate social conflict rather than resolving it. Only a small group of very local farmers were likely to use the program and reimbursement did not result in a reduced sense of conflict for this vocal anti-carnivore group (Skogen 2015).

Reading Skogen's (2015) research, I believe there exist parallels between rural Norway and other rapidly changing rural areas such as rural Alberta. In the FPR, resource extraction abounds (Epp 2008; Ghitter and Smart 2009). I include in this economy the production of animal products (predominantly beef) because they are treated as 'units of production' (Yarwood and Evans 2000), 'lively commodities' (Collard and Dempsey 2013) and strictly 'animal capital' (Shukin 2009), whose production is quite environmentally intensive, requiring an extractive relationship with the land (Kröger 2020).

Furthermore, there are tensions between rural and urban social factions in rural Alberta (see "3.4 A political, historical, and economic overview of the Foothills Parkland Region of Alberta" for further explanation; Epp 2008). Divided by social, cultural, and political positions, the conservation and/or welfare of wild predators represents a polarizing issue that may be understood to be an affront to rural ways of life, in as much as dogs, livestock, and potentially humans are threatened (Krange and Skogen 2011; Skogen 2015; Skogen and Krange 2003). These social and economic tensions help provide context for why coyotes are understood to be a threat by certain social groups in rural Alberta. These studies do not, however, point to easy solutions. As Skogen (2015) identifies, attempting to ameliorate concerns over rural capital by reimbursing ranchers for depredation is not beneficial.

Some local governments in Canada (Patten 2011; Proulx and Rodtka 2015) and the United States (Bartel and Brunson 2003; Lopez 1978) have tried a different approach to resolve rural residents' concerns over livestock depredation. Attempting to reduce predator populations altogether, governments have offered bounties on coyotes, wolves, and other predator species (Bartel and Brunson 2003; Lopez 1978; Patten 2011; Proulx and Rodtka 2015). Bounties on predators have been demonstrated to cause immense animal suffering, as cruel methods of neck snaring, strychnine poisoning, aerial shooting in non-vital regions are often used, resulting in suffering and delayed deaths (Proulx and Rodtka 2015). These methods are also non-specific, often killing many 'non-target' species (Proulx and Rodtka 2015). While politicians have reported that these bounties are successful, making areas "safer" (Patten 2011), there is no evidence that I have found in academic literature on the subject. Rather, studies show that bounties will not likely result in significant changes to coyotes' population numbers (Patten 2011), but do present massive welfare concerns (Proulx and Rodtka 2015).

In my opinion, bounties reify the narrative that the only coyote of economic value is a dead one. Already caught in social tensions between rural-urban politics, predator species continue to suffer as a result of discourses that frame them as threats to rural capital (Skogen 2015). Building on research presented in this section, I discuss the ways in which coyotes are constructed as a threat to rural capital in FCI discourse in section "3.8 Coyotes and capital".

## 2.4 Synthesis

Having laid out key theoretical concepts in this chapter, such as more-than-human/animal geographies, speciesism, and rural geographies, I would like to conclude by explaining the critical nature of this thesis.

Critical theory, broadly, has three qualities (Best 2009). These are 1) an analysis of power structures, 2) an examination of the role of science in supporting said structures, and 3) a critical stance towards both the structure of power and the ways in which science supports it. Critical geography, specifically, “must provide a structural explanation of a condition, a reflexive explanation of the frame of reference of the scientist, and it must be a committed explanation that expresses its emancipatory interest” (Best 2009, p. 347 c.f. Gregory 1978). This thesis is both an example of critical theory and critical geography.

This discourse analysis follows a critical realist tradition of identifying ideologies, and the ‘commonsense knowledge’ that arises from them. Speciesism, as a prominent ideology that is common across most societies (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Kim 2015), produced many examples of these problematic ‘commonsense knowledges’ which further perpetuate oppression of nonhuman animals. In this thesis, FCI data provides a case study for human perspectives on coyotes and other species in the FPR, which I analyze for speciesist ideologies.

Following the second tenant of critical theories and geographies, I reflect critically on both my own role as a scientist/researcher, and how my positionality impacts my analysis (see “1.9 Positionality Statement”). I also touch on how certain disciplines of science, historically and recently, have reproduced certain knowledges which reflect oppressive ideologies (such as speciesism, colonialism, and sexism).

Finally, this thesis is a critical geography committed to countering hegemony of human over nonhuman animals. While I centre the human-coyote relationship, I believe that the power structures between human and nonhuman animals, white and minority racial groups, cis-men and other genders, and other oppressive dualisms, are related. Focusing on humans and coyotes, I outline the speciesist ideologies behind the ‘commonsense knowledge’ participants communicate and act on every day in the FPR.

Using a critical realist discourse analysis, I examine what ideologies are inherent in forming human-coyote relationships. Specifically, I examine three themes that emerged from the data: rurality, masculinity, and capital. These themes came up frequently as landowners spoke to their relationships with coyotes, reflecting the entangled nature of speciesism with other more-than-human ideologies in the geography of the FPR.

# **Chapter 3: ‘The Rural, the Masculine, and the Capital’: Speciesism and more-than-human politics that threaten coyotes in the Foothills Parkland Region of Alberta, Canada**

## **3.1 Abstract**

This critical animal geography identifies the social, political, and economic ideologies which support the practice of killing coyotes in the FPR. Analyzing discourse stemming from FCI interviews, I identify that speciesism (see “2.2 Speciesism”) is a predominant ideology which supports landowners’ decisions to kill coyotes. Previous work has failed to identify speciesism in anti-predator paradigms. In my analysis, I identify that the FPR is a landscape built on the oppression of non-human animals. Reflecting this, landowners express speciesist prejudice against coyotes and other species. However, I argue that speciesism is not an ideology that stands alone. Rather, it is mutually reinforced by social and political ideologies which benefit from it. From discourse analysis of FPR landowners, ideologies of rurality, masculinity, and capitalism emerge as central structures in forming humans’ practices with coyotes. While similar studies have been performed in Norway in regard to wolves, this analysis is unique in its identification of ideologies which fuel anti-coyote attitudes in Canada. The goals of this research are ultimately counterhegemonic; by deconstructing the ideologies underpinning violence towards coyotes, this analysis yields findings which challenge anti-coyote speciesism both locally, in the FPR, and across North America more broadly.

## **3.2 Introduction**

*Cause there was quite a few coyotes around there. So, we hung 'em on the fence and then they didn't come around much.* -Interview 27 (male, 55 years in situ)

What is a coyote’s life worth in the FPR? It depends on who you ask. Federal and provincial governments do not appear to hold much esteem for coyotes as a species. While coyote deaths do

not appear to be well-recorded in Canada, experts estimate that they might mirror statistics in the U.S., indicating that as many as 500,000 coyotes are killed annually (Fox and Papouchis 2005). Furthermore, in apparent support for the malignment of coyotes, the Province of Alberta labels coyotes a ‘nuisance’ in their Agricultural Pests Act (Province of Alberta 2020), while Alberta Agriculture and Forestry offers a free guide as to the myriad of legal ways to kill them (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry 2017).

While officially referred to as a ‘nuisance’ (Province of Alberta 2020), coyotes are often unofficially referred to as a ‘pest’ in the discourse of landowners of the FPR (Alexander and Draper 2019a; 2019b). When asked to use a few words to describe a coyote, one FCI participant in Interview 26 said, “Predator. Pest. Smart... smelly”. Yet another participant in Interview 41 said, “pest, I guess. Umm gopher eater. They’re pests and they clean me out of cats and birds”. The discourse of ‘pest’ and ‘nuisance’ are just a couple of examples of how discourse reproduces the powerful ideology of speciesism both in policy and in conversation, becoming situated ‘commonsense knowledge’ (Haraway 1991). Related to their socially constructed label as ‘pest’ and ‘nuisance’, discourse from landowners in the FPR suggests coyotes are killed regularly and with little remorse. While one FCI participant from Interview 27 mentioned hanging coyote bodies on the fence, another mentioned putting toxic gas into an active den of coyote pups (see selection from Interview 41 in “3.3 Context”), and another (Interview 30) let a man trap on his property for a couple of months until he had killed at least a hundred coyotes. In certain social groups in the FPR, I assert that the discourse reifying coyotes as worthless becomes so taken for granted within the local context, that it discursively normalizes the widespread practice of killing coyotes.

While coding discourse from the FCI data (see section 1.1), one theme emerged as most prominent: coyotes’ and other non-human animals’ lives are evaluated in terms of what they provide to human landowners. I understood this to be an example of speciesism, a term increasingly used to describe the belief that humans are uniquely different and superior to the rest of the animal kingdom (see section 2.2; Bekoff 2013; Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Gaard 2011; Kim 2015). While these speciesist evaluations of life vary from household to household, depending on the landowners values (Alexander and Draper 2019b), what appeared to remain consistent was a troubling social hierarchy in which humans and, by extension, their pets and livestock, are superior to coyotes and other nonhuman animals (Boesel and Alexander 2020). In

this analysis of rural landowners' discourse, I assert that the large-scale persecution of coyotes in the FPR stems from a pervasive speciesist ideology.

As such, I examine human-coyote relationships in the FPR as a case study of speciesism. The findings may be helpful in considering human-predator relationships in other parts of rural Alberta and beyond. I consider the FCI participants, who are both agricultural and rural residential landowners from the FPR (Alexander and Draper 2019a; 2019b), to be producers of powerful discourse (see section 1.7). Their discourse is interrelated with their actions (Sayer 2015), which ultimately result in life or death of nonhuman animals on their property. I argue that what becomes local 'commonsense knowledge' in the FPR regarding coyotes and other species, such as 'pest' or 'nuisance' labels, is in fact speciesist dogma. Furthermore, I assert that speciesism does not exist in isolation and is instead synergistically related to other powerful (and hegemonic) social constructs such as rurality, masculinity, and capitalism.

I frame my analysis as part of the growing body of critical animal geographies (see section "2.1 More-than-human/animal geographies), asserting that the tradition of killing coyotes is a problematic sociocultural and political-economic phenomenon resulting from speciesist ideologies (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998b; Collard and Gillespie 2017; Kim 2015; Wilbert 2009). I further establish my argument with literature from rural geographies (Skogen and Krangle 2003; Woods 2009b), rural masculinity studies (Bye 2009; Little 2009; Woodward 2000), and political-economic animal geographies (Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg 2015; Emel, Johnston, and Stoddard 2015; Skogen 2015), which aid my understanding of these more-than-human social dialectics threatening coyotes. Ultimately, I write this thesis with the position that coyotes' lives are intrinsically valuable and that speciesism and other related more-than-human ideologies must be dismantled to create a more equitable society for all.

### **3.3 Context**

*See, the coyote cull that these guys do—this is a guys' club and it's competitive and there's a bit of money involved and it's a sport. So, you can give any arguments you like and it ain't going to change their behavior. (Laughs) -Interview 10 (male, 28 years in situ)*

Following a line of critical animal geography stemming from ecofeminism (Gaard 2011; Kim 2015; Wilbert 2009), I theorize that killing coyotes is a social practice that is firmly rooted in constructions of rurality, masculinity, and capitalism. In her essay, *Are You Man Enough, Big and Bad Enough?*, Emel (1995) made similar assertions regarding the practice of white men killing wolves in the United States. She, too, challenged the validity of the practice, asking,

*What is this all about? It is not solely about protecting livestock, because... the slaughter went on long after the economic threat ended. It continues to this day when almost no one living in the continental United States has seen a wolf. As cultural ecofeminists contend, cultural phenomena and economic factors interact with each other in a complex dialectic* (Emel 1995; p. 720).

Like Emel's analysis of wolf-killing, I find coyote killing to be more complicated than practical economic preservation of livestock assets. The FCI participant in Interview 10 (at the beginning of this section) speaks to some of these complexities, noting that killing coyotes is a game for men's clubs in rural Alberta, which offers monetary rewards and is unlikely to end, no matter the external pressures.

Responses such as these are further evidence to me that coyote coexistence and larger disciplines of conservation and animal welfare must be studied as a product of sociocultural and political-economic forces. Critical animal geographies were formed, in part, with this thesis in mind (Collard and Gillespie 2017; Philo and Wilbert 2000; Urbanik 2012; Wolch 2002). Increasingly, fields of conservation biology are realizing that social sciences must be centred, too (Pooley et al. 2017; Redpath et al. 2017). FCI (as discussed in section 1.1 of this document) responds to this call, collecting data on the more-than-human dimensions of the FPR geography (Alexander and Draper 2019a; 2019b).

Critical animal geography more specifically calls for revealing how animals are socially defined, and therefore 'placed' by local human societies (Philo and Wilbert 2000). One such definition relevant to coyotes could be the aforementioned 'pest' or 'nuisance' labeling (Alexander and Draper 2019a; 2019b; Philo and Wilbert 2000). Other critical animal scholars, however, have challenged that even taxonomic categorisations of species carry with them social definitions (see Collard's [2012] discussion of the biological and taxonomic category of cougar in section 2.1). Philo and Wilbert (2000) argue that said socially constructed meanings of what an animal *is* effectively 'places' them, delineating where they should be found in local material



spaces of homes, yards, farms, factories, wilderness and more. Quoting de Certeau (1984), they write, “A place (*lieu*) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence... The law of the ‘proper’ rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are *beside* one another, each situated in its own ‘proper’ and distinct location, a location it defines” (Philo and Wilbert 2000; p. 6). Following de Certeau (1984) and Philo and Wilbert (2000), I observe that while a domestic dog, socially defined as a ‘pet’, belongs to the house or perhaps the yard, its close relative, the coyote, is a ‘wild’ animal, and thus relegated to the imagined wilderness.

Yet, what happens when nonhuman animals transgress these imagined rules of place? Scholar Tim Cresswell writes extensively on concepts of ‘place’ and ‘transgression’ in his book *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (1996). He asserts that

*transgressions appear to be ‘against nature’; they disrupt the patterns and processes of normality and offend the subtle myths of consensus. These deviations from the dominant ideological norms serve to confuse and disorientate. In doing so, they temporarily reveal the historical and mutable nature of that which is usually considered ‘the way things are’* (Cresswell 1996; p. 26)

Coyotes, a species ‘placed’ in ‘wilderness’, transgress societal expectations when they move into cities, backyards, and other more distinctly ‘human’ spaces (Alexander and Draper 2019a; Alexander and Quinn 2012), rupturing ‘normality’. Building on Cresswell’s theory and previous research (Alexander and Lukasik 2017), Alexander and Draper (2019a) designed FCI to reveal if and when participants believed coyotes to be ‘out of place’ and therefore transgressing, with questions framed around ideas of space and trespassing. While other species certainly challenge human perceptions of “place” (Ojalammii and Blomley 2015; Collard 2012), Alexander and Draper (2019a) note that coyotes in particular threaten human conceptions of where wild (predatory) animals should be. Coyotes are found in centres of human society—New York City and Los Angeles, for example. Coyotes’ occupation of urban and suburban landscapes challenges human conceptions of where animals should be (Braverman 2016).

In the FPR, Alexander and Draper (2019a) noted that while (most) participants did not explicitly believe coyotes to be ‘trespassing’, 75% of participants recalled experiences in which coyotes had ‘transgressed’ by entering into ‘human spaces’. While there seemed to be relative consensus regarding how close a coyote could be to human spaces, participants had more

complicated understandings of what was ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ behavior. Aggregating the qualitative data, Alexander and Draper (2019a) found that while over 90% of participants found it to be ‘natural’ for a coyote to kill or eat a cat or dog, most participants also considered this to be an act which was ‘punishable by death’. The human ‘rules’ that Alexander and Draper (2019a) identify reveal complex, at times contradictory, culturally-specific conceptions of ‘place’ and ‘natural’ behaviors for coyotes in the FPR.

One example of the elaborate rules found by Alexander and Draper (2019a) was imagined ‘critical distances’ (Brighenti and Pavoni 2018) that coyotes were expected to maintain from humans, their livestock, and their pets. When coyotes transgressed these critical distances from humans or their occupied land (barns, homes, etc.), participants felt it was ‘unnatural’ coyote behavior that represented a serious biosecurity threat (Alexander and Draper 2019a). When coyotes trespass this ‘imagined geography’ (Philo and Wilbert 2000 c.f. Said 1979) of critical distances, they are often killed (Alexander and Draper 2019a). As Alexander and Draper (2019a) and other critical animal geographers note (Collard 2012), when nonhuman animals are deemed a ‘threat’, they are often ‘made killable’ per Haraway (2008a) or ‘non-criminally put to death’ per Derrida (1991). Alexander and Draper (2019a) note that, ironically, coyotes’ ability to adapt and survive in changing landscapes also makes them more likely to transgress socially constructed notions of ‘place’ and ‘critical distances’, “threaten[ing coyotes’] daily experience, as well as the social fabric of their lives” (p. 3).

From Alexander and Draper’s (2019a) analysis, we learn that landowners in the FPR expect nonhuman animals to stay ‘in place’. To transgress these imagined places, or critical distances, is potentially deadly. I build on Alexander and Draper’s (2019a) findings to reveal the ideologies in the FPR that define what is ‘normal’, or what is ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’ (Cresswell 1996). Critically analyzing discursive patterns in the FCI interviews, I reveal dominant ideologies that inform the social norms and taken-for-granted knowledge which result in the practice of killing coyotes in the FPR.

[Would you recommend killing coyotes before they become a problem?]

*No.. Although, [name redacted] was working the field up there and he spied a female that kept coming out of one of the badger holes, so we plugged it and smoked them. You know the—the smoke plugs for gophers? They look like a stick of dynamite. But all it does is it makes that sulfuric gas smoke. So, we did. We plugged the hole and killed the litter. We*

*didn't kill her... it didn't bother me to take out a litter because they multiply, right? But that she got away, that's okay. I don't care. She'll eat gophers. Cause there is a balance, right? So, I don't advocate just killing them all because your land would just end up full of gophers and full of badgers. So, a few of them out and around isn't a bad thing.*

-Interview 41 (female, 12 years in situ)

Like Alexander and Draper (2019a) and other critical animal geographers (such as Collard 2012; Gillespie 2014; Sundberg and Dempsey 2009; Sundberg 2011), I analyze the practice of killing coyotes within its sociocultural, political, and economic context. As Urbanik (2012) writes, ethics are geographic. Much like knowledge (Haraway 1991), ethics, per Urbanik (2012), are formed within particular social and cultural contexts; they are not uniform. Situated within particular cultures and their related animal practitioners, animal-related 'geo-ethics' (Urbanik 2012), or norms regarding which animal practices are 'right' and 'wrong', vary (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Kim 2015). Even with the FPR, there is no generalized consensus. Some human residents are eager to coexist with coyotes, grateful for the species' proclivity for eating rodents, while others, like the participant from Interview 41, poison coyote pups with sulfuric gas. The FPR is quickly changing, and this is reflected in the diverse (and often polarized) relationships with coyotes.

### **3.4 A historical, social, and economic overview of the Foothills Parkland Region of Alberta**

The FPR (see Figure 1 and section 1.2) is experiencing rapid development, both in land transformation and also in social change (Ghitter and Smartt 2009). The FPR was first rapidly transformed for the beef industry; lands were cultivated for the purposes of grazing with the removal of First Nations and Métis peoples during the nineteenth century (Simonson and Johnson 2005). Cattle production was the major industry of the region for over a century (Ghitter and Smart 2009). Calgary, known colloquially as 'Cow Town', became the hub of this industry. By 1900, surveys show that Calgary housed a tannery, a pork packing plant, three beef packing plants, cold storage, and, of course, a brewery to sustain and support the nascent beef industry (Ghitter and Smart 2009). The Calgary Stampede, a point of pride for many Albertans, has been a celebration of cowboy culture since 1912 (Epp 2008). It began as a fair in 1884 (Staff 2021),

just seven years after Treaty 7 took land rights away from the Blackfoot Confederacy, Tsúút'íná First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations (Epp 2008).

The FPR was transformed yet again as the oil and gas industry boomed, amassing wealth in Calgary in particular after the discovery of oil and gas in Turner Valley in 1913 (Epp 2008; Ghitter and Smart 2009). As the city of Calgary grew and developed, booming with oil money, Calgarians began to imagine themselves as separate and distinct from the rest of Alberta (Epp 2008). Indeed, political scientist Roger Epp argues that there are, in fact, two trajectories for Alberta (2008). Urbanites, according to Epp (2008), were frustrated to see their taxes spent on rural infrastructure and “eager to differentiate Calgary, a diverse, cosmopolitan and tolerant metropolitan enclave, from the backward parts of Alberta” (p. 167). This desire to cleave a new identity for Alberta’s booming cities was further reflected in geographies and prospects, argues Epp (2008). While Alberta’s urban core (which Epp (2008) defines as the corridor of cities along Highway 2, spanning from Calgary to Edmonton as well as the oil boomtowns of Fort McMurray and Grand Prairie) was one of the fastest growing and best-educated populations in all of Canada. The ‘other’ Alberta was struggling. The ‘other’ Alberta was older on average, declining in population, much less likely to have a university degree, and whiter. This Alberta made less than two thirds the income per capita compared to the provincial average and struggled to keep schools and hospitals open (Epp 2008).

While Epp’s (2008) spatial geography would suggest that the FPR is very much part of the ‘new Alberta’, I find that some of the ‘old Alberta’, and tensions between the two, exist within the FPR itself. As Epp (2008) notes, “it would have been no simple task to draw a clear line between urban and rural. The latter was the site of acreage subdivisions, bedroom communities, championship golf courses and factory farms; there was no single rural landscape” (p. 168). The FPR counties surrounding Calgary certainly match this description, encompassing multiple imaginings of ‘rurality’. Forever changed by the flood of money Calgary experienced as a result of the oil industry (Ghitter and Smart 2009), land prices throughout the region have gone up, and many ranches have been sold and subdivided as the demand for small rural acreages has increased. In fact, many of the FCI participants are wealthy retirees of the oil and gas industry, who, able to afford the ‘rurban’ lifestyle (Ghitter and Smart 2009), move to the ‘countryside’ just a short car ride from Calgary, buying acreages with large comfortable homes (Epp 2008).

Families who have lived in this countryside for generations often referred to these new residents as the ‘acreage people’ in FCI interviews.

*And the other point I'm going to get to is there is a cultural difference between rural and urban. And the way to look—and even in the—so you get a lot of what we call "acreage people" ... People come in and say, "I'm rural, I've got an acreage, I live in that" and they think they're part of it and they blend in. But those of us from the older families in that when we talk, or you hear some of them talk, it's—well, they don't consider them a part of it. – Interview 23 (male, 60 years in situ)*

Demonstrating the different productions of rurality in the FPR, Participant 23 names what he understands to be key delimitations on who are truly rural. From this participant’s perspective, a member of an established ranching family, the ‘acreage people’ are not really rural. These FCI participants’ definition of rural is exclusive and singular, a construction of an imagined, more homogenous rural community akin to what Skogen and Krange document in Norway (2003). What emerges from the interview data, particularly in listening to those whose families have been in the FPR for generations, is their investment in their sociopolitical identity and an exclusive ideology of who is truly ‘rural’.

This solidarity around who is truly ‘rural’ in the FPR appears to be a tool employed to construct an exclusive rural society. Participants defined who was ‘rural’, ‘urban’, or ‘acreage people’ so often in FCI data that the three socially constructed identities emerged as important codes early on (see section 1.8.3). Rurality was actively produced as an exclusive social identity that included authority on what the best animal practices were, especially in relationship to coyotes. While ‘acreage people’ were framed as being clueless, ‘older families’ and ‘cowboys’ were seen as being pragmatic and experts on how to manage nonhuman animals.

In this way, analysis of discourse from FCI interviews revealed a more complex dynamic between humans and coyotes than clear-cut conflict resulting from attacks on livestock or pets. Rather, like Skogen and Krange’s analysis (2003) of the anti-carnivore alliance in Norway, predator and other wildlife opposition seems to be inextricably enmeshed with social tensions between human groups. Bye (2009) makes a similar conclusion, noting that to be a ‘rural man’ in rural Norway, one must be ‘anti-carnivore’. These social identities often have not only certain political positions, but also sociocultural-specific practices with certain animals (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Kim 2015).

For example, members of the ‘old families’ remember a time when large-scale coyote hunts were a common, socially accepted weekend sporting event during the 1950s. Lining up two rows of men on opposite ends of a large piece of land, they would encircle any coyotes in the area, shooting into the middle of the circle until the pests were exterminated. FCI participants reported over a hundred men would often show up to these events.

[Would you support a coyote cull?]

*Only if numbers warrant it. I want to tell you something that you likely weren't aware of. This is a game back in the fifties. I wasn't even married yet. I got married in 1957 so now you know it would be prior to fifty—between fifty and fifty-seven. Coyotes were so thick that what they used to do—and of course there wasn't too many acreages around then—at that time. And I remember I went on a coyote hunt around that De Winton area. And what they used to do is that they used to um—it was shotguns only. And so, they'd advertise "there is a coyote hunt this Saturday or Sunday. So, meet here". So, we'd meet there. And depending on how many people met—for instance, if there were upwards of two hundred people with their shotguns and you'd take an area off, maybe six-mile square. And string everybody out. Well out here, heck, you might be three hundred yards apart so then what you would do is you'd walk to the middle and you're chasing all the coyotes ahead of you. And when you are in that last half mile and you "oh god there they are—a half mile". You see the other guys coming at you. Well, then you got shot guns. Well, here of course you might have twenty to a hundred coyotes (laughing) boxed in there. All the coyotes are running over to one side and you would hear a barrage of shots. But anyway, that's how they eliminated them. And it worked. But that wouldn't even be allowed now because—oh man. People have become so... I mean you had responsible people doing it. And I remember we went with um people that were in the city, but they had been off the farm years ago and you know were experienced... The problem is too now that most of these residential acreage areas don't allow shooting. Now coyotes love those areas, they really move into those areas. -Interview 18 (male, 60 years in situ)*

There are lineages of these old families’ events and attitudes that appear to persist, though more privately and apparently in more exclusive places. For example, in interview 10, the participant describes the persistence of coyote killing events, in a well-known private men’s club which still regularly (and discreetly) plans coyote killing events, taking bets on their hunts (see quotation in section 3.3). This particular performance of rurality, while perhaps becoming more private over the decades as politics change, is an example of culturally specific and politically charged practices with coyotes. While coyote killing contests were vehemently opposed in much

of the FCI discourse, in the social and cultural context of a rural men's club, this practice may have political and social significance for rural men.

Producing rural identities through practices with coyotes and other nonhuman animals may be one way of trying to preserve the 'rural way of life' in the FPR. Certainly one can see evidence of this nostalgia and rural pride in events like the Calgary Stampede (Epp 2008). However, these narratives of a rural identity stuck in time and steeped in nostalgia and idyll negate the more complex narrative of a changing and developing, and perhaps less rural and more urban landscape in the FPR (see "2.3 Rural Geographies"). Human-animal relationships have evolved significantly in the FPR. Animal production has been made more efficient with technology, changing the ways that humans interact with nonhuman animals (Buller 2009; Epp 2008; Pachirat 2011), as Participant 18 illustrates.

[What was your earliest up-close encounter with a coyote?]

*Oh likely—likely as a young youth. Helping my father dig out a coyote den because in those days, if you could locate the den, you win. [You] dug 'em out and exterminated them because uhh.. farming had changed. You also had the—you also had—we all raised chickens and that kind of thing. And it was always in snagging a chicken for supper or something. Or whatever, and so it's just that management has changed. I mean we don't even have chickens anymore. And of course, the whole chicken production has gone to intensive livestock production. It has just changed! -Interview 18 (male, 60 years in situ)*

As Participant 18 notes, ranching and livestock production in general have changed a lot in the last half century with larger-scale and more technological operations. However, the tradition of killing coyotes has persisted in the FPR (Alexander and Draper 2019a; 2019b). Coyotes are still viewed by ranchers as a threat to their way of being, an opponent one needs to 'win' against.

This rhetorical framing is not improved by the current economic situation in the FPR for ranchers. These ranchers are under immense financial pressures as the beef industry changes and faces new challenges (Ghitter and Smart 2009). The ranches that remain also face decreasing land availability; the FPR is the fastest developing region in Canada (Ghitter and Smart 2009; Theobald et al. 2020). Sections that might once have been leased for grazing are increasingly being sold for residential development.

The FPR's increasing land prices have multiple implications for human-coyote relations. First, as the number of acreage properties and related infrastructure increase, natural habitats for

wildlife are further degraded. Wildlife species either adapt or become locally extinct. If they are like coyotes and can to adapt, they face multiple challenges in having to coexist with humans in suburban neighbourhoods. Forced to navigate a fragmented habitat with increased likelihood of being hit by cars, less social stability within packs, and fewer natural food sources available, habitat change and loss is a significant stressor for coyotes (Paquet and Alexander 2018). Second, as Alexander and Draper (2019a) assert, in suburban landscapes coyotes are often perceived to be ‘out of place’. Not ‘placed’ in suburban neighborhoods, coyotes are often expected to live in an imagined wilderness that no longer exists in the FPR. Once the land has been developed, the rules change, and coyotes’ presence may be even less tolerated (2019a).

In this mosaic more-than-human landscape of the FPR, I argue that identities and related ideologies inform how humans relate to coyotes; they inform normative practices for how to live alongside coyotes, dictating even the rules for which coyotes live and die within any given community (Alexander and Draper 2019a). In this critical discourse analysis, I focus on three emergent ideologies from the FCI interviews: rural-urban politics, masculinity, and capitalism. I find these overarching ideologies to be interrelated and critical in forming the various sociopolitical identities of the FPR, which result in particular discursive themes and practices regarding coyotes and other nonhuman animal species. Related to all these ideologies is an inherent speciesism. Nearly all the FCI participants, no matter their identity, expressed speciesist views. The speciesist hierarchies, of course, differ from individual to individual, and often from social group to social group. While some ‘acreage people’ may be more likely to express affection for their dogs and spend money, time, and energy to ensure their welfare, they may also be content to set traps for rats in their backyard. The people working on the frontlines of a ranch may care for their cows deeply, appreciate their working dog’s labor, and kill any coyote they see around a newborn calf. While these evaluations of animal life are different, steeped within their own cultural and economic reality, they both ultimately rely on speciesist assumptions.

### **3.5 A case study of speciesism**

In my review of FCI interviews, speciesism, a discriminatory ideology which validates the belief that humans are vastly superior to other nonhuman animal species (see section 2.2; also Boesel



and Alexander 2020), emerged as a common through line in almost all interviews. Certainly, it seems core to the widespread persecution of coyotes which results in them being shot from hundreds of metres away for being ‘too close’, their dens being poisoned, and private coyote-killing contests. Here I present some content of interviews with landowners in the FPR as a case study of speciesism, arguing from the position that society is and has been built upon the oppression of nonhuman animals.

For as long as the FPR has been colonized by European settlers, speciesism has been woven into the very fabric of society. Calgary’s first major industry, livestock production (Ghitter and Smart 2009), is evidence of this. Building human livelihood and wellbeing around the industry of raising cows for slaughter, immediately pitted humans’ wellbeing against nonhuman animals. As Buller (2009) notes, the very existence of these livestock individuals is “defined by the fact that they are there to be materially consumed” (p. 127). Their affect and welfare are, at worst, not considered and, at best, an ethical compromise (Buller 2009).

Built around the consumption of nonhuman animals, I assert the FPR’s social, political, economic, and cultural landscape has historically been interwoven with speciesism. An entire speciesist categorization of nonhuman animals existed in terms of the human needs. Chickens were a cheap food source raised in the backyard. Cats were rodent control in and around the house and workplace. Coyotes, wolves, cougars, and bears were framed as a threat to settlers’ way of life and existence and often eliminated (Emel 1995; Lopez 1978; Lukasik 2018).

In the twenty-first century, while much has changed, the schematic ‘placing’ of animals persists within the FPR. Notably, the production of animals has become industrialized (Buller 2009; Shukin 2009) and less visible. Chickens are rarely in the backyard anymore, and instead are concentrated in large, industrialized warehouses, in small battery cages. Calves are born (often from artificial insemination) to their mothers in the field, and then within a year, moved to feedlots to be fed and fattened, to optimize their value when they are transformed into a beef product at the slaughterhouse. Coyotes, a threat to newborn calves, and therefore the beef industry, are still routinely poisoned, shot, and trapped.

While much stays the same, some animals have been recast, as their relationship to the land changes with human modifications. Elk, for instance, are reported by FCI participants to be existing in larger numbers than ever before in the FPR. The elk have learned to take advantage of producing grain for livestock. In doing so, they reportedly destroy thousands of dollars of crops

destined for human-serving livestock. In this destruction of capital, FCI participants discursively frame elk as an enemy to the farmer and rancher in Alberta. They have become an intensely political animal.

*Well, I think... rural Alberta is really cheesed off with the government of Alberta. And so I think when you talk to the people they're not going to give you uhh.. the benefit of the doubt. When you complain about elk doing substantive damage, your reaction is well, the elk is native here. ... And the grizzly bear thing. Where grizzly bears seem to be more valuable than human life, right? So, the landowners have a—I guess you'd say have a chip on their shoulder with respect to anyone who is doing work on a wildlife because their feeling is that everybody's against them and the wildlife is wonderful. From our point of view, I don't see—the wildlife that causes me concern is elk. To a lesser degree moose. But elk are the real problem. And deer when they're too abundant... And of course, the government does absolutely nothing to help you. -Interview 34 (male, 50 years in situ)*

*They just tear out the fences as they go. Oh, they're miserable things. They belong in your freezer!! -Interview 41 (female, 12 years in situ)*

Caught up in debates over government control, rural jurisdiction, hunting rights, and farming economics, as articulated in the FCI interviews, the elk has become a species embroiled in political debate. While all animals, part of amore-than-human geography, “are already subjects of, and subject to, political practices” (Hobson 2007; p. 251), we rarely recognize them as such. Dominant human cultures have failed to recognize nonhuman animals’ sentience and agency, instead managing them to serve human needs and wants (Nelson et al. 2011). Instead of being considered agents with their own desires, nonhuman animals are considered subjects to human desires, providing critical ecosystem services, food sources, labor, and more (Hobson 2007). Critical parts of our political networks (Hobson 2007; Wilbert 2018), they become caught up in anthropocentric political controversy when they challenge human industry, perceptions of security, and more (Collard 2012; Skogen 2015). And elk are not the only example the FCI interviews provide.

Like coyotes, many species of rodents are explicitly listed as “nuisances” (Province of Alberta 2020). Politically blacklisted, any method of elimination seems acceptable for these species. The Northern Pocket Gopher, for example, has become a subject of ire within many parts of the FPR. Perceived to be increasing in numbers, Mountain View County (in the north of the FPR) even offers an “incentive trapping program”, or bounty on the Northern Pocket Gopher

(Mountain View County 2021). While the Northern Pocket Gopher bounty program, according to FCI participants, used to be open to everyone, the website states it is now only available to children. The county website advertises, “The program offers \$100 for the first 50 Mountain View County resident YOUTH (under 18 years of age) to submit 100 Mole tails. Only one \$100 payment will be made per residence” (Mountain View County 2021). In an apparent move to acculturate children with speciesist ideologies, Mountain View County’s discourse legitimizes the persecution of entire species. But it is not just the gophers—or “moles” as the website also refers to the species—that appear to suffer such persecution due to speciesism.

Rodents, generally of all types, are not well-accepted in most parts of North America. Alberta, however, goes above and beyond, purporting to be a “rat-free” province (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry 2021). Their website proudly boasts that “Albertans have enjoyed living without the menace of rats since 1950 when the provincial rat control program was established” (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry 2021). Outlining both the rules and prescribed outcomes, the Alberta government decrees, “through the rat control program, rats are not allowed to establish themselves in Alberta. Rats, especially Norway rats, are very destructive to crops. Occasionally small infestations are found in the province – but they are dealt with” (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry 2021). In my opinion, the systematic speciesism underlying both government and landowner discourse is clear: any species that challenges humans will be at the very least made ‘killable’ (Haraway 2008), like coyotes, and possibly, like rats, categorically destroyed.

[What behaviors signal to you that a coyote needs to be killed]

*Well, we haven't had a real problem with them being oodles and oodles and oodles. You got to remember that we also use the coyote as gopher control, and things like that. Like there's other benefits to having them around. And really for us, we wouldn't stop if somebody said, "can we come and shoot coyotes on your land?". But, we don't have any real reason to get rid of the coyotes. -Interview 22 (male, 28 years in situ)*

*What behaviors? Um I guess that you know boldness. Showing lack of fear of human. If I see that behavior, they're going to get one over their head or in their head. -Interview 36 (male, 48 years in situ)*

Interestingly, while some FCI participants appear vehemently against coyotes, others seem situationally supportive of them, regarding their utility. This evaluation of coyotes’ worth

in terms of their rodent control services, I argue, is also speciesism. Increasingly recognized for their capacity to control rodents, many FCI participants expressed tolerance and even appreciation for coyotes.

[When I say coyote – what are the first few words that you think of to describe them?]

*I guess umm—well, they remind me of a dog. They're um.. I think of them as being very elusive. And they're a great gopher control (laughs). -Interview 14 (female, 5 years in situ)*

[Would you recommend killing coyotes before they become a problem?]

*Uhh only if.. only if you're.. gots so many of them. If you are inundated with them. It—it—is (pauses) keeping this balance. See what happens is, they become a problem when there is nothing to eat. You know they um they do a great job of um even in the summertime. These little pocket gophers and these Richardson ground squirrels. Yeah, they live on those! And they do a good job of that. But those—those have to be available to them. - Interview 18 (male, 60 years in situ)*

*Eh.. that's a tough one. Because they're. They're... they do serve a purpose. You know if they're eating gophers and mice, we wanna have some around but we don't want to.. we just get rid of the worst ones. You know what I mean? Like the ones that stick around the field. If they don't leave, they're done. -Interview 20 (male, 50 years in situ)*

*I think that they do a good service in that they do keep our gophers and that sort of thing under control. Mice and everything else. -Interview 28 (male, 17 years in situ)*

[Is there anything about coyotes that makes you laugh or smile?]

*Laugh or smile? They do kill mice. They are good for something. -Interview 35 (male, 63 years in situ)*

Interestingly, cats appeared to fall into a similarly utilitarian role as coyotes—especially in more agricultural settings. Valued for their ability to hunt rodents, many cats were not seen as pets but rather as farm laborers. They too were described as expendable in some FCI participants' estimations.

[something make you angry]

*Yeah, when we used to have kittens here and they would be killed, or disappear. But to be honest, we didn't know if it was the owls or the coyotes getting them. We know something always gets kittens. So, we don't keep cats here anymore because we can't. Oh those*

*damn coyotes got our kittens again. So, we don't have cats anymore. Then I realized, the only reason you have cats is because you don't like mice, and if the coyotes are getting them, who cares? So, we quit getting cats.* -Interview 1 (female, 32 years in situ)

[Thinking about coyotes, is there anything they do that makes you angry?]

*Well, if they quit killing my cats—would make me happy. Like I go through—I dunno. We were down to only one cat there last year. You know people in the city always want to neuter their cats. You can't out here cause you gotta—you gotta have them. Like we have to have cats or we would be overrun with mice. So, what do you call it. You don't want to neuter your cats because—you know people in the city wouldn't understand it—because the coyotes come and they kill your cats, eh? So, you got to always have a steady supply of cats unfortunately.* -Interview 35 (male, 63 years in situ)

In summary, speciesism promotes the ranking and ordering of nonhuman animals in relation to humans (Gillespie and Collard 2017; Haraway 2008; Kim 2015). In the FPR, species were often ranked by their utility, creating complex, situational species hierarchies that can differ from property to property. These situational speciesist hierarchies were further complicated by politics of rurality, masculinity, and capital, which emerged in FCI data as competing ideologies. The formation of these social identities such as 'rural' or a 'real man' have been found to predispose individuals to anti-carnivore attitudes (Bye 2009; Skogen and Krangle 2003). I argue that this too is a form of speciesism, which can work in tandem with other more-than-human politics to adversely affect human-coyote relationships. I present these arguments in the following sections on rurality, masculinity, and capitalism.

### **3.6 Coyotes and rurality**

*And again, that's—that's part of that thing. You know people who come from town—it's never part of the way they grew up. With us, you were always—I guess killing is a sad word, but I mean that's what you did a lot of. Like as a kid you hunted squirrels, that's how you made your spending money. And if you... had a problem animal, you took care of it. And then we all hunted, it was just part of being in this country. Cause everyone hunted!* -Interview 27 (male, 55 years in situ)

Killing coyotes, and other animals, emerges as a practice that is central to rurality in the FCI data. While as Epp (2008) notes, there is no 'singular' rural Alberta, and the worldviews represented in FCI data demonstrate heterogeneity (Alexander and Draper 2019b), discursive themes emerge regarding which practices are central to certain conceptions of rurality. Woods

(2009) echoes this, writing that rural geographies recognize “‘rurality’ as a social construction and analysis of the discourses through which rurality and rural areas are imagined, represented, and contested” (p. 429). It is in this debate of what rurality is, and the way that it is imagined, contested, produced and reproduced in respect to coyotes and other nonhuman animals, that my analysis enters. In this section, I explore how a rural identity, and ideology, is produced in FPR landowners’ interviews regarding their practices with coyotes.

As critical animal geographers, Elder, Wolch and Emel (1998b) write, “Animal practices are a powerful basis for creating difference...they serve as defining moments in the social construction of the human-animal divide” (p. 184). Through multiple case studies, these animal geographers illustrate how animal practices are used to construct further racial and cultural differences amongst humans in their essay *Le Practique Sauvage: Race, Place and the Human-Animal Divide* (1998). Kim (2015) picks up this conversation in her book *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multi-cultural Age* (2015). Building from from these researchers’ conclusions (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Kim 2015), I argue that animal practices are not employed solely to produce racial differences, but also difference between rural and urban identities.

In these discourses that produce rurality through practices with coyotes, there exist broad and common themes. First, rurality was asserted through pragmatism and ‘commonsense’. Rural-identifying people claimed they knew the right way to manage coyotes and did not get overly emotional (even though these management styles often differed). Secondly, as Participant 27 did (see beginning of section), rural-identifying people contrasted themselves to urbanites and more recent migrants to the countryside, the ‘acreage people’ (as they were often referred to), who they believed did not know how to manage their own pets, let alone coyotes. Third, rather than rely on provincial government or any wildlife organizations, whom they expressed distrust and, at points, resentment for, rural participants described asking their neighbours, family, or friends for help when it came to coyotes and other nonhuman animals. This is a point of pride for many of these communities—and certainly a more consistent part of their political identity (Epp 2008).

In the FCI discourse, the nature of ‘rurality’ in the FPR itself is contested, produced, and reproduced. Ways in which people discursively produce their rurality vary. FCI participants’ imaginations of what it is to be ‘rural’ are likely heterogenous as the FPR continues to become more diverse with counterurbanization. However, as Pratt (1996) identifies, while “we may not

be able to point to a ‘true’ rurality, it may be possible to identify certain discourses about rurality that serve to enable and support the reproduction of particular uneven social relations, economic distributions and social stratifications” (p. 7). It is these multiple discourses of ‘rurality’ in tandem with animal practices that this section seeks to identify, analyzing how they produce uneven social relations and stratifications between human and nonhuman animal actors in the FPR. As in Skogen and Krangle’s (2003) study on the anti-carnivore alliance in Norway, I hypothesize that violence towards coyotes, and potentially other nonhuman animal species, may be a discursive (and material) performance used to produce and build a sense of rural community and rural political identity in the FPR.

One way in which some FCI participants claimed their rural identity through their knowledge of coyotes was in describing that they “grew up on a farm”. While coding FCI interviews, this quickly arose as an important “in vivo code”, or repeated common phrase (see 1.8.3 Coding). These participants used the discourse of “growing up on a farm”, or in the “country”, to legitimize their rural identity and linked animal practices. For some participants, they described that growing up on a farm meant that they were equipped with commonsense knowledge of animals. Growing up on a farm allowed them to “know what a coyote is” (Interview 1). For others, like the participant in Interview 18 (see section 3.4), it meant knowing that a coyote was a competitor. This male participant (from Interview 18) described digging up coyote dens and exterminating the pups with his father at a young age, because that was how you “won” (Interview 18). Participant 27 (see beginning of this section) offered similar rhetoric, stating that in growing up in the country, killing was a naturalized part of childhood. Often, “growing up on a farm” was a phrase used by FCI participants to describe a pragmatic and unemotional relationship to animals.

*It's a farmer's mentality. Um.. if I have a farm dog, and the dog gets old, I'll simply shoot it. We have a balance of emotion for life and death which most city people have lost. We don't get too emotional. One of the biggest problems we have in the Western world now is—no disrespect to yourself with dogs—but people have become too emotionally attached to domestic pets. They spend fortunes on them. They—they you know the whole thing. Here's what I say to people when I'm being really crude, "you got to remember that dog can lick its own ass as well as your face". -Interview 24 (male, 11 years in situ)*

[Who taught you what you need to be aware of when living with coyotes?]

*I grew up on a farm so, I suppose you just—you absorb it, I think. Although, it was again the mentality that if you saw a coyote, you shot it. I think in those days they had a bounty—on their tails or something.* – Interview 28 (female, 17 years in situ)

This unemotional and pragmatic relationship to taking animal life appeared regularly within the interviews in reference to rurality. In the FCI interviews, Alexander and Draper (2019a, 2019b) asked how killing a coyote would make the participant feel. Framing their answer in terms of a farming, ranching, and rural identity, rural FCI participants describe that killing a coyote, or any other nonhuman animal, is just practical. In doing so, they link rural ideologies to speciesist ones, reproducing societal norms of killing nonhuman animals without concern for their wellbeing. These rural FCI participants' discourse suggests that to be 'rural', nonhuman animal life must not be grieved.

[If you had to kill a coyote, how would that make you feel?]

*I don't know. Probably... probably wouldn't lose much sleep over it.* -Interview 5 (male, 10 years in situ)

*I mean it's more that when you are a farmer, that is part of life. It didn't bother me a bit. That one didn't bother anybody.* -Interview 7 (female, 7 years in situ)

*It's just what you have to do.* -Interview 22 (male, 28 years in situ)

*Nothing. Just whatever. It's something you have to do.* -Interview 27 (male, 55 years in situ)

*I've never myself. No. Well, I'm a farm kid so that's nothing. It's just like you have a sick dog, we'd shoot the dog. I mean never take a dog to a vet so, it's just practical.* -Interview 34 (male, 50 years in situ)

*Whether it's killing one that's mangey or you know, doing it for defence of our livestock or I don't have no feelings either way. Well, joyful in some cases. It's like okay no more problem. The buggers! Looked after that problem.* -Interview 36 (male, 48 years in situ)

*I'm not a hunter. I find it hard to shoot but at the same time, you know necessity is necessity. It's like going out and having a cow with a bad infection. Have to euthanize it. You just have to do it.* -Interview 38 (male, 55 years in situ)

*Hmmm I'm not certain I had much emotion about it. It was just something I had to do.* - Interview 43 (male, 6 years in situ)



*Well, I—it's like killing anything else. It—it's not a great feeling. But you know even as a hunter—and I've hunted all my life—I started hunting when I was eight years old. I shot my first animal when I was eight years old! ... It's not something you brag about, but it's something we did for food. That's all it was. And if I were to kill a coyote, I think I'd feel the same way.* -Interview 48 (male, 28 years in situ)

Clearly, within these FCI participants' discourse, there is variety. Some rural participants express the necessity of killing coyotes, while others express 'joy'. Yet grief is not obviously expressed. Scholar Judith Butler (2009) argues that 'grievability' is a normative framework by which certain human and human-like lives are grieved or, conversely, made 'losable' (Redmalm 2015). By normative, Butler (2009) means what is socially accepted and expected. In this context, I argue that grieving a coyote life, or even a farm animal's life, would not be considered normal or even socially accepted in certain instances. In the FPR, however, killing nonhuman animals is discursively framed as normative in reference to growing up on a farm, or in a rural setting.

Extending Butler's notion of grievability, I argue that FCI participants build their rural identity in asserting that nonhuman lives seem to be 'losable'. Even the loss of the family dog is not described with grief; instead, Participant 34 talked about the practicality and necessity of taking it to the backyard and shooting the dog when it becomes old. Coyotes, and certainly animal livestock, are not discursively framed as "grievable lives" in reference to "growing up on a farm".

Sociologist David Redmalm (2015) argues that to grieve a nonhuman animal life is to challenge "non-human animals' general status as material resources, non-social objects and replaceable members of a species or of the very vague category of 'animals'" (p. 19-20). Perhaps here there is a chasm between rural and urban ideologies. Rural industry hinges on nonhuman animal bodies being material resources (Buller 2009). To value and acknowledge nonhuman animal life would rupture the normative social hegemony that most of rural society and economy appears to be built upon. If a cow, and even the family dog, are not grievable lives, then a coyote is certainly a very 'losable' life in the more-than-human geography of the FPR (Butler 2009).

This consolidation around the 'rural' way of relating to animals was further legitimized by discourse creating difference between the 'urban' and 'rural' animal practices. Again and again, FPR participants made it clear that 'acreage people' and 'city people' had very little common sense when it came to managing animals.

*Well, yeah, really. Chill out for sure. I think people are ignorant. I think people need to be educated about coyotes. Because when you hear some of these people on these acreages freak out about..*

*It's those people that live on those acreages there. They're not—they're not country people. Those are the ones that are the first ones to post on our rural site anxious gibberish you know, whatever. But the thing is that perpetuates that whole thing about if you see a coyote on your land—shoot it. It's ignorance. It's ignorance. They haven't even done any damage. They show up. So what, they show up? They show up in the yard. So what? But they make a big deal of it because they don't know any better. Cause the—our neighbour [name redacted] says, "if you see a coyote, shoot it! To prevent any problems". You know so, these people who live on these acreages, open books! You could teach them. I think you could. I think you could. How to live with everything (pauses) I dunno. -Interview 11 (female, 60 years in situ)*

*It's um (pauses) you know and you wanna be—I wanna get along with my neighbours but I—I've had one neighbour with a Great Pyrenees crossed with (pauses) and I mean I like the folks, but that dog roams this countryside and she chases—I've seen her going after things. And she is out there three in the morning, and I've talked to them several times and we wound up in an altercation because I said you know I haven't done but I can call the MD. And they actually said to me, "[name redacted], this is country living" and I thought "you've been here for three years, and I have been here for fifty off and on" you know?*

*They are very nice people but when you get inexperienced folks that come out and—well they are all—many of them I would say I have to say are just completely irresponsible. - Interview 17 (female, 38 years in situ)*

*Urban thinkers don't have a clue. They don't even understand their septic system (laughs).*

*I mean I've watched [coyotes] stalk these new city pets that come out here and I find it quite amusing. You know it's unfortunate, but city people have to learn the hard way because they won't listen to words so. But I find it amusing when they are stalking. - Interview 25 (female, 37 years in situ)*

*If someone had a little pet dog, I wouldn't let them run around outside... I've seen back before I developed [name of acreage development redacted]—I've watched these coyotes and I've appreciated—the acreage peoples' dogs would come on and I'd watch them trap that dog and I'd say, "good for you". Coyotes were a lot less trouble than the neighbours' dogs. - Interview 28 (female, 17 years in situ)*

Identifying the acreage peoples' and city peoples' flaws and inexperience in animal practices is a point of unity amongst many rural peoples' discourse. It makes an 'other' of recent migrants to the community, adding further social friction and regional tensions. This discursive move to demonstrate difference produces social hierarchy, constructing an imagined unified rural

community (Bye 2009; Skogen and Krange 2003). This constructed social boundary of who is 'rural' delimits 'place' (Bye 2009; Cresswell 1996). While 'rural people' are framed as 'in place' in the FPR, 'acreage people' are squarely 'out of place' (Cresswell 1996). This exclusive imagination of who belongs in the rural parts of the FPR is further demonstrated in a lack of trust for government, and instead a trust in the rural social network.

When asked, "Who do you trust to help you with a coyote problem?", many of the rural-identifying participants had a two-pronged answer. First and foremost, that they would not trust the government to help them. As many rural communities have come to believe (Skogen and Krange 2003; Walker 2003), more centralized governments have failed to recognize and value the needs of rural peoples. In short, there is a perception that these communities are forgotten, or left behind (Epp 2008). Therefore, participants express that if they were not able to do it themselves, they would rely on a neighbour. There appears to be immense pride in being able to handle any situation independently. However, participants said if they needed help, they would turn to their sons, their friends, and their neighbours (keeping the labour internal to their closest community and, therefore, maintaining solidarity to rural network and independence).

[Who do you trust to help you with a coyote problem: friend(s), family, neighbour(s), government agent, other?]

*You know I grew up on the ranch, and you do deal with things. You don't look to the Fish and Wildlife people to make the... We would, probably.* -Interview 8 (female, 50 years in situ)

*I think neighbours and um neighbours and friends that are living in rural environments or people in the know.* -Interview 14 (female, 5 years in situ)

*Nobody! Just ourselves. You certainly don't want to get the government involved. They're the most ignorant part of our society.* -Interview 27 (female, 55 years in situ)

*I have a nephew who will come out and take a few of them. [government?] I've never tried them (laughing).* -Interview 30 (male, 6 years in situ)

*(Laughs) Not the government! Well you—you—what you do is—it would be neighbours and friends. I've got quite a few friends who are pretty astute hunters and trappers.* -Interview 34 (male, 2 years in situ)

*Not the government but everybody else on your list, pretty much. Like neighbours, and friends, and.. yep.* -Interview 41 (female, 12 years in situ)

*The government? Never trust the government (laughs). Just ourselves. Yeah. We—we have a rifle that is meant for predators... if we had to. And it's here for when you do get even a deer stuck on this deck. Or something goes terribly wrong. You know where a bear is here that refuses to leave. Same with coyotes who get cornered and you leave them room and they just won't leave. That's the worst-case scenario. So, we can handle most problems here ourselves. -Interview 42 (female, 8 years in situ)*

While the government was portrayed by a portion of participants to lack usefulness as a source of knowledge or support, neighbours were often viewed differently. I see this as speaking to a central performance in the production of rurality (Woods 2010). Central to the production of rurality, and rural identities, is self-reliance, both within individuals, and within the local communities. Related to lack of trust for centralized governments, FCI participants regularly employed the rhetoric of a 'good neighbour'. Many of them described that a good neighbour was handy. If for some reason they were not able to handle an animal by themselves, some FCI participants described that a neighbour (and their gun) was there to back them up.

[Who do you trust to help you with a coyote problem: friend(s), family, neighbour(s), government agent, other?]

*The main neighbour I would contact is this guy here. He is a volunteer firefighter and he has the proper gun licensing. And he is a really honest, good person. And he is a good shot. -Interview 2 (female, 5 years in situ)*

*Probably my neighbours. They are the ones that are going to be there the easiest probably. And have more experience with them than me. -Interview 5 (male, 10 years in situ)*

*I can go to the Rocky View County and get poison. Neighbours. I try to be a good neighbour and shoot the ones that are killing calves. Friends. I alert friends if I don't have time to hunt them. I do have friends that would come out. You know if neighbours help neighbours. We shoot the problem ones; they shoot the problems ones. We poison the problem ones. I don't know what our neighbours do. I think if everybody does their part, it works out okay. -Interview 20 (male, 50 years in situ)*

*I don't own a gun so.. but I do know people that do. So if I had a problem, I—my neighbour up here is always willing to help. -Interview 30 (male, 6 years in situ)*

[On average, about how many coyotes do you (or a hired person) kill each year?]

*Here it fluctuates. That year we would have had to killed lots but not since then. See and the neighbours are really diligent around me so I'm not having to. You know this one*

*little quarter section is pretty small in the midst of big, big, big ranch holdings.. but if we do one a year? -Interview 41 (female, 12 years in situ)*

Overall, rural-identifying FCI participants were consistent in their dependence on their rural networks, in tandem with an independence from central governments. This discourse, central to the production of rurality in the FPR, differed however in reason. For example, Participant 43 didn't want the government involved because of the way they killed coyotes. Contesting the version of rurality that suggests one should be apathetic to nonhuman animals' lives and deaths, Participant 43 expressed that while growing up on a farm, he learned that the government poisoning of coyotes was unethical.

*When I was small, and this was up at Cochrane. Umm when I was little, the government they were still putting out baits for wolves and coyotes. And umm—I dunno I was maybe five years old and there was a.. a coyote that had gotten into some poison bait and he was dead right in front of the barn door. I went out early in the morning before anyone else for some reason and here's this dead coyote laying there so what happened to him.. mom said "that damn government guy's been putting out bait again".*

*[so did she not like the killing?]*

*She didn't mind people shooting coyotes or trapping but she had no—no use for poison. - Interview 43 (male, 6 years in situ)*

The distaste for poison is echoed in many interviews and speaks to the varying ethics within the rural-identifying participants. Perhaps based in experience or perhaps based in family philosophy, discursive productions of 'rurality' vary greatly (Pratt 1996). There is no one singular 'rurality' and there is no one single way that FPR participants, rural or otherwise, relate to coyotes. Yet certain dominant rural discourses, and the ways in which they employ coyote (and other nonhuman animal) bodies to produce, demand attention.

In this section, I have demonstrated the ways that many rural participants link rural ideologies to speciesist ones. They do this through the three discursive themes I have highlighted in this section. First, rural people have "grown up on a farm", raised to know and accept killing non-human animals. They described killing as a more practical than ethical choice. Second, rural-identifying people assert authority, experience, and practicality over people living in cities, or the recent migrants to the country, which they commonly referred to as 'acreage people'. Seeing their knowledges as superior rather than situated, they assert that the 'others', the city and

acreage people of this landscape, do not know how to manage coyotes. Third, rather than seeking assistance from wildlife agencies, non-profits, or academic institutions, they rely on rural networks for animal management. They don't ask for help from government or non-profits because that would break rural solidarity, potentially threatening one's status as a 'rural' person, as described in research from Norway (see "2.3 Rural Geographies" or Bye 2009). Rural-identifying FCI participants described themselves, their neighbours, and often their rifles as more than capable of handling any nonhuman animal.

I assert that these rurality-producing discourses from the FPR are both informed by and further reproduce speciesism, in as much as they rely on knowledge that suggests that nonhuman animals are losable material commodities (Redmalm 2015). While these situated knowledges make sense contextualized within the FPR's social and economic geography, this does not mean they should remain unchallenged. As long as performances of rurality depend on the discursive framing of coyotes' lives being 'losable' and 'non-grievable' (Butler 2009; Redmalm 2015), violence towards coyotes will ensue. There are, however, different discourses of rurality, and linked coyote practices, produced within the FCI interviews that offer hope.

*So, this last year when I was combining over here. So in the fall, is kind of cool because the swathes lay, right? And the mice are underneath there so when you combine, they all go skittering. So when I was combining across the road here, that there's that coyote. I don't know where she lives. I'm gonna say she is older too. You can see by her—it's her coloring, everything. I've seen her before. And she just hung around and waited. And as I passed then she'd come and she'd eat them. She'd get the mice. And then at night she still stuck with me at night by the little slough there. She still did that until I dunno it got to be nine eight thirty nine at night and then I didn't see her again. So yeah, she stuck with me and ate a lot! Ate a lot! And they know that combine.. I mean it's a big machine. Big machine. And she didn't go far. Didn't go far. I stopped and got out and took a picture of her cause I thought it was kind of fun. Yeah, she didn't go. She didn't run. She was used to us there. That was just across the road. Yeah, it is neat. I think so.*

*So, across the road is an organic farm. A custom farm for the organic people, our neighbours—that he grew up with here. And organic farming is lots of weeds, lots of green, and so lots of gophers and then lots of badgers. And so then that changes, that's changed over the last year over here. More badgers, more gophers, the coyote, I'm sure they're happy. Very happy over there with food. So I find that to be a very interesting little system. Right there. -Interview 11 (female, 60 years in situ)*

*I would think our main management technique is leaving grass so there are other food sources for coyotes. Like we work hard at—we do the—like I said we do this. You know so there are always you know some areas that are late grazed and they're cut right down.*

*And there are some early spring areas. But we are managing grass so that we have lots of ground cover, lots of diversity and enough cover for there to be rodents which I think are their main food sources.*

*Yeah, one that doesn't bug you and just does their thing—terrific. And I think we feel the same way about the coyotes. They are there and they are doing a great job. You know we all need they are part of that diversity; they are part of that landscape and regenerating that landscape and knowing it's a healthy landscape. If you got a nice pair there and they are not doing anything, why would you ever shoot them? -Interview 12 (female, 60 years in situ)*

*Alls I remember was when my girlfriend and I would yelp in the evening and get them to yelp back. And they still do that! If I got little kids here, I say "do you want to call the coyotes?" And they go "yeah!" And I say "well come with me!" And I'll take them to the edge here and will start calling and they'll start yipping back in the summer. -Interview 15 (male, 25 years in situ)*

*When we lived in our other house, when there were not so many people on the road. Um I used to work in town and come home and go for a big walk every night—and I had a different dog obviously. And if I headed off to the Southwest on to the neighbour's property—they didn't live there so—there was a big creek and there was a big hill leading down to the creek and there were beaver in that creek but in the side hill there were coyote dens. And so I used to take the dog in the Spring and we used to go out and sit at a vantage point and watch the pups play. And so I can remember just going every night to see those coyote pups. It was just so, uh, magical. -Interview 17 (female, 38 years in situ)*

*I think we probably do better because we just leave ours alone so you get dens in here and then you've got a very stable population and we don't bother them and they don't bother us. -Interview 23 (male, 60 years in situ)*

These alternative relations with coyotes in rural parts of the FPR contest 'rurality' and how it is produced with respect to animal practices. Radical in their dedication to living alongside coyotes, these participants, who were often female-identifying, offer to produce a new 'rural' way of relating to coyotes, even if it not yet a dominant one.

### **3.7 Coyotes and masculinity**

[Who do you trust to help you with a coyote problem?]

*If my son is with me, he can do it too 'cause I taught him how to shoot. Our daughter would be useless. She would want to pet it. – Interview 25 (female, 37 years in situ)*

Violence described towards coyotes in the FCI interviews was often purported as a masculine act. In almost all cases, when a woman was asked who she would trust to help with a coyote problem, she described a male relation. In every case in which coyotes were described as killed for entertainment, it was men who were described as taking part.

Gender has for decades been understood to be a critical ideological construct to understand within rural geographies (Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2006; Little 2009; Woods 2009b). In fact, many researchers have specifically focused on the relationships between socially constructed rural masculinities and rural environments and community (Little 2009). Of course, like ‘rurality’, there is no one version of ‘rural masculinity’ (Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2006). Rather, what it is to be a ‘rural man’ is regularly contested in various sites, such as bars, sporting events and hunting trips (Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2006). In my analysis of FCI interviews, I also find that coyote practices are an activity in which rural masculinities are produced and contested. In this section, I assert that violence towards coyotes cannot be understood comprehensively without a critical examination of rural masculinity (see “2.3 Rural Geographies” for more background).

In my analysis of FCI interviews, I identify three discursive patterns which produce gendered roles with coyotes which I discuss in this section. First, both men and women in the FCI interviews frame killing predator species, like coyotes, as a man’s job. Reproducing these gendered roles, masculinity becomes intertwined with killing coyotes. Second, men often describe killing coyotes as an act of ‘defending’. Ex-military men are described as being brought in multiple times throughout the FCI interviews to takedown the coyote foe. I assert that this rhetorical framing of rural masculinities being required to ‘protect’ against the ‘enemy foe’ of coyotes leaves little room for more relational attempts at coexistence. Third, killing coyotes is a masculine sport in certain social groups within the FPR. While many FCI participants express disdain for sport hunting, there are certainly men who are still engaging in killing coyotes for entertainment. I maintain that while sport hunting is increasingly socially challenged (Woods 2000), it is still an activity in which men in the FPR reproduce rural masculinities, killing large numbers of coyotes in the process. In this section, I assert that the performance of certain rural masculinities results in the shooting and killing of many coyotes in the FPR. To meaningfully challenge speciesist persecution of coyotes, rural masculinities must be critically examined, contested, and challenged.



To enter this exploration of masculinity and coyotes, I begin with the observation from FCI interviews that management (and killing) of coyotes often begins at home, with gendered roles. Jo Little (2009), a rural geographer, asserts that an essential role of rural geography is to examine how gendered roles are not just practical division of labor, but rather “how gendered power relations were woven through... the status and responsibilities of men and women on the farm” (p. 316). Within the FPR, violence towards coyotes was described as a responsibility on a farm or ranch that was specifically masculine. In fact, many of the female FCI participants expressed that if and when they needed help with a coyote, they would call upon a male relation. It seems that boys are raised in this rural environment to understand that this is their role. As in Bye’s (2009) essay, ‘*How to be a Rural Man’: Young Men’s Performances and Negotiations of Rural Masculinities*, being anti-carnivore is one way in which young men become a ‘rural man’. For example, the female participants from Interview 25, whose words begin this section, illustrates this gendered performance. Her son was raised to know how to kill coyotes, while her daughter was perhaps socialized to be more caring. These distinct gendered roles in which men kill coyotes, and other vermin, were reaffirmed by other women in the FPR as well. In the first FCI interview, a female participant was interviewed, and multiple times she made it clear that whenever an animal needed to be killed, it was her husband’s job. Here are some examples from the interview with her:

[Do you ever use strychnine or compound 1080?]

*Would we use it if we had to? Maybe. I don't know. I wouldn't. That's just not my.. Rob takes care of everything that is outside.*

*He saw a mouse this year. And you know how terrified I am. And he put out poison to get that outside. We very rarely see mice but I sure as heck don't want them. So, he takes care of all of that for me. -Interview 1 (female, 32 years in situ)*

Other women also reiterated this position that killing animals was a man’s job.

[Who do you trust to help you with a coyote problem?]

*My husband probably. And you know if I had one here now that was a problem, I'd ask a neighbour to. You know if there was a situation—well actually I would probably take the 22 to it if I had to. You know if I really had to. But umm.. my husband says he doesn't want me using a gun (laughs). -Interview 28 (female, 17 years in situ)*

[How able do you feel to deal with problem coyotes?]

*Yeah, I'd feel able. But I wouldn't shoot it! I don't shoot stuff. I might call my son in to shoot it (laughs) like if it was rabid or something. No, I would not. -Interview 31 (female, 2 years in situ)*

Framed as being responsible for managing coyotes in FCI interviews, masculinities emerged as a clear theme in violence towards coyotes. This was often a role produced within families, either in women relying on male relations to kill nonhuman animals or in fathers teachings sons to hunt coyotes, which appeared to reflect broader societal expectations regarding gender.

Passed down from generation to generation, killing coyotes, and hunting more broadly, appeared to be a common and enduring performance of rural masculinity across white North American and European cultures. Sociologist Bredit Brandth (2016) notes that while raising children has become more equitable and rural fathers have taken on more parenting responsibilities than previous generations, fathering practices through hunting, sports and other outdoor activities “constitute stable sites of rural masculinity” (p. 435). Bye (2009) echoes this finding, claiming that hunting remains a rather ‘inflexible’ aspect of gendered geographies. In her study of rural masculinities in Norway, she found that while women are now more likely to be invited on hunting trips, they are considered ‘housewives on vacation’ (Bye 2009). Similar to Bye’s findings (2002; 2009), hunting in the FPR also appeared to be a ‘stable site’ of rural masculinities maintained from generation to generation.

This claim is perhaps best supported when examining answers to the question, “Could you describe your earliest memory of encountering a coyote?”. In answering this question, many participants described a coyote encounter alongside their father. FCI participant responses included descriptions of their fathers teaching them to kill or go after coyotes.

*There was one instance as a child, where we were driving down the road in Quebec and my father spotted one and he stopped the car, and he had his gun in the trunk and he was going to shoot it because it was rabid. And I can't remember why he thought it was rabid, if it was frothing, but it was really close. Like it came up really close to us. And I threw a full-on tantrum so that he wouldn't shoot it (laughs) and he finally gave up in a huff and threw his gun in the trunk and we drove off. -Interview 14 (female, 5 years in situ)*

*I remember Dad shooting the coyote. -Interview 27 (female, 55 years in situ)*

*You see when I was a kid—now you are raising thing! They used to have coyote hunts. Right? Where the farmers would get shotguns and be in a big circle. You heard of that? And then they'd come in and a smart coyote would get out of there early before they were close enough to shoot them. [Did you participate?] No uh my dad did! I was a kid when that—this would be in the early fifties. -Interview 34 (male, 50 years in situ)*

*Uhh—I dunno. I was probably from here to you from a coyote. My dad, we were actively hunting them, and he was just walking through the bush, and I was like waiting on the riverbank by the main trail where they came out in winter and that and he came blasting out of there and I shot him like from me to you. [How old were you?] I dunno. Like twelve. [Was it frightening?] No, I was pumped! It was a pretty good rush cause you're like, "holy crap!" Yeah so. I dunno I'm not—I guess growing up on a farm you are used to getting bit by big dogs and stuff so you kind of know what it would feel like. And like you think you could take a coyote like kind of how strong a dog is and stuff. -Interview 36 (male, 48 years in situ)*

*Probably the earliest memory is dad shooting them. Oh, I'd probably be six. -Interview 44 (female, 25 years in situ)*

Participant 24, a father, described killing coyotes while his boys were with him, saying, “There was one just standing across the gully and I had my boys in the car. It was a reddish one. And I shot it from about a hundred and fifty meters. [researcher: from the vehicle?] Yeah. They're easiest to shoot out a window. I don't think it's exactly legal, but it is what it is”. Performing masculinity for his sons, Participant 24 exemplifies how the tradition of killing animals is passed in a patriarchal lineage. Interestingly, later in the interview, Participant 24 recalled his own father teaching him how to raise pigs on the farm.

*When I was a boy, when a sow would have a litter of piglets, my father would lean in over the pen and he said to me, "that one's a squealer, take it out and kill it". Because if you had twelve piglets, there was always a weak one. If you didn't take it out and kill it, it kept squealing because it couldn't get that tit and it couldn't get milk, and the mother would keep standing up and turning around and sitting down, and she would kill some good ones. And it's this balance of reality that we have lost in the western world... We are soft. Far too soft.. -Interview 24 (male, 11 years in situ)*

Denouncing being “too soft”, Participant 24 makes clear that part of growing up as a man is accepting “reality” and thus killing animals out of practical need. Reaffirming the rural construction that nonhuman animals’ lives are not ‘grievable’ (Butler 2009; Redmalm 2015), fathers reproduce certain hegemonic masculinities, knowingly or unknowingly indoctrinating

young children in gendered and speciesist ideologies at a young age, producing another generation of rural men that might feel that killing coyotes is just what one ‘has to do’.

More than just gendered division of labor, coyote killing was also framed as a way men “defended” and “protected” livestock, pets, and potentially people in the FCI data. While not a rancher himself, Participant 7 described the potential threat of a coyote and need for armed action saying, “I know a lot of my friends had a gun by the doors and when the coyotes started howling, they went to save their calves... I had nothing to defend so I just stayed in bed”. Invoking language which paints coyotes as a potential opponent to the practice of ranching, a theme emerged in which men described coyotes almost as a threat that required military action. In two cases, participants even boasted about friends or familial relations who had been military men who were employed to kill coyotes on the ranch.

Researching extensively on the connections between military and rural masculinities, geographer Rachel Woodward (2000), notes similarities. ‘Real men’ are constructed through military and rural discourses as men who are physically fit and mentally tough, able to cope with the physical challenges of being outdoors, while either ranching or being a soldier (Woods 2009b; Woodward 2000). Rural ‘natures’, and by extension, coyotes possibly, are seen as a test of both rural and military masculinity (Radel 2009; Woods 2009b; Woodward 2000); if men can survive, control, master or dominate nature, then this evidence of their masculinity. In the FCI interviews, men are described as mastering nature by killing coyotes, often producing *both* rural masculinities and military masculinities in the act.

*I have two grandsons. My son and his wife that are on the ranch with me, they have two sons, they both joined the army, they both did tours in Afghanistan. The oldest one, he did two tours in Afghanistan. And he was a sniper. And now he has a buddy who comes down—matter of a fact he comes down Wednesday I think again. He is still in the army because he is trying to—[name redacted] has left the army is now with the Calgary city police. That's where he is. His wife was a nurse. They just got a trailer and moved onto the ranch. And uh they just had a new child but at any rate she is taking off a year and uhh [named redacted]—that is the friend of [name redacted]'s—he is still with the Princess Pats stationed out of Edmonton but I don't know how those guys work. Four days on and four days off or whatever he is so on his days off he is down at the ranch. So what is important about that is uhh.. "I'm a sniper, I shoot things!" You know what I mean. So, I always say "Well now just a minute now" (laughs). I know they've got three or four coyotes this winter, but we still got three or four around so (laughs). -Interview 18 (male, 60 years in situ)*

*I was doing my early morning check—at six in the morning, and I came across a coyote eating a calf. And the calf wasn't dead yet and he had opened up his stomach and it really ticked me off. (Laughs) And so I phoned my boss because my boss doesn't allow hunting on their place at all, and I told him what was going on, and he said, "okay, find someone to start shooting them". And so I happened to have a guy working for me, that was an ex-marine sniper (laughs). So, yeah. I never seen anything like it. I couldn't even see the coyote. He says, "you see that over there?" "Yeah" and the next thing you know you see it flying in the air. I'm just like, "wow". That's crazy. But I don't know. We didn't get too many. I'd say maybe five in that month. They get to know how close they can be (laughs). But anyway, it scared them away, so we didn't lose anymore that calving. -Interview 30 (male, 6 years in situ)*

These discourses which frame coyotes as an enemy threat, or ‘killable’ (Haraway 2008), reveal where rural and military masculinities may intersect. As Little (2002) notes, certain hegemonic rural masculinities in farming rely upon notions of ‘taming’ nature to ‘maximize production’. Failing at farming is to allow nature to disrupt production and therefore, fail as man (Little 2002). This hegemonic rural masculinity is affirmed by the FCI participants in interviews 18 and 30. Both men are ranchers. One had experienced recent depredation while the other had not. Either way, by employing military men, these FCI participants ensured nature, or coyotes in this case, would not threaten their livestock production. In killing coyotes, a potential threat to their livestock and therefore livelihood, these men have dominated nature, performing rural masculinity and ensuring their status as ‘real men’ (Bye 2009; Woods 2009b; Woodward 2000).

Discourse such as this which frames ranchers as being ‘at war’ with coyotes is not new. Coyotes were, after all, once named the United States Biological Survey’s (the precursor to ‘Wildlife Services’) ‘most frustrating opponent’ and a ‘threat to the American way’ during the twentieth century (Flores 2016). According to Dan Flores’ (2016) *Coyote America: A Natural and Supernatural History*, popular journals at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth century referred to coyotes as “contemptible”, “especially perverse”, and “lacking in ‘higher morals’” (p. 78). Most notably, the senior biologist of the U.S. Biological Survey, E.A. Goldman, referred to coyotes in 1930 as the “archpredator”, a “very serious menace”, and in perhaps the most anthropocentric turn of phrase, a “destroyer of useful creatures” (Goldman 1930; p. 330).

This historical rhetoric in North America has created the perfect conditions by which coyotes are not only killed to defend the ‘rural way’, but also to perform rural masculinities—sometimes for sport. Participant 10 spoke about being invited to private killing contests hosted by the local Elk’s Club (see section 3.3). Making explicit the connections between rurality,

masculinity, and capitalism, he describes how coyote culls are held as an exclusively male contest with financial rewards. Saying, “you can give any arguments you like and it ain't going to change their behaviour”, Participant 10 reaffirms the solidarity and insularity of a rural community, insisting that it is a tradition that will not be challenged by outsiders. Further in his interview, he makes clear the masculine nature of killing coyotes as a sport. He articulates that the club’s culture is threatened by integration of women, suggesting the need to preserve masculine spaces and performances:

*I'm a member of the local Elks and we had a meeting in [redacted] last night and one of their big things is to have this coyote cull, to go and shoot all these coyotes. See the coyote cull that these guys do—this is a guys' club and it's competitive and there's a bit of money involved and it's a sport. So, you can give any arguments you like and it ain't going to change their behavior (laughs).*

[Who are the Elks?]

*Yeah they are mostly.. you know the guys.. you know, the guys? And uhh they are landowners, they work in the oil patch, and they have a sort of fraternity... I don't know if I should tell you this but, anyway, I think it's kind of fun! Because what happens in a population of—what's happening in the Elk's organization in Canada is that they've sort of been forced to incorporate the Royal Purple part of the Elks Organization into the Elks. In other words, you are mixing the sexes within the same group. And boy that's caused some problems because what happens and it's the same problem in the RCMP and the in the armed forces. When you mix the sexes, the culture changes totally. There is a lot of resentment and anger, and in fact a number of the Elks' lodges have folded for that reason. Because the guys are well “we don't want to do this anymore”. So, they have no reason to get together. But this club in [redacted], they are a bunch of guys still. And I mean I had a really good time last night. I was a visitor. I'm a member of the [redacted] Elks but I visited their lodge. And they are one of the few lodges that are very healthy. And you can see why. It's a boys' club and you have a few drinks (pauses) then annual rituals (laughs).*

[Would you support a coyote killing contest?]

*Like the Elk guys that do it? Well to them it's a sport. But I wouldn't participate in it. But I respect other peoples' point of view and you know it's a tradition that's been going forever. And if they feel like it's a problem with their livestock, then... -Interview 10 (male, 28 years in situ)*

Illustrating the links between strictly masculine spaces and coyote killing for sport, FCI Participant 10 speaks to the existence and reproduction of a hegemonic masculinity steeped in

speciesist violence. According to Participant 10, masculinities are being threatened as traditionally male spaces are being forced to integrate with women and possibly other genders. Whether this narrative of decline in male-only spaces is based in fact, it seems likely that while the FPR develops and becomes increasingly heterogenous, coyote killing events may come under increasing scrutiny.

Sport hunting, for example, while still legal, is commonly criticized within FCI interviews. While participants described killing coyotes to protect livestock or pets, very few admitted to partaking in the act for sport or pleasure. Increasingly, this particular performance of masculinity appears to be challenged within the FPR. An emergent theme, as expressed by some participants who recollected the mass coyote hunts during the 1950s, remember sport hunting as part of the past rather than the present.

*I think for one thing, there was a time when killing coyotes was considered recreation. And I know up around Tofield where we spent some time, some of those guys used to chase them with Ski-Doos. It was just a recreational thing. They'd run them down, you know? Is it still common?*

[Would you support a coyote cull?]

*No I wouldn't. Well, I think it's unnecessary. That's all. I think often it's non-issues. I knew—I knew some people who came from around Ponoka and every year they engaged in this. And all the guys got together and they just ran everything into a circle and shot guns and then they killed all these coyotes. And that I think the coyote population is probably self-controlling to some extent. Like anything else. And I don't see any point in.. and again, it was recreation—I think. Because they always looked forward to it and they would brag about it. And it was a recreation thing. -Interview 48 (male, 28 years in situ)*

Whether, like Participant 48 suggests, killing coyotes for recreation is truly becoming less common or just becoming more private, as in the case of the Elks, is unknown. However, from the FCI interviews, I observe that this construction of rural masculinity, which links strength and dominance to entertainment and killing coyotes, exists. The very nature of this socially constructed identity demonstrates the synergistic relationship between ideologies of masculinity and speciesism. As long as rural masculinities are linked to the dominance and mastery of nature (Woodward 2000), coyotes are likely to be killed by men, as evidenced in the quoted transcripts below:

[Can you describe one or two key experiences that you had with coyote(s) in the past 10 years that stand out in your mind (were the most memorable)?]

*Yeah, I was having a drive one day. There was four of them in a hay field. So I thought (pauses). Hmm. How do I get close to you? But as soon as I stopped the truck, they booked it off into that gulley. They were pretty cautious. So, I thought, "Rikey little blighters". So, I drove down to the end of the gulley, parked the truck, and sat and waited. One come out, shot it. Second one came out, shot at it. And damn it. It was just behind the fence and it's amazing how fate takes a hand. I hit the wire! Bullet pinged off and coyote disappeared, or I would have had two in the same day. But then that is the easiest way to shoot them. Sit and wait for them coming on a set route. -Interview 24*  
[Can you describe the feelings you had?] *Exciting. It'd be a sad world without Mr. Fox and Mr. Coyote. But they are a great challenge. The-the smartest there is out there. - Interview 24 (male, 11 years in situ)*

[Would you support a coyote killing contest in this area (prize for most dead, biggest, smallest, etc.)?]

*If somebody wanted to do it, I wouldn't be opposed to it. I'd—I'd hope that they would... I've got a coyote hide in my office actually. Hanging on the wall. A client gave it to me years ago. - Interview 34 (male, 50 years in situ)*

[Could you please describe your earliest memory of encountering a coyote?]

*Well, I would work on a farm sometimes so unfortunately my cousin used to try to shoot coyotes. We used to shoot gophers. I would have been maybe fifteen. This was in Olds/Woodward area. That's halfway between here and Red Deer practically. But I don't think they were shooting them for pests—they were just being—for sport. - Interview 46 (male, 23 years in situ)*

Exploring why anti-carnivore and pro-hunting mentalities are so persistent in young men in Norway, Bye (2009) highlights that human relationships to predator species are increasingly political (Darimont et al. 2018) and claims that because of this, taking a particular stance towards predators might be critical to demonstrating “rural men’s loyalty to place” (p. 282). Bye suggests there are certain ‘rules’ regarding carnivore species, which if followed, may “secure their identities as ‘rural men’, as they are invited into male networks and other male-dominated activities in the community” (Bye 2009; p. 282).

Taking Bye’s (2009) conclusions into consideration when analyzing FCI interviews, I think a possible explanation for the persistent paradigm of coyote killing amongst men is that a particular stance towards coyotes is required to be considered a truly ‘rural man’. Like Bye



(2009) I assert there may be certain “rules” that men need to follow with respect to coyotes and other non-human animal lives to prove their rural masculinity.

From the FCI interviews, I understand these rules to be as follows: rural men in the FPR ‘take care’ of coyotes. This is not a woman’s job, but rather a distinctly masculine job (Little 2009). If coyotes represent any threat to livestock, pets, or people (whether it be real or imagined), it becomes a man’s job to defend and protect and thus kill coyotes. To fail to protect your livestock or pets may be seen as a failure in masculinity (Woodward 2000). In certain private circles, to be a ‘rural man’ may require participating in informal coyote killing contests, where money is bet on who will be the most successful man, and kill the most coyotes.

While these “rules” may suggest that the production of masculinity intrinsically requires coyotes to be killed, rural geographers remind us that rural masculinities always have the potential to be challenged, contested, and redefined as they are produced (Bye 2003; Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2006; Little 2002; Woodward 2000). Rural masculinities are neither singular nor static. Within the FCI interviews, there is evidence of men in the FPR whose choices, words, and actions, challenge the coyote killing tradition of more hegemonic rural masculinities. Their discourse produces new rural masculinities.

*Whereas my dad, umm he wasn't that kind of--you know he just didn't hunt. He didn't shoot wildlife. He didn't shoot birds. He wasn't a hunter. So, he didn't—you know—he never ran to get the gun but that was certainly the mentality with everyone else around. - Interview 28 (female, 17 years in situ)*

[Why do you think you feel different about coyotes?]

*I would say it's a shared philosophy in the family and I think it rolls with generations. Umm when I think about my grandfather, he had a 22 and a shotgun. He hated magpies but coyotes he was kind of okay with... So, I think part of it is.. you know how you grew up, and that's just the perspective you have. And it's that perspective of, well we.. the coyotes and the elk and cougars and stuff were here, we can live side by side. -Interview 47 (male, 10 years in situ)*

It is clear from these testimonies of alternative rural masculinities, and from broader research projects on the relationships between natures and gender (Nightingale 2006; Radel 2009), that killing coyotes (or dominating nature in any way) need not be essential to masculinity. Many performances of masculinity exist in the FPR that are less hegemonic with respect to coyotes and other nonhuman animals.

In conclusion, in the FPR coyote killing is still employed in performances of rural masculinities. This relationship between killing predator species and performing masculinities is not unique to the FPR, as researchers have documented similar performances of masculinity in Norway and the United States (Emel 1995; Krange and Skogen 2007; 2011; Skogen and Krange 2003). It demonstrates, however, a need for complex understanding of gender in any consequential attempt to deconstruct the paradigm of coyote killing. Perhaps this is already happening in small and local ways, as more hegemonic rural masculinities are challenged and contested. I see some evidence of this already in FCI interviews. It is in this process of continual challenging of what it is to be a ‘rural man’, that perhaps what it can mean to live as a coyote in the FPR can change too.

### 3.8 Coyotes and capital

[Thinking about coyotes, is there anything they do that makes you angry?]

*Of course! When you lose an animal, right away it bothers you because you know, the animals you lose are always mine. You know what I mean? The first you know eighty percent—they belong to the bank and the taxes and this and that and that. It's those last few—when you start losing those—those are—those are always mine. My share. Because I can't go to the bank and say, "No sorry. You know you lost some percentage of yours. We are sharing the loss." No one wants to share that part of the losses. -Interview 38 (male, 55 years in situ)*

Capitalism must be analyzed to understand the practice of killing coyotes in the FPR, and likely throughout North America. From my observation of FCI interviews, coyotes are killed both for being a threat to livestock capital *and* for the economic gain in their dead bodies—either in their pelts or from bounties. There appears to be no cost associated with killing them. No licence or tag needs to be purchased to kill coyotes (Alberta Government 2020). They are one of the few animals that can be hunted for free in Alberta. As FCI Participant 24 said, “The only thing that is free in Canada is to shoot coyotes”.

The paradigm that frames coyotes as an opponent to capital may in part originate with the production of animal livestock. In fact, researchers surmise that hatred and fear of wolves may have immigrated to North America with European colonizers and their livestock production (Álvarez et al. 2011). While Europeans had not experienced coyotes before, researchers surmise that they quickly were understood to be a relative of the wolf, and were dealt with as such

(Flores 2016). It is assumed that Europeans not only brought with them the rhetorical framing which pitted predators against animal livestock, but also their perceived solution: bounties (Eichler and Baumeister 2018; Emel 1995; Nelson et al. 2011; Proulx and Rodtka 2015). Bounties, as described in “2.3.3 Rural capital”, are paid out to private citizens to reward them for killing unwanted species. These bounties predominantly appear to be in service or support of the ranching industry, encouraging the killing of predators who threaten livestock capital, though the reasons are likely more complex (Emel 1995).

In the FPR, much of society and economy centres on the production of animal livestock (Ghitter and Smart 2009). Cows, the primary form of capital, are the central commodities of life in the rural FPR (Ghitter and Smart 2009). It is the development of their bodies that seems to dictate many of ranching decisions. To ensure cattle commodities reach the slaughterhouse at their optimal weight and health, the industry of ranching necessitates the reorientation and re-evaluation of all local species. Elk, as described in “3.5 A case study of speciesism”, are recast as a competitor to grain sources for cattle. Rodents are potentially a costly menace, eating crops that could be fed to cattle or otherwise consumed. Coyotes are discursively reframed in economic terms. They become, in this paradigm of animal livestock, nothing but a threat to cattle bodies as capital.

This claim that coyotes become an ‘enemy’ in the scheme of animal livestock production emerges from the FCI discourse. In the FPR, killing coyotes in service of defending livestock capital appears to be discursively normalized in FCI interviews. Participants, even those who are not ranchers (like participant 5 and 7), expressed concern over the loss of a calf, stating that killing coyotes who threaten calves is understandable.

*I'm empathetic towards ranchers—or sympathetic. When I hear about them losing a calf or two or three to the coyotes, I'm empathetic towards the ranchers but my feelings towards the coyote would be pretty neutral. Just kind of they did what they do, and now the rancher's going to do what he does. -Interview 5 (male, 10 years in situ)*

[Do you ever use strychnine or compound 1080?]

*No. But that would be a rancher. Because they have large herds. And they have to be aware of. They—you know, the coyotes would kill their calves. Each calf is worth six hundred dollars. -Interview 7 (female, 7 years in situ)*

Participants make clear that the value of a calf, the livelihood of a rancher, and the life of a coyote are interrelated in the FPR. The participant from Interview 38, whose words begin this section, makes the connection explicit, sharing that the calves that are lost to predators are a significant hit to the annual profit he makes. The margins of smaller ranches work such that the profits are so slim that a small number of calves killed can make or break the year. To these ranchers, a handful of calves lost to coyotes can damage their livelihood in the FPR.

[In the past 10 years, have any of your livestock been attacked by coyotes?]

*I usually have a budget of three or four a year eaten by coyotes. Three or four calves to be eaten every year. That's my budget. Depending on how cold it is, right? -Interview 20 (male, 50 years in situ)*

[What few words tell me how you feel about coyotes?]

*They are needed but they can be—affect my livelihood—you know what I mean? For killing my calves. That's money in my pocket. -Interview 20 (male, 50 years in situ)*

[Thinking about coyotes, is there anything they do that makes you angry?]

*When they kill baby calves, I'm angry. Because it's my job to keep them alive. -Interview 30 (male, 6 years in situ)*

Threatening a rancher's livelihood, the apparent threat that some coyotes present to a calf can be linked to so much more: in killing a calf, coyotes do not just reduce profit, but they also challenge the ongoing existence of a 'rural way' of life, predicated upon ranching that for many in the FPR is already fragile, as it becomes less economically tenable (Epp 2008; Ghitter and Smart 2009). Furthermore, as described in "3.7 Coyotes and masculinity", in killing a calf, coyotes may challenge rural men's ability to provide for their families and protect their property.

The relationship between men's ability to provide is underscored is an example provided by Participant 30. He recounts the story of a man who came onto his property to trap coyotes after the man had lost his job in the oil patch, saying,

*That was last—and that was right when our blood hound went missing and then, that's when that guy came and asked me, and I said he could go hunting--or trapping. He took at least a hundred. First of the year.*

*So, he took them for pelts. Cause I didn't pay him. Which is one of the—he was laid off the oil rigs, and he said that made up for his winter. -Interview 30 (male, 6 years in situ)*

Participant 30 was not the only one who brought up the value in dead coyote bodies. A couple in Interview 9 recounted a story of running into an acquaintance who was capitalizing on a local bounty, saying,

*Because remember like a friend of a friend—we were out in Maple Creek area. And he says "Oh yeah there is a bounty on coyotes. Four paws get you twenty bucks!" And so we went walking up and he goes "yeah look" and the back of his pickup truck he had (pauses) full of coyote paws. Or carcasses. Ready to chop 'em off. -Interview 9 (female, 48 years in situ)*

While bounties were outlawed for many years in Alberta (Proulx and Rodtka 2015), the past several decades saw a relaxation in environmental protections and a resurgence in bounties. Politicians have reported bounties to be successful in eliminating the coyote threat and creating “safer” communities (Patten 2011). While research indicates that lethal control is not successful in reducing human-coyote conflict (Gehrt, Anchor, and White 2009), bounties persist (Proulx and Rodtka 2015).

While there were no bounties on coyotes offered by local governments in the FPR at the time that interviews were undertaken, the Mountain View County (the Northern most part of the FPR; see Figure 1) elaborates on their ‘Agricultural Pest Management’ website, stating, “Mountain View County does not have a bounty on coyotes, however, the County does offer a Coyote Predation Management program, which allows for the distribution of restricted toxicants” (Mountain View County 2021).

The toxicants provided by Mountain View County and other jurisdictions in Alberta to support ranching efforts, yet again, frame coyotes as a threat to agricultural industry. Working under the slogan, “We work for a better agricultural industry in all parts of Alberta” (The Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen 2021), they provide toxicants to any rancher that can show depredation from coyote or another wild predator. Involved in distributing these toxicants, FCI Participant 36 was both an agricultural landowner and an Alberta Agricultural Fieldman. A large part of his job was to distribute toxicants to kill coyotes on ranches that had experienced depredation. From his perspective, there was only one way tenable to live alongside coyotes, and this required lethal control.

[How effective is killing coyotes as a means to stop coyote problems in the long term?]  
*I mean it's the only method. It's the only way you can control them is by killing them. I mean I think it's been proven. -Interview 36 (male, 48 years in situ)*

Having grown up in a rural, agricultural family within the FPR, killing coyotes was the only way that FCI Participant 36 could imagine relating to the coyotes. In his closing statement, he acknowledged that coyotes have a place in the FPR. Or perhaps more accurately, they “serve a function”.

[Do you have any final thoughts on what are the most important things to know about living with coyotes?]

*Um that they have a place. I mean they serve a function in the ecosystem and that. And you know that we live in their—you know—habitat, yeah. And that we, you know they're just part of the landscape and that uh you know every person has a different interaction with coyotes and it really depends how they've been impacted and that—by coyotes and how they respond to them, whether it be control methods or what their views are. - Interview 36 (male, 48 years in situ)*

Yet again, the discourses surrounding coyotes and rural capital are not monolithic. Instead, when viewed together, they create a complex—and at points competing—set of narratives. On the one hand, a theme emerged in which living coyotes threaten capital, while dead coyotes offer a potential source of income. On the other hand, some FCI participants’ described coyotes as useful in ranching—they provided free rodent control services (see “3.5 A case study of speciesism”). Interestingly, a third, and perhaps somewhat radical, narrative emerged in the data. This narrative emerged in response to questions regarding land rights—a topic which is increasingly recognized as essential to capital accumulation in decolonizing scholarship (Daigle 2019; Tuck and Wayne Yang 2012). While I have argued that speciesism appears interwoven into the economy and society of the FPR, I also contend that some FCI participants who expressed this third narrative were ‘anxious’ (Fudge 2002) or perhaps ‘ambivalent’ (Kim 2015) in their anthropocentrism and speciesism. Questioning humans’ a priori right to land in their responses to a question regarding ‘trespassing’, many of them contended the notion of humans’ right to land over coyotes’.

[In your opinion, are coyotes trespassing when they hunt domestic animals on your private property?]

*Are they (laughs)—no, if anything it's the reverse! Of—whose property this is in the first place?! Kind of silly. Do people say that? “They are trespassing on my property”. It's like you just get a little stamp there and all of a sudden, “This possession! This possession!” -Interview 13 (female, 27 years in situ)*

*No! They were there first. I love that one. -Interview 24 (male, 11 years in situ)*

[Do you have any final thoughts on what are the most important things to know about living with coyotes?]

*Well, I think it's generally a good idea, particularly to kids, to explain to them that we are more or less—“we” meaning humans—are more or less a guest in their habitat. And we should respect their habitats. I think you should teach kids early on how to react to encounters in an appropriate manner. So not to go into panic mode. Know what to do if you face such a situation. -Interview 6 (female, 1 year in situ)*

*I think living with them is the most important thing. To just not try and be on a rural property and expect it to be urban. To expect—this was their space first. They've been here for generations. Finding a balance where they can eat and have shelter and have water and uh we are kind of borrowing that space from them. -Interview 14 (female, 5 years in situ)*

*In living in Radium, I mean there is even more big horn sheep and cougars and bears and you just have to respect that. It's their world as much as yours and you try to avoid each other. -Interview 46 (male, 23 years in situ)*

These questions of more-than-human land rights are intimately woven into settler capitalism (Coulthard 2015; Tuck and Wayne Yang 2012). Ever since the FPR lands were taken from the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksiká, Piikáni, and Káínai First Nations), the Tsúút'íná First Nation and the Stoney Nakoda (Chiniki, Beaspaw, and Wesley First Nations), the land was modified to serve a settler colonial way of life (Simonson and Johnson 2005). This way of life is based in producing animal capital (Ghitter and Smart 2009; Shukin 2009). With this sharp transformation of land use in initial colonization, humans' relationship with coyotes in the FPR was altered completely.

Industrialized animal capitalism, I argue, will likely always make an enemy of coyotes and other predator species. Employing a network of more-than-human oppressions, the industrialized beef industry begins with 'rural people' and their raising of livestock on colonized lands, continues with underpaid, often immigrant human work forces slaughtering and dismembering livestock (Ghitter and Smart 2009; Pachirat 2011), and ends with the sale of plastic wrapped beef products in urban centres.

Following this economy, I assert that it is not just ‘rural people’ of the FPR who are involved in this network of speciesism required to produce beef in large quantities. Rather, I maintain that we must also consider where the demand for beef commodities comes from—primarily Calgary and cities farther afield. We must consider that the geography of violence towards coyotes extends far beyond specific cattle-grazing lands. I contend that the ‘rural’ people and their ‘rural way of life’ have only small roles in a system of violence toward coyotes, which implicates almost all Albertans, rural, urban, acreage, or otherwise.

As Skogen (2015) explores, the economic paradigm that pits rural people against carnivores is not easily solved. Renumerating ranches for depredation has not appeared to resolve tensions between carnivores and their opponents (Skogen 2015). Rather, deconstructing this economic paradigm may require much more extensive reflections and reworkings of human-animal relationships. I believe we will have to look beyond colonizer cultures for these relationships (Burow, Brock, and Dove 2018) and abandon industrialized animal capitalism altogether.

### **3.9 Deconstructing speciesism**

Deconstructing the practice of killing coyotes in the FPR requires a comprehensive analysis of speciesism and the other ideologies that support the tradition. Elder, Wolch, and Emel (1998a) provide a framework for such an approach in their essay, *Le Practique Sauvage: Race, Place and the Human-Animal Divide*, in which they illustrate the intersections of speciesism and racism in the policing of animal practices. They identify four questions that can be used to define what practices are socially and politically acceptable between human and nonhuman animals (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a). I use their framework to assess why the practice of killing coyotes is normative within the FPR.

Elder, Wolch and Emel (1998a) begin with the question, “Was a specific harmful practice necessary for survival or to minimize human or animal pain/death?” (p. 84). Killing coyotes, particularly in reference to saving a calf, pet, or child from a direct threat makes the practice socially acceptable within the FPR. Calves and pets, the most common targets for coyote predation, are also notably nonhuman animals that are anthropocentrically valuable. Providing companionship or capital, their lives are often valued over those of coyotes’. What makes killing



coyotes an unnecessary harmful practice is the existence of alternative conflict-reducing tools and practices. Leashing dogs, for example, in known coyote denning areas is an easy way to reduce the potential for coyotes attacking dogs. Keeping small dogs within a fenced back yard also mitigates risks. For livestock, many of non-lethal controls exist to reduce coyote conflicts. Livestock guardian dogs are a common tool that have proven effective in large cat conservation efforts in Africa, for example (Marker, Dickman, and Macdonald 2005). While a couple of FCI participants reported using livestock guardian dogs, non-lethal controls did not emerge as a common discourse in FCI interviews. Killing coyotes was still discursively framed as a necessary practice to decrease attacks on pets and livestock.

Complicating the normativity of animal practices, Elder, Wolch, and Emel (1998a) pose, “was the person(s) involved in the harmful practice ‘appropriate’?” (p. 84). In the FPR, the white, male ranchers are described as the ‘appropriate’ people for the job of killing coyotes. FCI participants, both male and female, repeatedly identified that killing coyotes was a masculine job. Some even spoke in greater generalities, suggesting that killing coyotes was somehow part of the “nature of men”. Rural residential landowners, who had no need to kill coyotes, often said that while they wouldn’t personally kill a coyote, it was certainly appropriate for a rancher to do so, given that his livelihood depended on it. If one is a white, male rancher, killing coyotes appears to be an acceptable—and even expected—practice.

Next, Elder, Wolch and Emel (1998a) ask us to consider, “how was the harm inflicted?” (p. 85). In the FPR, it seems there are few limitations on how coyotes can or should be killed. In the FCI interviews, participants admitted to gassing, snaring, shooting, and poisoning coyotes. The provincial government does little to regulate how a coyote can be killed. Instead, the government provides a guide with a myriad of techniques one can use (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry 2017) and will freely distribute the toxicant compound 1080 to any rancher who has experienced depredation by coyotes (The Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen 2021). Many ‘non-target’ species often die when this poison is used. It does not target the individual responsible for depredation, or even coyotes as a species well. So, to answer the question, ‘how was harm inflicted?’, there is no clear answer. It depends on whom one asks. Some participants would use any method to kill and would find them all socially acceptable. Others report having no desire to kill a coyote unless it was for the welfare of the individual coyote (i.e. a rabid or badly maimed coyote). The polarity of these responses demonstrates the diversity of worldviews

(Alexander and Draper 2019b) and geo-ethics (Urbanik 2012) displayed in an increasingly multicultural FPR (Epp 2008; Ghitter and Smart 2009).

These decisions regarding method of harm inflicted are highly correlated to place and bring me to the fourth and final question: “Was an animal killed in a slaughterhouse or in the backyard barbeque pit next to the pool?” (p. 85). Place is essential in determining whether an animal practice, or more specifically, a coyote kill, is appropriate. As Alexander and Draper (2019b) identify, place is also essential in determining if coyotes are accepted or not. The same is true for where animal practices, like coyote killing, occur. For example, FCI participants reported that it would be unusual for coyotes to be shot on acreages; some even sited rules that banned the firing of guns in these more residential neighborhoods. Shooting a coyote on a ranch, however, appears to be an accepted and normalized practice.

Elder, Wolch and Emel’s (1998a) framework allows us to further identify the instances in which killing coyotes is an acceptable practice in the FPR. I’ve answered these questions according to the collection of information provided by FCI participants, and conclude that killing coyotes is considered a socially accepted practice when there is some imminent (or imagined) threat to livestock, pets, or children; when a (usually white and male) rancher is the one killing; when the coyote is shot, poisoned, snared or gassed; and the kill is performed on a ranch, or more rural area, where the kill less visible and ostensibly in the service of protecting livestock.

While killing coyotes may be normative practice in parts of the FPR, I assert that it is not ethical. The normativity of the practice obfuscates the availability of alternative, non-lethal, though perhaps more labour-intensive strategies to living alongside predator species (McManus et al. 2015). I also observe in my discourse analysis that the practice is rendered necessary due to the regional reliance on industrial animal livestock—an economy predicated on the bodily commodification of livestock animals (Collard and Dempsey 2013; Gillespie 2018; Pachirat 2011). Entangled in productions of rural identities, masculinities, and capital, the practice of killing coyotes is deeply entrenched within the social fabric of the FPR.

This critical animal geography of the FPR calls for a new relationship between human and coyotes. This call, I argue, echoes testimonies of FCI participants, who also expressed desires for more thoughtful and compassionate relationships with coyotes. As expressed throughout this manuscript, there is no singular human-coyote relationship in the FPR; illustrating this diversity and contesting dominant narratives, some FCI participants shared

radical and counterhegemonic imaginations of what human-coyote relationships could look like in the FPR. For example, when asked to share final thoughts about living with coyotes, Participant 12 responded, “That you are living *with* coyotes. And you have to learn to live with them just like you have to learn to live with a sister you don't get along with”. Yet another participant spoke about her desire to find more compassionate ways of relating to animals than she had been raised with, saying:

*I grew up in Quebec. It was a small farm and it's not that there were coyotes necessarily around but—there was always somebody shooting something (laughs). There was always something whether they were butchering a cow or they were hunting something or shooting a predator so from an early age that was... From an early age I'm trying to think of a non-violent way of approaching it. -Interview 14 (female, 5 years in situ)*

Others spoke about encouraging their neighbours to not kill coyotes:

*I gave him one of my books. And I said "you read about coyotes in here". And his daughter is seven, and next time I saw her, she said "I love the coyotes story" and so I saw him... and he said to me "oh by the way, I'm not killing the coyotes anymore since I read your book" which I thought was amazing and I said, "what are you doing?" And he said, "oh well I fire a warning shot above their heads". I said, "oh well that to me is acceptable". -Interview 17 (female, 38 years in situ)*

Stories of neighbours holding neighbours accountable for their more-than-human relationships may be a key aspect of building a more just future in the FPR. As noted previously, a key tenant to rural identity is an insular attitude that often does not respond well to outside opinions and judgements. Ending violence towards coyotes may very well have to be a rural-resident-led movement within the FPR. Fortunately, there are people and families who already consider themselves to be living in relationship with the land and animals. Contesting the extractive settler-colonial relationship, they describe giving back to the land:

*But how many did you lose? That's the thing. If you got 300 head of cattle and you lose 1 or 2 calves a year ahhh that's your fee for being on the land. I think that um everybody's got to eat and if you want Mother Nature to look after things, then a coyote has every right to come in and help himself to something every once in a while. You are on the land? So are they. Yeah, it's like some of these ranchers would probably like to shoot me for saying that but it's true. Like I have rancher blood in me and if I lost a calf, I'd be like, yeah I'd be upset about it, but.. -Interview 9 (female, 48 years in situ)*

*We used to have a neighbour who when we first bought the place they owned a ranch and he was actually born in a house down here. I mean that is how long his family has been here. And actually [name redacted] Ranch was his brother's ranch down the road. And I don't know how I got into a conversation about him with cows—and we got talking about bears and I said do you ever lose? And he said, “oh yeah”. And I said, “you don't do anything?” And I think that is where I picked it, he says, “Well, you look where you are living and then you got to give back. Well we take the grass so I lose a cow every once in a while, it is just giving back, right?” And he didn't seem too upset about it and his family had been in ranching. -Interview 16 (female, 17 years in situ)*

If this ethic of reciprocity between humans and the rest of the more-than-human landscape were more widely adopted, I believe violence towards coyote would decrease. Some FCI participants already model more inclusive and understanding ways of relating to coyotes, by acknowledging coyotes' independent needs and desires, and encouraging sensibility and generosity in their fellow residents while living with coyotes.

*You know what's important I think for all animals but we will gear it towards them right now. Don't take things personally that they do. And that is hard to do when you are emotional because they killed your cat and they've gone after your calves. They are a creature that has instincts. They have levels of intelligence but to think they are out to get you? You can pretty much put that in a bag and get rid of it. -Interview 2 (female, 5 years in situ)*

*Jeez it's almost like any other kind of thing. You have to be generous and forgiving. Generous and forgiving. And um.. Sensible. That is... the coyotes are being.. they didn't stop thinking when they are around people. I mean... understand limitations for both yourself and for the animals. The coyote is just smart at being coyotes but certain things it can't think about. It's not their realm. You have to understand that. -Interview 13 (female, 27 years in situ)*

Building on participants' discourses and a long history of scholarship on human-nonhuman animal relations, this thesis calls for a societal embrace of a gentler and wiser relationship with nonhuman animals. Wolch and Emel (1998) note that the animal protection movement emerged during the early nineteenth century, in tandem with early suffrage and abolition movements and social welfare and child protective societies. Calls for new epistemological and ontological perspectives on animals came soon thereafter. During the early twentieth century, author and naturalist Harry Beston (1928) wrote,

*We need another and a wiser and perhaps more mystical concept of animals ... We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err and err greatly. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finish and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth. (Wolch and Emel 1995; p. 19-20 c.f. Beston 1928)*

Well before white, male authors like Beston (1928) came to this conclusion, Indigenous populations have been living in ‘relation’ with more-than-human entities (Burow, Brock, and Dove 2018). Indigenous scholar Glean Sean Coulthard (2015) writes extensively on the difference between settler-colonial and Indigenous relationships with land, sharing,

*In the Weledeh dialect of Dogrib (which is my community’s language), for example, ‘land’ (or dè) is translated in relational terms as that which encompasses not only the land (understood here as material), but also people and animals, rocks and trees, lakes and rivers, and so on. Seen in this light, we are as much a part of the land as any other element. (p. 7)*

Coulthard (2015) notes that embedded within this ‘field of relationships’ are ethical obligations to lands, plants, animals, lakes, and more. The commitment and responsibilities in these relationships are akin to the way we relate to fellow human beings (Coulthard 2015). These ‘fields of relationships’ are ruptured in settler colonialism, Coulthard (2015) argues. My findings in this discourse analysis certainly support Coulthard’s (2015) assertion. Discourses from settler-landowners on human-coyote relationships in the FPR yield little evidence of perceived ethical obligations between humans, coyotes, and lands of the FPR.

Heynen and Ybarra (2021) echo Coulthard’s (2015) assertions, stating that “white supremacy shapes human relationships with land through entangled processes of settler colonialism, empire and racial capitalism” (p. 21). While I have not in this thesis attended to the political-ecological processes listed above, I concur with Heynen and Ybarra (2021)—settler colonialism appears to have crucially altered the more-than-human relationships in the FPR. Its impacts are seen in the way that landowners describe their relationships not only with coyotes, but also elk, magpies, cattle, cats, rodents, and more. Engaging with Black abolitionist ecologies, Indigenous knowledges, and Latinx geographies, Heynen and Ybarra (2021) speak to “the need to engage with complexity as we theorise what liberation looks like for humans and nonhumans

alike” (p. 23). Their call is a challenging one—but one I hope that this thesis has responded to on a small scale, by identifying the discourses and ideologies that have both further supported and contested nonhuman oppression in the FPR.

Ultimately, I believe that deconstructing the speciesist practice of killing coyotes will require abandoning a settler colonial and extractive relationship with the more-than-human elements of the FPR, to rebuild and repair a more reciprocal and caring network of relationships with nonhuman animals, plants, and the landscape more broadly. In abandoning this extractive relationship, the humans of the FPR could build a new one. Undoubtedly, this radical refiguring of human-animal relationships would be met with resistance. From this analysis alone, we know that ideologies of rurality, masculinity, and capitalism would all be immensely challenged if human-animal relationships were to shift. Collard and Gillespie (2017) imagine more broadly what the effects might be, writing:

*This refiguring of human–animal relations is part of radically changing our material encounters with other animals and our conceptualization of certain species. It may mean the cessation of intervening in animal lives in the case of breeding, culling, and exercising other forms of intimate control over animal bodies. This new order might mean letting go of our attachments to preserving certain species, like domesticated turkeys, pigs, chickens, and cows whose existence is perpetuated by our continued exploitation of them and whose history of human selection for certain traits in breeding has often been the cause of their suffering. It may mean radically revising (and likely doing away with) our categorizations of animal species – as food, pets, research subjects, pests – that also work to subordinate certain species and reify others. It certainly means destabilizing speciesism and redefining how we think about intelligence, cognition, emotional depth, and other physical, emotional, and psychological capacities. In other words, ‘human’ would no longer be the category against which all other species are measured and come up short. (p. 9)*

Despite the radical societal changes that would need to occur, I believe the FPR is not without hope for coyotes and other nonhuman residents. I believe that the FCI participants who show generosity to their local coyotes by attempting to understand their perspective demonstrate that there is the possibility for a different, more inclusive set of politics in the FPR. While this radical change in politics will not be easy to achieve, geographers offer scholarship that suggests potential alliances and areas for solidarity. Collard, Dempsey and Sundberg (2015) write *A Manifesto for Abundant Futures*, calling for a more-than-human liberation movement uniting conservationists who prioritize animal welfare and Indigenous, peasant, and other decolonizing

movements. Despite the many massive socioecological crises that we collectively face in the Anthropocene, they (Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg 2015) assert, “This is a time to think big, to dream” (p. 326), and imagine ‘abundant futures’. Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg (2015) define these ‘abundant futures’ as relational, multispecies worlds, which include animals as ‘uncolonized others’(Plumwood 1993) and “as beings with their own familial, social, and ecological networks, their own lookouts, agendas, and needs” (p. 328).

Kim (2015) offers advice to those seeking multi-species justice. She asserts that ideologies of racism and speciesism are irrevocably entangled (Kim 2015). Often resulting in shared oppressions, Kim (2015) argues that hegemonies must be analyzed and deconstructed in tandem. Kim (2015) warns against half-measures, writing “The answer to neoliberalism’s destructive practices and values is not to marginally broaden the category of beneficiaries of this destructiveness but rather, through a critical and transformational politics, to radically restructure our relationships with each other, animals, and the earth outside of domination” (p.21).

Heynen and Ybarra (2021) also encourage larger, grander liberation movements, calling on geographers to “rethink the politics of the possible” (p. 30). Building on Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s premise of abolition geography, which describes ‘freedom as a place’, they call on geographers to use their analytical tools, and “to think about how to build freedom across relations of land and people” (Heynen and Ybarra 2021; p. 30).

Inspired by both the alternative imaginations of FCI participants and the growing body of decolonizing and counterhegemonic more-than-human scholarship, this thesis aligns itself with freedom (Heynen and Ybarra 2021), abundant futures (Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg 2015), and multi-species justice (Kim 2015). Revealing the dominant ideologies in the FPR through discourse produced in FCI interviews, I have hoped to identify areas which demand attention in order to achieve a better future for coyotes. This thesis finds that despite the ongoing sociocultural tradition of killing coyotes, there are voices in the FPR that desire a different way of relating to coyotes and perhaps the rest of the more-than-human world. These few participants who contested the speciesist status quo encourage me to ‘rethink the politics of possible’ (Heynen and Ybarra 2021) and imagine a different, more abundant future (Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg 2015) for the FPR.

### 3.10 Conclusion

In this manuscript, I studied the FPR as a case study of anti-coyote speciesism. Analyzing agricultural and rural residential landowners' interviews generated by FCI, I found speciesist assumptions which are supported by a complex dialectic of rural, masculine, and capitalist ideologies. Studying the FCI participants' discourse, I argued that within the FPR, coyotes become ideological creatures, imbued with social and political ideology.

In this study, I argue that speciesism informs the way in which people perceive and relate to coyotes. Built on animal industry, the FPR systemically produces speciesism. Much of the infrastructure and wealth accrued in the area before the oil boom was built to service the cattle industry (Ghitter and Smart 2009). This, as I have argued, necessitated the framing of coyotes as pest and menace, a threat to smaller and more vulnerable livestock capital, which persists to the present day. I present government policy, which in my opinion, reflects these speciesist knowledges. Offering no protections to coyotes by way of hunting seasons or tags (Alberta Government 2020), the provincial government instead employs agricultural field hands to kill coyotes when they present a threat to ranchers (The Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen 2021) and offers a manual on all the legal ways to dispatch of coyotes privately (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry 2017). The discourse of landowners often echoes the government's discourse. Coyotes are called a "pest" and participants describe a myriad of legal and illegal ways they kill coyotes. Systemically, to support the ongoing industrialization of animal livestock, speciesism is required, framing coyote lives as offering little value (except in their rodent control services). In the discourse of rural residential and agricultural landowners, coyotes become embroiled in ideologies outside of their own making, often at great cost to their lives and welfare. To meaningfully challenge this paradigm, I argue that speciesism must be deconstructed.



## **Chapter 4: Research Conclusions**

### **4.1 Key Findings**

In my analysis of FCI interviews, I found that human-coyote relationships in the FPR are heavily influenced by the overarching ideology of speciesism. Discourse analysis reveals emergent ideologies of rurality, masculinity and capitalism also support the practice of coyote killing. These dominant ideologies work in tandem, producing forceful anti-coyote discourse, and reported large-scale persecution of coyotes using guns, poisons, snares, and gasses.

While anti-coyote discourses were prevalent in FCI data, other discourses also emerged, providing alternate narratives of human-coyote relationships in the FPR. Not all landowners reported killing, or even disliking coyotes. Instead, analysis of the FCI interviews reveals a patchwork of different ‘geo-ethics’ (Urbanik 2012) or place-based rules (Alexander and Draper 2019a) that differ from property to property in the rural areas of the FPR. Some neighbours work in tandem, each doing their part to ‘control’ coyotes. Other neighbours advocate for coyotes, encouraging coexistence with their neighbours by offering literature on coyotes with the hope of fostering increased knowledge and appreciation.

Rurality quickly emerged as an important ideology and identity which was produced, in part, through practices with coyotes. In these discourses, killing coyotes specifically, and nonhuman animals more broadly, was described as a practical and non-emotional act. Part of “growing up” in rural settings was learning that non-human animal lives were ‘losable’ rather than ‘grievable’ (Butler 2009; Redmalm 2015). Rural identities were further produced in reference to coyotes in discourse regarding ‘acreage people’. Producing social difference, rural-identifying people contrasted themselves to more recent migrants living in acreages, whom they described as ignorant and unable to manage their pets, let alone coyotes. Finally, the rural identity was produced through rural insularity in managing coyotes. Rather than depend on governments, academic institutions, or non-profit organizations, participants performed their rurality in stating that they could rely on themselves, their families, friends, or neighbours to manage (and most often kill) coyotes.

Rural masculinities also emerged early on as an important ideology and identity which was performed through practices with coyotes. Interestingly, both men and women described that

killing coyotes was man's job. This gendered role became particularly clear on agricultural properties, where men described the need to 'defend' and 'protect' livestock from the perceived threat of coyotes. Two participants even reported employing military-trained men to kill coyotes in the protection of their livestock. In neutralizing threats to their livestock capital, rural men preserved their roles as the providers within their families. FCI interviews also revealed evidence of a long-standing tradition of coyote killing events by and for men within the FPR. While the descriptions of recreational coyote killing contests were often framed as an activity of the past, one participant divulged that they continued in the privacy of an all-men's social club. Clear from his discourse was that was the masculine nature of the sporting event had persisted. Overall, coyote killing emerged as a central performance in rural masculinities. This finding leads me to believe that to end the tradition of coyote killing in the FPR, hegemonic rural masculinities must be contested, and possibly replaced by alterative, more liberatory conceptions of masculinity.

A dominant narrative invoked for killing coyotes is the protection of livestock capital. Ranchers described that the depredation of a few calves could result in significant profit losses. At points, they discursively framed themselves as being in competition with coyotes. It was their wellbeing or the coyote's. In my analysis, I assert that the industrialization of livestock necessitates the evaluation of coyotes and other non-human animal species in relation to human capital accumulation. Coyotes, as a potential threat to livestock, have been framed as an opponent to ranching efforts throughout North America since colonization (Flores 2016). In FCI interviews, alternative discourses emerged in which coyotes were described as valuable, through primarily in reference to their rodent control services. This discourse yet again recognized the species' capital value; if coyotes were truly eradicated, resources would need to be spent to eliminate other species, like gophers, moles, and squirrels.

Less common but related, participants described opportunities to make money by killing coyotes, either by turning their dead bodies in to local governments in exchange for bounty (Proulx and Rodtka 2015) or by selling their pelts. Both practices are ultimately based in the speciesist notion that a coyote life has little intrinsic value.

Overall in my analysis of FCI interviews, I find that speciesism structurally supports the persecution of coyotes in the FPR. Speciesism in the FPR is supported by dominant ideologies of rurality, masculinity, and capitalism, making it appear challenging to contest. I argue that to

meaningfully challenge the practice of killing coyotes, the FPR would require a radical shift in politics. The needs, wants, and desires of coyotes would need to be included in management decisions. Current dominant constructions of rurality, masculinity, and animal capitalism would need to be reenvisioned.

Despite immense obstacles, FCI interviews offer hope. I find that there are voices in the FPR who are already beginning to contest the status quo, and push for a more generous, sensitive and inclusive politic. I, like other geographers (such as Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg 2015; Heynen and Ybarra 2021), believe that these efforts would be most successful with solidarity between traditionally segregated liberation movements. I believe that within the FPR, there may be opportunities for alignment in activism between conservationists who advocate for welfare (like Dr. Alexander), First Nations and Métis peoples, and other groups with counterhegemonic aspirations.

## 4.2 Research Significance

My analysis of FCI interviews provided unique insights into speciesism and how this ideology impacts wild species like coyotes. While several strong analyses of speciesism exist (such as Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Kim 2015), which outline how the taxonomy of power interacts with other better-studied oppressive systems, like racism, the study of speciesism is still underdeveloped within critical animal geographies. For example, in a recent and comprehensive review of human-animal studies within the journal *Society and Animals*, ‘speciesism’ was not mentioned once (Shapiro 2020). While Haraway’s (2008) concept of ‘human exceptionalism’ was mentioned, the larger system of speciesism and its complex interactions with race and culture (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 1998a; Kim 2015) were not. Certainly, we have established that humans are ranked (by ourselves) as superior in many cultures around the globe (Kim 2015)—but by leaving our analysis at this stage, I believe we critical animal geographers miss the complex and rich interactions that occur between entangled oppressions of species, gender, race, and other less-obvious ideologies of rurality, capitalism and more (as this thesis attempts to do). Multi-species ethnographers (often in anthropology departments) seem to be making headway in more-than-human cultural studies which often document shared oppressions, though often do not

refer to speciesism explicitly (Dave 2014; 2017; Govindrajan 2018; Hartigan 2017; Kirksey and Helmreich 2010; Parreñas 2016; 2018). It is my opinion that critical animal geographers are uniquely positioned to research and challenge speciesism. This thesis aims to contribute to the body of literature on speciesism within critical animal geographies by documenting this hegemony and its reported impacts on coyotes within the FPR.

In this thesis, I claim that speciesism is woven into the social and economic fabric of the FPR. I argue that speciesism is built into industry, policy, and ingrained assumptions that become known as ‘commonsense’ knowledge. While I think this argument is not unique to the FPR—in fact, it could likely be made for almost all societies within North America—I believe it to be an important claim to make. In not naming speciesism, it remains normalized. However, in demonstrating the impacts of speciesism, and the ways in which this ideology constructs our society, we, as critical animal geographers, take the first step in deconstructing this more-than-human hegemony.

Fortunately, much of the work to build an argument for structural speciesism has already been done. Or at least, this was the experience I found in examining how speciesism informed rural residents’ relationships with coyote. From rural geographies, for instance, we know that rural industries and identities are often built (in part) upon the oppression of nonhuman animals (Buller 2009; Woods 2009b). Predators are often killed to maintain rural insularity and self-reliance (Bye 2009). From feminist geographies, we know that masculinities are often produced through the domination of natures, and specifically the killing of animals (Emel 1995; Littlefield 2010; Radel 2009). Rural geographers add much to this conversation as well, researching rural masculinities specifically and demonstrating how they are performed in both hunting and particular anti-carnivore attitudes (Bye 2003; 2009; Little 2002; 2009; Woodward 2000). Finally, feminist political ecologies and animal geographies demonstrate how animal lives are valued extrinsically as capital and commodities by many human cultures (Collard and Dempsey 2013; Collard 2020; Meer 2020; Radel 2009). Adding to this collective, this thesis pieces these geographic analyses together to demonstrate how speciesist ideologies informed FCI participants’ relationships with coyotes, in tandem with synergistically related ideologies of rurality, masculinity, and capitalism.

This research has broad implications for coyotes and other nonhuman animals in the FPR, and possibly in other rural localities in North America. In acknowledging the speciesist basis for

widespread coyote killing, I hope to challenge the practice altogether. Many of the FCI participants suggested that killing coyotes was just practical; this thesis contests that discursive framing, acknowledging its genesis in relation to animal livestock capitalism. This thesis encourages alternative imaginings of rural identities, rural masculinities, and rural industries in the FPR that do not rely upon the oppression of nonhuman animals, or, more specifically the practice of killing coyotes.

Armed with an interdisciplinary education and a critical lens, it is my opinion that critical animal geographers are uniquely positioned to research and challenge speciesism. Collectively at our disposal, critical animal geographers have access to the language and technology of political ecology (Radel 2009; Sundberg 2004; 2011; 2015), conservation biology (Bekoff 2013; Redpath et al. 2017; Wallach et al. 2015), animal welfare studies (Buller 2009; Hampton, Warburton, and Sandøe 2019), multi-species ethnographies (Dave 2017; Govindrajan 2018; Hartigan 2017; Kirksey and Helmreich 2010; Ogden, Hall, and Tanita 2014; Parreñas 2018), non-representational theories (Barad 2013; Hartigan 2021; Thrift 2007) and more. The crises of our present moment require researchers who can toggle between multiple methodologies and scales (Kaika 2018) to tackle the complex convergence of social and ecological forces at our present moment—such as the persecution of nonhuman animal species. I believe that this thesis analysis has taken one small, essential, and local step to understanding human-coyote violence, which may also be helpful in understanding anti-predator attitudes across North America.

### **4.3 Next Steps**

While analyzing FCI interviews was deeply informative, it also left with me further questions. Decolonization provides an exciting potential avenue for future research. As discussed in “3.9 Deconstructing speciesism”, colonization profoundly affected all human-animal relationships (Burow 2017; Coulthard 2015). Within the FPR, this certainly appears to be this case, with the emergence of cattle production as the primary industry (Ghitter and Smart 2009). This, I surmise, may have been a turning point for humans’ relationships with predators on the land as they were abruptly reframed as a threat to settler capital accumulation. As other scholars (such as Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg 2015; Heynen and Ybarra 2021) have mentioned, decolonizing the land

and the relationships it houses may be a starting point for meaningfully challenging the paradigm of coyote killing.

Environmental anthropologist Paul Burow (2017) highlights that there may already be signs of success with joint decolonizing and conservation movements. Highlighting the project of bison conservation (which became necessary after colonizers nearly extirpated the species), Burow (2017) notes,

*bison conservation is part of larger structural processes of dispossession, but can also be a means of realizing decolonized futures... Last year, the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation announced their intention to put forward U.S. congressional legislation to transfer the National Bison Range from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to the Tribes' Natural Resources Department. The Department of the Interior and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service indicated their support for this measure after decades of fraught attempts at co-management. There is hope that with widespread local, federal, and congressional support, the legislation will move forward to see the range transferred back to the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes. (p. 4)*

Giving land and relationships back to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes would seem to suggest a meaningful attempt to locally decolonize. As Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck (2012) writes, “Decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools” (p. 1).

While Burow (2017) notes that the project of conservation and the move to decolonize landscapes are often divergent, with different desired outputs, other scholars (such as Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg 2015; Heynen and Ybarra 2021) have suggested that geographers may have the tools and the perspective to adjust, modify, and try to decolonize, such that we may pursue goals of conservation in ways that align with the goals, desires, and leadership of Indigenous groups. Here, Burow (2017) offers encouragement, writing:

*I want to argue that settler society needs to look more to the other-than-human in a way that is attentive to entanglements between these beings (human and not) rather than seeing the other-than-human as an object. And we should see this space of entanglement not as something that occurs on parcels of land or in singular habitats, but as life itself imbricated with relationships of mutual obligation. Conservation is not objectivist or value neutral. Understanding its co-production with settler colonialism demonstrates how they share the same underlying logics of territorialization, replacement, and elimination. In short, it's not about the bison—conservation can be a profoundly political project. (p. 3-4)*

Burow's (2017) suggestions serve as a springboard for what I would consider to be next steps in my line of research in the FPR. Assuming no time or monetary limitations, I would propose performing a participatory ethnography (Cahill 2007a; 2010; Caxaj 2015; Eubanks 2009) with those interested in reimagining human-coyote relationships in the FPR. I envision this ethnography would include a diverse set of perspectives (following suggestions from R.-C. Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg 2015), both of conservation and welfare-oriented biologists, activists interested in decolonization and environmental issues, and concerned citizens. Building a coalition in the FPR, I hope this ethnography would be an opportunity to put diverse perspectives in conversation with each other (perhaps through focus groups) as they reimagine what human-coyote relationships could look like. I believe researchers could bring academic knowledge, legitimacy, and language, while activists (which could include Indigenous peoples) could bring experience and knowledge of how to meaningfully contest coyote killing, organize, and imagine a different way of existence. Citizens would also bring a key perspective, offering how they, independently, manage to coexist with coyotes in their day to day. For this group, I would propose reaching out to former FCI participants who, in their previous interviews, already expressed their own ideas about how to relate to coyotes peacefully. I hope that in researching with this group, we might organize and collaborate to create a coalition and reimagine the politics of the FPR as they relate to coyotes, and other nonhuman animals. Other participative decolonizing studies show that this type of research is certainly possible and potentially productive (Cahill 2007a; Caxaj 2015; Eubanks 2009).

Another possible avenue of research I have considered would be to employ non-representational techniques (Hartigan 2020; 2021; Thrift 2007) in performing an ethnography of coyotes in the FPR. Non-representational theorists have recognized the need to study more than discourse, and other representations of the human experience (Cadman 2009). They identify the need to reveal affect, or emotion, as beings engage with their worlds. As Cresswell (2009) succinctly writes, "The suggestion that there is nothing (that can be apprehended) beyond discourse suppresses and marginalizes... important aspects of life on Earth" (p. 214). Linking non-representational and more-than-human geographies, Cadman (2009) writes that Deleuze and Guattari provide tools for geographers, such that they may overcome a human-centric "perspectivism by engaging with a dynamic plane of immanence in which there are no distinctions between what things are and what they do" (p. 466). While techniques stemming

from non-representational theory are considered novel and less proven (Hartigan 2021), some geographers and multi-species ethnographers have boldly attempted them (Hartigan 2020).

Decentering human perspectives, these early forays into non-representational nonhuman ethnographies offer fresh insights into nonhuman sociality and subjectivity (Hartigan 2021). John Hartigan (2021), a multispecies ethnographer, in a forthcoming essay, reviews various efforts to employ ethological observation in ethnographies. While some ethnographers make more casual attempts, employing perhaps more allegorical than truly ethological methodology, others, he writes, such as Govindrajan (2018) and Salazar-Parreñas (2018) tap ethologists and primatologists in their studies (Hartigan 2021). These ethnographers, however, are also not without their doubts. Citing Salazar-Parreñas' concerns, Hartigan (2021) writes, "Parreñas suggests, 'We could turn to different kinds of experts to help us piece together what orangutan perspectives might be' (14); but in purveying these, she cautions that 'privileging a primatologist's perspective over all others limits our imagination to those with technoscientific expertise' (16)" (p. 4). Hartigan (2021) notes that Salazar-Parreñas (2018), instead, identifies her use of "embodied ways of knowing" to engage the expertise of ethology while exploring experience and affect, which are often suppressed in scientific writing. Referring to his own study as an ecologically informed study, Hartigan (2021) writes about his experience in researching for *Shaving the Beasts: Wild Horses and Ritual in Spain*. Having prepared himself by participating in a prior field survey of wild horses in the region and learning ethological methods, he observed the four-day event of "rapas das bestas" or shaving the beasts in which wild horses are herded together and their manes and tails shaved. Having learned the horse ethogram, Hartigan (2021) documented a range of affiliative and aggressive gestures which horses engaged to negotiate social proximity. Allying his decades of social analysis as an ethnographer and his recently learned ethology, Hartigan (2020) makes considerable strides in presenting the affectual state of horses through ethnography

Inspired by attempts at ethologically informed ethnographies, I propose a next logical step in coyote research in the FPR could be to employ non-representational approaches in researching coyotes and their day-to-day experiences. To study coyotes' ethology using such techniques, video from camera traps near den sites or high-traffic areas could be employed to provide fascinating insights. While researchers have already imagined what life in a modified



landscape could be like for coyotes (Paquet and Alexander 2018), a natural progression of this research could be perform a more formal ethologically informed ethnography.

In this thesis, I have asserted that speciesism is essential to the persecution of coyotes and, tangentially, the use and treatment of many other nonhuman animal species as either disposable labourers or profitable commodities. This hegemony, which supports human exceptionalism (Haraway 2008), does not stand in isolation but is, rather, synergistically related and, at points, mobilized by other hegemonies, such as racism (see example from Kim 2015). The next steps that I have suggested, both in participative methodologies and non-representational techniques, are meant to be counterhegemonic in methodology. By creating research *with* rather than *on* human subjects, participative methodologies allow researchers the opportunity to co-produce knowledge, potentially including epistemologies and ontologies outside of traditional academic disciplines (Cahill 2007a; Caxaj 2015; Eubanks 2009; Elwood 2006b; Renold 2018). Non-representational techniques counter speciesism, by decentering the human perspective (Hartigan 2014), and attempting to centre nonhuman animal subjectivity and sociality (Thrift 2007).

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