

**Cat-People:
An Ethnography of More-Than-Human Interrelatedness
in the Cat Fancy**

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as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Anthrozoology
in September 2019

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Abstract

The practice of breeding and showing pedigree cats, termed the 'cat fancy', provides a novel lens through which to explore more-than-human intersections within leisure. Based on multispecies ethnographic fieldwork in the United Kingdom at cat shows and drawing on interviews with those who breed and exhibit cats, as well as judges and veterinarians, the thesis considers the relationships and sociality between humans and cats that form within the fancy. Going beyond a typically anthropocentric approach to leisure, it engages with feline subjectivities and asks, 'what's in it for the cats?'. This question is not one that seems to arise often in the consciousness of breeders or exhibitors. The cats themselves may benefit from specific standards of care, including health provisions and general daily needs. Yet, the thesis contends that the cat fancy involves serious compromises to the well-being and agency of the cat. The selective breeding of human-constructed cat breeds and the establishment of the cat fancy itself has restricted or removed feline agency. The processes and discourses disseminated and controlled by cat fancy institutions also represent an exercise of biopower, the overall aim being the 'improvement' of breeds and the preservation of 'lineage' and 'pedigree'. The evaluative logic used within reproductive decision-making shares characteristics with eugenicism. The thesis does not deny that humans and cats form close intersubjective bonds in the cat fancy, indeed, such bonds are clearly in evidence. At the same time, however, multifarious, coinciding and conflicting relations and conceptualisations of cats emerge. Cats may simultaneously act as kin, companions, social conduits, status symbols, extensions of self, collaborators in cat fancy success or failure, lively commodities, and objects for aesthetic evaluation. The cat fancy also produces humans who self-define as 'cat people' and 'ethical breeders' with shared norms of care and attitudes towards cats. Overall, despite allowing the production of heterogeneous human-cat relations, the thesis argues that prevailing discourses, practices, and norms of care in the cat fancy result in the prioritisation of human needs.

Acknowledgements

There are many human and other-than-human animals who I wish to thank for their assistance and support throughout this PhD journey. There are too many to name individually, but please know how grateful I am to all of you.

I am truly indebted to my supervisors, Dr Tom Rice and Professor Staffan Müller-Wille, who helped me tirelessly with continued enthusiasm to get to this point. I will always be hugely appreciative for the invaluable ideas, constructive feedback, and encouraging support you have provided in helping me to grow as a researcher.

I wish to sincerely thank the wonderful friends I have made during this process. Thank you all for the many hours of discussion in person and over extended Skype calls, but particularly for the unerring support when things got tough.

My dear family, who have supported me throughout this whole journey, your understanding and love made all of the difference in getting to the finish line. Adam, none of this would have been possible without you. Thank you for always being willing to hear more about cats and joining me on research trips across the country. Kora, thank you for getting me out of the house on long days of writing and providing constant distraction and happiness. To my wonderful cats, thank you for being there, always purring. I hold them responsible for any random keystrokes in what follows.

I would like to thank the many generous people who were willing to speak with me, let me spend time in their homes and with their cats. I could not have achieved this without you all. Special thanks to the cats for whom I did this. I hope it makes a difference and we start to listen to you more closely.

I want to dedicate this thesis to all of the cats of the cat fancy, but in particular to Oscar who unexpectedly passed away towards the end of my research. I will always be grateful to Oscar for sharing his exhibition experiences with me.

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Introduction - Why Study the Cat Fancy?

Domestic cats (*Felis catus*) fulfil multiple roles within society. They can take the position of family member, friend, surrogate child, social facilitator, status symbol, hunter, and pest, amongst others, and these categories are not mutually exclusive. As companions, their population is increasing in many countries within the 'West' and globally, alongside increasing economic prosperity (Pierce, 2016). This growth is thought to be due to a burgeoning urban population working longer hours outside of the home, making other companion animal guardianship, mainly living with dogs (*Canis familiaris*), less feasible (Bradshaw, 2013). Estimates vary but in the United Kingdom, the location of this research, there are thought to be between 8.5 to 10.3 million cats living within 19-25% of households (O'Neill et al., 2015: 125) and the latest PDSA (2018: 8) report indicates that this figure is now as high as 11.1 million.

Companion animals are often described as providing positive benefits to humans in terms of both psychological and physical well-being, in what Herzog (2011) refers to as the 'generalised pet effect' (see Wells, 2009). This idea of a wholly positive benefit to living with 'pets'¹, however, overlooks the complexity of both human and other-than-human animal lives. Furthermore, as will become evident throughout this thesis, much of the human-companion animal relationship is unbalanced: 'we have the power to decide the fate of our pets unlike any power we have over the human members of our families' (Irvine and Cilia, 2017: 2).

¹ I try to problematise terms such as 'pet' and 'pet-keeping' and prefer to use 'guardian' over 'owner'. As stated by Fraser and Taylor (2019: 155) these terms assume 'humans can rightfully keep animals (captive) as their playthings'. Despite these relations being apparent in many human-cat interactions, this attitude towards other beings is something I hope to critique.

This thesis explores the complexities of human-cat relations within a particular microcosm, the cat fancy, and within a specific UK context. As an underexplored human-feline 'contact zone' (Haraway, 2008b), the breeding and showing of domestic pedigree cats provides a valuable opportunity to examine other-than-human² intersections within a leisure context. Other-than-human animals are often active participants in leisure and sports activities. Their roles may extend to predator or prey, and they may be used for the production of food or for equipment to be consumed during leisure pursuits (Bunyak, 2019). There is an increasing call for researchers to explore the impact of leisure activities on the species necessary for their continuance (Danby et al., 2019; Young and Carr, 2018). The thesis concentrates on addressing this significant anthropocentric research gap utilising insights gathered during multispecies ethnographic fieldwork at cat shows and interviews with human cat fanciers and other interested parties across the UK. Hurley (2018) writes that the underlying structures behind the practice of showing dogs have rarely been questioned and this is the same for cats. Danby et al. (2019) similarly argue that there is a need to examine power and its possible abuses within multispecies leisure. The research will interrogate power structures and potential exploitation at both institutional and individual levels in the cat fancy.

The cat fancy is a small yet significant part of wider human-feline cultures. It generates and facilitates a multiplicity of relations between human guardians, the 'pedigree' cat population, and non-pedigree cats, in addition to other enmeshed parties such as veterinarians and cat welfare organisations. Further, it legitimates the activities of those who breed and exhibit their cats under the cat fancy

² I have chosen to not use the term, 'non-human animal', to describe other-than-human animals within this thesis. The term "non-human", often used as a way to denote the recognition that humans are also animals, is also grounded in human exceptionalism' due to its focus on being 'non' (Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010: 555).

institutions. Pedigree cats account for an estimated 8-11% of all cats in the UK (Bradshaw, 2013; CFSG, 2015; Farnworth et al., 2018; Fox, 2009: 98; Plitman et al., 2019). Some expect the 'pedigree' cat population to increase in line with high neutering rates of 'non-breed' cats and a general rise in companion cat populations (Bradshaw, 2013; see Bradshaw et al., 1999). 'Pedigree' is a term used to describe animals whose ancestry or 'lineage' has been recorded over generations. However, unlike the dog fancy, very little attention has been focused on trying to understand the role of pedigree within human-cat relations (see Jones, 2005 and Fox, 2009 for notable exceptions), and in particular how it influences the well-being of cats and their ability to thrive. Academic enquiry within fields such as anthropology, sociology, and anthrozoology has instead focused primarily on human-animal leisure activities with dogs (Baldwin and Norris, 1999; Bettany and Daly, 2008; Carr, 2014; 2015; Dąbrowska, 2018; Derry, 2003; 2018; Farrell et al., 2015; Fox, 2009; Gillespie et al., 2002; Haraway, 2008a; 2008b; Hultsman, 2012; 2015; Hurley, 2018; Ritvo, 1986; 1987; Worboys et al., 2018), horses (*Equus ferus caballus*) (Carr, 2015; Cassidy, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; Coulter, 2014; Dashper, 2014; 2016; 2017a; 2017b; Hurn, 2008; Maurstad et al., 2013) and farmed animals³ (Derry, 2003; 2015; Geertz, 1973; 2005; Gray, 2010; McMullen, 2008; Peñaloza, 2001; Yarwood et al., 2010). Many of these studies adopt a historical perspective (Derry, 2003; 2015, Ritvo, 1986; 1987 and Worboys et al., 2018 are good examples) and there is a dearth of contemporary ethnographic explorations of pedigree 'pet' shows in particular (Hirschman, 1994), despite them offering a window into our conflicting attitudes towards and ambiguous relationships with other species. This research, then, provides a novel

³ Following Gillespie (2018), I have chosen to refer to animals regularly labelled as 'livestock' or 'farm' animals as 'farmed' to reference that these animals do not only have value in their productive capacities and to account for the human control inherent in industrial agriculture systems.

lens into the entanglements of harm and care within our relationships with cats as companion animals in the context of the cat fancy (Srinivasan, 2013).

Where studies have been conducted into human-companion animal leisure activities, they have primarily focused on the human side of the relation (Carr, 2014; Danby et al., 2019; e.g. Baldwin and Norris, 1999; Gillespie et al., 2002; Hultsman, 2012). Additionally, the growing scrutiny of human-animal interactions amongst the general public increases the need to examine 'the social licence' of using animals in leisure (Birke and Thompson, 2017: 24). As well as exploring the interconnections and relationships between feline and human lives, the thesis attempts to engage directly with the feline perspective to address the question, 'what's in it for the animals?' (Birke, 2009: 1).

Although this thesis is based on exploring the contemporary cat fancy in the UK, as mentioned in the opening paragraph, this is not the only position of the domestic cat within society. The cat also fulfils multiple social and biological niches in addition to 'companion'. For instance, there has been a plethora of research focused on cats labelled as 'stray' and 'feral' (e.g. Franklin, 2014; Griffiths et al., 2000; Marra and Santella, 2016). Even within the fancy, cats take varying positions often simultaneously, for instance as breeding queens (female non-neutered breeding cats) or studs (male non-neutered breeding cats), show champions, beloved companions, consumers and so on. I wish to provide a deeper understanding of the nuances and complexity within what is an often-unproblematized categorisation, namely that of the 'pedigree cat'.

Research Questions

As is often the case with ethnography, rather than seeking to test a fixed hypothesis, I started with a particular 'guiding theoretical problem' or research area to explore (Bryman, 2008; O'Reilly, 2012: 32). I set out to uncover the breeding and exhibiting practices, discourses, and sociality of the cat fancy, examining multispecies relatedness and the co-shaping of human and feline lives within it. To provide focus I then developed and addressed several questions (Bryman, 2008). These emerged and were refined throughout the iterative-inductive ethnographic process, from initial literature reviews to fieldwork and conversations with participants, as well as during analysis and the write up phase (O'Reilly, 2012). They are as follows:

- What are the institutional and individual level motivations that underpin pedigree cat breeding and showing and that enable it to continue?
- Are breeding practices and discourses reminiscent of nineteenth and twentieth century eugenicism and are notions of 'pedigree' and 'lineage' still prevalent within the contemporary cat fancy?
- What particular intraspecies and interspecies relationships form within the cat fancy?
- What kinds of people and cats are shaped through cat fancy social structures?

Pedigree cat bodies have experienced extensive human manipulation that has resulted in changes to their morphology and the creation of many mythologised breeds over time. The research explores the welfare and ethical questions that are raised by this manipulation. Adopting an anthrozoological perspective and with an applied approach, it questions the implications of the cat fancy for feline

well-being and the human-cat relationship now and into the future, exploring how the prevailing discourses within the cat fancy impact upon cat fanciers' perceptions and valuations of the cats.

On Being a Cat Person and An Ethics of Care

In part, this research is an ethnography 'at home' (Jackson, 1987; Mughal, 2015), a social setting within a broader cultural frame with which I am familiar from being born and living in the UK. Furthermore, I have engaged with human-cat cultures throughout my personal and professional life. In other ways, the cat fancy was an unfamiliar context, a world of argot and social structures that I, as a neophyte, needed to learn to access the lived experiences of those involved and in order to immerse myself within the culture. I am hesitant to describe the research using an insider/outsider dichotomy because I believe, following O'Reilly (2012), that to some extent as researchers, we are always both. Within the field, I tried to balance the disclosure of my previous experience and amount of knowledge regarding cat welfare and behaviour: 'knowing too much can foreclose in-depth conversations; knowing too little can appear rude and disinterested' (O'Reilly, 2012: 89). However, overall, the interest in cats I shared with my participants was a useful way of connecting with them, and it was helpful to bridge the divide when differences in approach towards welfare became apparent. Furthermore, like Heyes (2017), I found that having some experience in the research area was useful when recruiting participants. Many of the participants in this research would ask me if I liked cats and if I had cats of my own. It appeared essential to them to know if I was also a 'cat person' and I could sense the relief when I would tell them about my relationships with the three cats with whom I share my life.

My interest in wanting to understand the world of pedigree cats developed from working in cat welfare with cats affected by pet-keeping practices and breeding decisions. My role at a cat shelter in Sydney, Australia involved caring directly for the daily needs of the cats, as well as conducting the adoption process and matching the cats with potential guardians. The vast majority of the cats I worked with would be classed as 'non-pedigree', yet I saw first-hand the attention from the public given to cats within the rehoming centre that looked like particular breeds and worked with cats affected by breed-related conditions, as well as dealing with high numbers of 'unwanted' litters of kittens. The pedigree cat world does not exist in a vacuum and its prevailing practices and discourses have a wider influence. I have conducted this research as a form of 'applied anthrozoology' with the intention of bringing in the animal so that it can contribute towards positively influencing the lives of cats and other species involved in similar activities. I hope that my research helps to provoke reflection and meaningful discussion as to how we interact with and affect other animals through our discourses and actions. However, despite my goal of contributing to the improvement of the lives of cats, I recognise an obligation of care in getting to know all of my research participants, human and other-than-human (Farrimond, 2013). At the same time, I aim to be reflexive in relation to my personal bias and motivations throughout the research (see Davies, 2012).

Overall, my positionality is rooted in an engagement with other animals as significant beings. I build on work from the field of anthrozoology as symbiotic ethics that recognises 'other animals as ethically significant' (EASE, 2018: np). This position challenges the interpretation of anthrozoology as a subject that prioritises 'the human in scholarship' (Gruen, 2018: 11). Further, in line with contemporary work in critical animal studies (e.g. Taylor and Twine, 2015), I

adopt an approach which values other species as equal actors and which advocates on their behalf.

Structure of the Thesis

In chapter one, I provide an overview of the methods I have used throughout this research and introduce my feline and human participants.

In chapter two, 'From Mouser to the Catwalk - The Journey of the Domestic Cat', I present a historical overview of the domestic cat's journey from their African wildcat ancestor, *Felis silvestris lybica*, to living alongside humans in their homes and appearing at competitive shows. This chapter provides a synopsis of the domestication of other-than-human animals in general and specifically in reference to the (semi) domestication of the cat, to highlight how our complex relationships with cats have evolved. This 'careful attention' to the histories of how domestic cats have come into being is critical for producing an 'understanding of the nuances and ambiguities of such [multispecies] relations' (Schroer, 2019: 17). The chapter then provides an overview of the development of the cat fancy in the twentieth century within a wider context of changing attitudes towards companion animals in the UK. It presents the contemporary landscape of the cat fancy and the different organisations of relevance to this research. I will argue that cats are what Haraway (2003a; 2008b) terms 'companion species', 'a *part* of us through thousands of years of coexisting and coevolving, but also *apart* from us' in their significant otherness (Dempsey, 2010: 1140, emphasis in original). Looking specifically at pedigree cats, I will propose that the selective breeding techniques that have established breeds and enabled the development of the cat fancy have removed or restricted the cat's reproductive agency, which has become more and more finely controlled by

humans. Much is known and discussed within both research and the public sphere around pedigree dogs. This thesis will provide the pedigree cat's story.

In chapter three, 'On the Catwalk - Companion Cats and the Show Experience', I begin to introduce my ethnographic data and explain the procedure of exhibiting cats at shows through an account of a typical show day, including an explanation of the judging process and how cats are evaluated. Cat shows operate as the space for the perpetuation of notions of the 'ideal' cat. Systems of judging also influence the future manipulation of feline bodies. I draw attention to the feline experience, questioning the impact of current practices on the cats involved. I argue that shows prioritise the human gaze over feline well-being with minimal attempts made to engage with the cat's species-specific and individual way of being.

Chapter four, 'Learning to Look at Cats - Enskilment, Aesthetics and Feline Agency', explores the visual enskilment of judges and the role of aesthetics within the cat fancy. Through learning to look at cats, judges train and are given authority. There are clear parallels with human beauty contests and there is often intense objectification of the cats and their appearances. However, there is more to judging than a detached vision or gaze, with touch playing a pivotal role. There is also an appreciation, both conscious and unconscious, of behaviour and temperament. Emotional and intersubjective factors influence judging decisions. Through these relations, feline agency is expressed in multiple ways at shows. The cats may comply eagerly or less willingly. They can also demonstrate resistance and attempt to communicate their discontent to their guardian, judges, and others. Occasionally they are successful in this, whilst other times their agency is ignored or misinterpreted. Both chapters three and four show that feline agency is very much at stake in the cat show.

In chapter five, 'Shaping Cats - Breeding, Eugenics and Biopolitics,' I explore the practices and prevailing discourses within pedigree cat breeding that are integral to the current functioning of the cat fancy. I utilise my fieldwork data and the personal narratives shared with me by human members of the cat fancy to outline how the feline reproductive process is understood and to begin to describe the influence of human interventions upon feline individuals. I also explore how these reproductive interventions and the discourses underpinning them relate to the concepts of human eugenics and biopolitics. I introduce the governance structures that help to disseminate and discipline norms of care regarding breeding. This chapter concludes that the breeding of pedigree cats and its associated practices and discourses share many characteristics with human eugenics and represent a clear exercise of biopower. Preserving 'lineage' and 'pedigree' are key motivators driving current breeding practices. However, notions of 'the eye' and 'intuition' often inform genetic work more so than scientific predictions. Eugenics in practice is much messier than in the abstract and efforts to control feline reproductive agency are not always entirely effective.

The cat fancy often distinguishes itself as a 'hobby' and chapter six, 'Cat Fancy Sociality – The Serious Leisure of Exhibiting Cats,' investigates the relevance of Stebbin's (1982; 2015) notion of 'serious leisure' to the activity. It extends this theoretical concept to consider the consequences of engagement for both the human and other-than-human participants. I provide a description of the sociality of the cat fancy which, as with other forms of human-animal leisure, is perceived by its participants as becoming more than a hobby and constituting 'a way of life' (Dashper, 2017a; Schroer, 2014). Through social interactions both at shows and online, emotional bonds and hierarchical relationships form which shape notions of what it means to be a 'cat person' within the cat fancy. Overall, I argue that

human desires to socialise, compete and win prizes, take precedence over consideration of the cat's experience and feline well-being. The cat fancy may represent 'serious leisure' for the human participants, but for many of the cats, it is often just serious.

Chapter seven, 'Love is Complicated - Cat Care Compromises and the Relational Entanglements with Harm', focuses more closely on the human-cat relationship within the cat fancy. I consider normative care practices, including shared rituals, discussions around indoor confinement, and the dynamics and interactions within multi-cat households. I look at the interconnections between harm and care (Srinivasan, 2013) and dominance and affection (Tuan, 1984) in norms of care within the cat fancy. Cat fancy practices of care can be protective and nurturing, whilst also being oppressive and harmful. Indoor confinement and the management of multi-cat households prioritise and protect the financial, genetic, and social value of the cats above attempts to engage with an understanding of the feline umwelt and individual feline needs. Again, feline agency is managed and restricted in these efforts to maintain notions of safety and 'good' cat care, at times contravening feline flourishing.

Finally, chapter eight, 'A Dying Breed - The Perceived Decline of the Cat Fancy,' explores what many cat fanciers perceive as the existential crisis facing the activity. The cat fancy is having to respond to diverse pressures from both within and outside. These demands derive from particular social, economic, and political conditions, including increasing concerns for animal welfare. Nottle and Young (2019) note that the rising interest in animal rights and changes to how animals are perceived are driving a questioning of leisure activities involving other species. I will highlight the anxieties shared by human participants regarding the feared decline of the cat fancy. Critically, these anxieties do not only relate to the

potential loss of a leisure experience; there is also grave worry for the disappearance of the pedigree cat. This concern again highlights the importance placed upon notions such as 'breed' and 'lineage'. Many breeders feel that the loss of breeds would be a shame, but they are investing in ideas and practices that are increasingly hard to justify ethically, and their assessments of the value of breeds seem increasingly insecure. The existential crisis facing the cat fancy also challenges the fundamental identities of cat fanciers as 'cat people' and 'ethical breeders'.

I conclude the thesis by summarising and reflecting on key findings and themes that emerged during this immersive multispecies ethnography. The relations that have developed between humans and cats have become increasingly intricate since initial steps towards co-existence and have become further complicated by the construction of breeds and (re)production of 'pedigree' cats since the late nineteenth century. The practices and discourses of cat breeding have developed in parallel with cat fanciers' identities as 'cat people' and 'ethical breeders'. Human cat fanciers mould themselves into particular kinds of 'cat people' based on shared norms of care and attitudes towards cats and their 'hobby'. In cat fancy culture, then, a co-shaping of human and feline lives takes place.

The cat fancy perpetuates and disseminates particular ways of relating to cats: as kin, companions, extensions of the self, consumers, collaborators in success or failure, objects for aesthetic evaluation and lively commodities. These conceptualisations can overlap and this can at times feel contradictory, but for participants in the cat fancy they can comfortably coexist; for instance cats can be kin, yet also reproductive products. However, although the cat fancy is dependent on cats as actors, there is also human neglect of feline agency and

the feline umwelt within the pursuit. Human leisure and social needs take priority above a consideration of the cats, resulting in compromises to their care.

Agency as a Recurring Theme

Agency is a theme that permeates multiple aspects of this research. It is, however, a contested notion with a variety of different interpretations (Taylor and Carter, 2013). Agency is a 'slippery term' meaning 'simultaneously a quality, a capacity and a process' (Birke and Thompson, 2017: 68-71). In actor-network theory (ANT), for example, agency is presented as being relational, emerging through interactions between humans but also between human and nonhuman 'actants' (e.g. Latour, 1993; 1999). Rather than being an inherent attribute belonging exclusively to humans, agency is positioned as 'an achievement', produced within assemblages that may often include multiple nonhuman actants, all of which have 'agency potentials' (Lorimer, 2007: 913). Agency is 'made in negotiations, alliances, and conflicts' (Dempsey, 2010: 1141). Like Latour, Gell also suggests that agency is attributable to nonhumans: 'to persons (and things ...) who/which are seen as initiating causal sequences of ... events' (1998: 16). These interpretations help to dispel the notion that agency is only possessed by human subjects (Lorimer, 2007) and this thesis contributes to this challenge to human exceptionalism.

Räsänen contends that ANT confuses 'agency with effect' and states that as non-living beings are unable to modify their behaviour they should be seen as 'intermediaries' rather than 'agents' (2017: 131). In a similar way, Gell refers to 'primary' and 'secondary' agency, with primary agents as 'intentional beings' and secondary agents as entities 'through which primary agents distribute their agency' (1998: 20). Tung (2014) draws a distinction between 'sentient' and 'non-

sentient' agency to account for what she perceives to be a crucial difference between intentionality and agency. She contends that objects and sentient beings have 'different capacities for agency' (Tung, 2014: 438). Of particular relevance to the argument I will go on to make, Pearson argues that more generalised theories of nonhuman agency overlook how some animals in particular are 'purposeful and capable agents' in a way that most objects are not (2013: 134).

Gell (1998) argues that an artwork can act as an index of the artist's agency, thereby extending the agency of that artist (Tung, 2014). The cats I describe in this thesis could, in a similar way, be seen as acting as a bearer or locus of their creator's/breeder's agency. Indeed, fanciers will often look at a cat at exhibition as a product of the breeder's work rather than as an independent being. The cat may also be recognised as being bred by a particular individual without the breeder being present, in the process demonstrating how the cats might be understood as an aspect of the breeder's 'distributed personhood' (Gell, 1998: 20-21).

While recognising the relevance of Gell's ideas on art to an understanding of show cats in the cat fancy, I also emphasise that cats have the capacity to act as 'change-making creatures' (Fudge, 2006: 3). They may unintentionally create changes, but I argue that they can have agency through intentionality as well. As Pearson argues in relation to other-than-human animals in general, 'they become agents in the sense that they are capable of a degree of intentional and self-directed action in the environments in which they live and in their relationships with other human and nonhuman agents' (2017: 249). I will also discuss cats acting in ways that could be understood to represent a form of resistance to attempts to restrict or shape their behaviour. They sometimes actively challenge their circumstances or aspects of their circumstances, whether that be

reproductive interventions, or particular care practices within the home or show environment. Moreover, the cats' sexual and reproductive agency both permits and resists human control established through transbiopolitical decision-making and actions.

A capacity to resist should not be seen as the only way that cats have agency though. Hathaway notes that behaviours that could be seen as 'resistance' in elephants constitute a small part of their full 'repertoire of action and behaviours' (2015: 226) and I would argue the same is true for cats. Agency is not only based on transgression of 'anthropocentric borders' (Taylor and Carter, 2013: 7). For example, the cats in this thesis are agents in their actions and choices towards other nonhumans as well. It is important to recognise, however, that while the expression of agency may always be hypothetically possible, it may not always be successful and may be curtailed, weakened or denied by human power.

Throughout the thesis, I return to the question of, 'what's in it for the cat?'. This question is not one that seems to arise often in the consciousness of breeders or exhibitors. While the cats may benefit from certain standards of care, there are serious compromises to the well-being and agency of the cats within the cat fancy. As such, following a symbiotic ethics approach, one of the primary aims of this research is to provide insight that will inform more congenial relations between humans and cats that will also have wider implications for our relationships with and ethical responsibilities to all other species. I wish to bring 'attention' to individual suffering and to both the 'political and economic systems' that are creating these conditions of suffering (Donovan and Adams, 2007: 3).

An ethics of care as an ethical theory approaches morality as relational, based on emotion and context rather than 'abstract systems of principles or formulas of

utility' (Hamington, 2017: 51). This approach is in contrast to traditional rights-based arguments on the intrinsic value of individuals (e.g. Regan, 1983) and utilitarianism that ascribes moral consideration based on particular characteristics of individuals, such as sentience (e.g. Singer, 1975). The overall wish of this thesis is to contribute to the transition to the 'Compassionocene' or the 'era defined by our compassion for other animals' (Bekoff and Pierce, 2017: 9). It is focused on well-being rather than welfare, in an attempt to move away from making improvements to the lives of animals 'within the status quo' and instead questioning the system within which the animals (in this case, cats) sit (Bekoff and Pierce, 2017: 27). I draw on knowledge of species-specific behaviours, combined with an awareness of animal individuality, in an attempt to 'construct a human ethics in conversation with the animals rather than imposing on them a rationalistic, calculative grid of humans' own monological construction' (Donovan, 2006: 306). In this way I hope to return some agency to the cats through this research, giving them both a presence and a voice. Overall, I take a position that advocates for a re-evaluation of cat fancy culture and seek to encourage a shift from the prioritisation of the reproduction and continuation of breeds to the prioritisation of well-being.

Chapter One - Exploring the Cat Fancy: Research Methods and the Fieldwork Setting

Immersion within the Cat Fancy

To enable a deep immersion into the cat fancy over an extended time period and to communicate the richness of the culture, the most effective methods were determined to be participant observation of both human and other-than-human participants and semi-structured and informal interviews with a range of actors, most notably cat guardians who breed and exhibit their cats, known as 'cat fanciers'. I utilised a multi-sited approach by accompanying my participants to different locations within the UK for cat shows and events over twelve months from April 2017 to April 2018. By choosing to 'follow the people' and their cats, my field of study was determined by the relations and connections I made and the events they attended (Marcus, 1995: 106). Fieldwork continued after this period on an ad-hoc basis as necessary for maintaining connections and conducting follow up interviews. Attending shows enabled me to gain first-hand insights into the social world of the cat fancy. As Brown (2016) found in her research on horses, shows provide the opportunity to witness the politics within judging, as well as to hear the conversations between people when discussing matters of importance to their way of thinking. Shows were also useful for spending time with the cats and observing their behaviours and interactions to gain insights for bringing in the animal to the research and engaging with what matters to them.

Multispecies Ethnography

This research explores the entangled lives of human and feline members of the cat fancy and how they 'co-constitute the world' that the cat fancy represents (Hamilton and Taylor, 2017: 2). It therefore seeks to portray the experiences of both human and feline actors. My human condition prevents me from fully knowing what it is to be a cat, and from completely understanding what matters to cats (Lloro-Bidart, 2018; Warkentin, 2010). For these reasons, Madden argues that an animal's thoughts 'are not able to be grasped in a manner that could *exclusively* inform a reliable, trustworthy ethnographic methodology' (2014: 289, emphasis in original). But I believe that as researchers we have the ability and the responsibility to attempt to portray their experiences (Gruen, 2015; Hurn, 2018; Milton, 2005). We are unable to disassociate ourselves fully from our anthropocentric view, 'but we can try as hard as possible to combine the animals' viewpoints to the ways in which we study, describe, interpret and explain their behaviour' (Bekoff, 2004: 495). Furthermore, concerns regarding the conceptual or methodological issues involved in engaging with other species perspectives 'ought not prevent us from radically and systemically considering how we can both make animals matter and reveal what matters to them' (Donovan, 2006; Lloro-Bidart, 2018: 263). Living with cats all of my life and caring for them at a cat shelter, I have developed a species-specific knowledge of cat behaviour and learned to recognise feline body language which has enabled me to feel comfortable interacting with them and able to communicate with them (Coulter, 2018; Hurn, 2018). Birke and Hockenhull (2015) note the importance of being able to read body language for building interspecies relations.

It is entirely feasible to go beyond the human within ethnography to a position where animals not only represent subjective actors but also participate as

research informants (Locke, 2017: 356). As such, I attempt to include and represent the perspectives and concerns of both my feline and human participants as minded individuals (Hurn, 2018; Birke and Hockenhull, 2015). Including other-than-human animals within the scope of this ethnography is critical for exploring the full spectrum of sociality within the cat fancy. 'Animals are not mere props in the human drama' and in the case of this research, the cats are minded individuals within intersubjective relationships with other human and other-than-human members of the cat fancy (Madden, 2014: 279). Furthermore, I recognise that 'animals are subjects, agents, creators, and co-creators of their lives and of cultures, differently able to express their agency depending on the structure and contexts in which they live and work' (Coulter, 2018: 62). As will become increasingly apparent, this agency is often restricted by the structure of the cat fancy.

Multispecies ethnography is an evolving approach that is increasingly utilised within ethnographic scholarship. It is recognised that we all live interconnected lives within 'multispecies communities' and have 'deep, entangled histories' with other beings (van Dooren et al., 2016: 2). Utilising a multispecies ethnography enables researchers to concentrate on these entanglements between human and other-than-human beings (Davis and Maurstad, 2016). Multi-species ethnography has come to represent 'a new and radical recentering and renegotiating of the position and role of animals in social science research' with the aim to 'conceptualise them as actors with the potential agency to create and transform social relations' (Lange, 2016: 40). However, even when attempting to present the not-just-human experience, it is easily possible to unintentionally return to a description of the human-side of the relation (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2016). Hamilton and Taylor note that animals are typically excluded from the

written content following ethnographic research due to the methods themselves being human-centered and even when attempting to include them it can be difficult 'to avoid falling back into established tropes' (2017: 9). I attempt to circumvent these pitfalls by engaging with the cats as active research subjects and 'equal actors' (Hurn, 2018: 4). I believe, as argued by Gillespie, that we do not need to be trained animal behaviourists to recognise emotion as '[c]areful attunement to animals' embodied states, and learning about how certain species and individuals tend to express themselves, is a window into knowing other species' (2018: 6).

During participant observation at cat shows and events, I hoped to pay close attention to the experiences of the cats and their engagements with others so as to aid the incorporation of the feline perspective into the research as much as possible. My approach sought to overcome the 'problem of representation' from humans speaking on behalf of their companions (Maurstad et al., 2013: 324). I have been 'committed to rendering animals as I encountered them – not as symbolic foil for human representation but as subjects whose agency, intention, and capacity for emotion was crucial in shaping the relationships they made with humans' (Govindrajan, 2018: 6). During periods of focused observation, I would also close my eyes to try and decentre the human tendency for ocularcentricity and attempt to take note of the other senses that may be influencing the cats' being, especially through sound and scent. In addition to drawing on my own experiences of living and working with cats, I also used current understanding of feline behaviour to inform my observations (e.g. Atkinson, 2018; Bradshaw et al., 2012; Ellis and Sparkes, 2016; Turner and Bateson, 2014).

Feline Participants

The felines I met, interacted with, and observed were cats used in showing and/or breeding practices. They were mostly cats who were labelled as a particular breed and seen as being 'pedigree' cats. However, there were a smaller number of non-pedigree cats either living within the household or who were also exhibited. Additionally, within the home environment there were a number of cats who were now retired from either breeding or exhibiting. Ages ranged the full spectrum of typical cat life expectancy up to around twenty years of age. The majority of the cats were born in the UK and there were a few cats who had been imported from overseas, particularly from mainland Europe. These demographic details would not be directly relevant to the cats themselves, but 'they shape the symbolic construction of the animals, and the material conditions of their lives' (Coulter, 2018: 62). Throughout the fieldwork, I have wanted to engage with what the cats tell me about themselves, not only what they mean to human cat fanciers.

Interviews

This research has drawn upon a range of interview types, including 'opportunistic chats' and in-depth one-to-one interviews (O'Reilly, 2012: 4). Interviews were deemed critical to 'locate the knowledge people carry in their heads, their "notions", the beliefs and values driving their actions' (Hockey and Forsey, 2012: 71; Holy and Stuchlik, 1983). I conducted semi-structured interviews either by telephone, email, online messaging services such as Facebook Messenger, or in person depending on the logistics of distance and interviewee preference. I selected semi-structured interviews with the aim of enabling 'rich personal narratives' to emerge (Sanders, 1999: xiii). The overall aim of the interviews was

to obtain in-depth narratives of people lives within the cat fancy and their relationships with their cats.

During immersive participant observation at show events, I also spoke in person with countless breeders, exhibitors, and judges in unstructured interviews or opportunistic conversations. Many of these initial conversations at shows led to follow up semi-structured interviews at a later stage, and all contributed to my understanding of the social setting. The unstructured interviews at shows worked well for building rapport with participants (Bernard, 2006). After attending shows at the beginning of my fieldwork, I began to see the same recognisable faces at future shows enabling recurrent interaction.

The show environment was a difficult setting for in-depth conversations due to interruptions and lack of privacy, high noise levels, and limited access to separate areas to continue conversations more privately. As such, I found that communications after the show were more effective for richer conversations. The interviews after the show were also insightful in terms of content. Brown also found the same in her study looking at Connemara Pony shows, where she stated 'post-show discussions were the most politically charged, as people were willing to discuss society politics while still in a reactionary state about show results' (2016: 73).

In my conversations with participants I tried to follow the rule, 'get people on to a topic of interest and get out of the way. Let the informant provide information that he or she thinks is important' (Bernard, 2006: 216). However, I also recognise that my participants and myself were co-authors of the interviews (Montgomery, 2012). I would begin each interview by asking participants to tell me about themselves and their involvement within the cat fancy. From here I would allow

their views to emerge. I would ask further questions to help move the conversation along where necessary but I was happy to allow digressions. After confirming compliance with the consent form which I often sent to participants prior to the interviews either by email or Facebook Messenger, I asked participants if they were happy for me to record the conversation. All participants agreed to this. I used the recorder on my mobile phone which, as an everyday object, I believe offered an unobtrusive option compared to other forms of recording device (see Bernard, 2006). Follow up interviews with key participants took place as relationships developed and we spent more time together at shows.

In total I conducted sixty-one semi-structured interviews, in addition to the numerous casual conversations at shows. The length of interview varied based on method of interview, location, and whether it was the first meeting or a follow up. However, most lasted approximately one hour. I recorded all pre-arranged interviews and fully transcribed them as soon as possible after the interview had taken place. I did this while the interview was fresh in my mind so I could also make note of any significant body language from in person interviews, or other cues such as changes in voice tone during the phone interviews. I also took notes during the interview process to aid in the production of detailed records. The transcription process, although time-consuming, provided the opportunity to get closer to the data and I was able to begin forming themes while still collecting data from my participants which could then inform future conversations. Ethnographic research can be considered as an iterative-inductive process with all phases of the process interlinked, including data collection, analysis, and writing all occurring simultaneously (O'Reilly, 2012: 5). Excerpts from these interviews will be used throughout the thesis to illustrate the perspectives of my participants.

I had initially planned to conduct the majority of the interviews in participant households so that I could also observe the living arrangements and interactions between human and feline. However, fieldwork is an unpredictable, dynamic, and 'messy' process (MacClancy and Fuentes, 2010: 10), and due to logistics and participant preference I was unable to secure as many of these household visits as I initially aimed for and I had to incorporate telephone interviews. I had anticipated that the responses I would receive by telephone would not be as in-depth as those in person. This assumption may partly have been due to what is described by Novick (2008) as a bias within qualitative research against telephone interviews. However, like others such as Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) and Bryman et al. (2008), I found the responses to be comparable with those that I did manage to conduct in person. In some cases the phone interviews lasted longer and it is possible that participants feel more comfortable when discussing sensitive issues by phone as it provides a level of social distance less available in-situ (Trier-Bieniek, 2012). Like Trier-Bieniek (2012) I also found that telephone interviews allowed me to reach a larger number of participants across the country, in addition to being able to speak with participants who considered themselves too busy to meet in person and we were able to organise interviews around work, human child-care, and cat-care requirements (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). When arranging interviews, it was commonly mentioned that we would need to select an interview time that would fit with cleaning or feeding the cats. Mia, a Burmilla breeder, told me that she would have to get back to me on a question I asked because it was feeding time and the "cats come first". Olivia, who breeds Singapuras and helps run cat shows, interrupted a conversation by telling me, "I just have to prepare a bottle and bottle feed a baby [kitten]". Diana, a veterinarian and Bengal breeder, had to leave our interview to go and check if the builder had

taken his shoes off before entering the house as she was concerned about the potential spread of diseases to her cats. Furthermore, offering a range of interview techniques likely helped people to select the mode that they felt more comfortable using and may have prevented the deselection of introverted individuals, as well as providing participants with a sense of control to help remove the hierarchy within the researcher-participant relationship (Trier-Bieniek, 2012).

As I was able to meet many of the participants I spoke with by phone in person at shows, I was able to overcome potential concerns that phone interviews prevent building rapport. I was also able to pick up on non-verbal cues that may have been missed by telephone during these in-situ interactions, as well as meeting participants' cats and observing interactions between them.

Participant Observation

I regularly conducted participant observation at cat fancy related events across the UK from April 2017 to April 2018 with ad-hoc visitation thereafter. Cat shows are public spaces, meaning that gatekeepers to the setting were not necessary for gaining access. However, I met with a key member of the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) organisation at the outset of the research and informed them of my fieldwork, partly to gain prior insights into the setting before accessing the field.

The acquisition of non-verbal data is central to ethnographic fieldwork and it was key to understanding the social world of this study. I wanted to see how people behaved within the cat world and how this corresponded with the data I collected through the interviews. There is a suggestion that this combination of methods is

necessary for adding validity to the research (Bernard, 2006) as it is 'not unusual for persons to say they are doing one thing but in reality they are doing something else' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008: 30). As well as observing the judging process and interactions between human participants, I also dedicated at least sixty minutes at each show to quietly observing the cats within their pens and their interactions with other cats and humans. I took detailed fieldnotes on my phone or notebook and these notes and vignettes have been influential for informing my subsequent analysis.

'Participant observation is about stalking culture in the wild - establishing rapport and learning to act so that people go about their business as usual when you show up' (Bernard, 2006: 344). I aimed to fully participate within the social world of the cat fancy to learn 'what is required to become a member of that world and to experience events and meanings in ways that approximate *members' experiences*' (Emerson et al., 2011: 3, emphasis in original). To achieve this, I actively participated within certain aspects of the fancy. As I made connections, I began to take on additional roles as they were offered to me, such as stewarding for judges and accompanying and assisting exhibitors with their cats at shows, with the aim of developing an embodied understanding and utilising other senses such as touch and learning to act as my participants do (Madden, 2014). This embodied participation also provided the opportunity to directly interact with the cats themselves, either through the judging process or in general interactions at the pens.

A number of my participants told me that the only way I would get a full understanding of the fancy is if I was to show my own cats (see Locke, 2017). Ella, a judge and exhibitor who I attended several different shows with, said: "you need to show then all will become clear to you and you can speak from first-hand

experience". Due to knowing my own cats and their advanced years, I decided that I would not put them through the stresses of the show world for the benefit of research. I often reflected on how this decision may have affected my integration within the social world fully and on whether I missed a level of understanding by not having that same intimacy with a show cat. However, I was fortunate to be granted the opportunity to assist with and observe the process by two different participants. Their cats were Oscar, shown in the 'Pedigree' section as a kitten when the fieldwork first started and later as an adult, and Barney, a six year old non-pedigree who was shown in the 'Household Pet' section. I met their guardians separately during the fieldwork and both invited me to join them at various shows. This exposure to exhibiting enabled the opportunity to both learn more about showing directly, but also to develop relationships over time with some individual cats. It soon became apparent during conversations with participants and through direct interactions with the cats that I knew how to behave around them and therefore I believe that I was accepted more readily as part of the community.

During my informal conversations and observations at shows, I would take 'jottings', recording any significant notes on my phone while at the show and I would fully write up all my observations on returning to the car after the show had finished (Emerson et al., 2011). Due to the particular context of the show setting where many people read books, or use their phones and tablets while waiting for 'Best in Show' to commence, as well as taking notes on current placings in the competition, I do not believe my notetaking would have stood out as unusual. During general observation periods and informal conversations, it was not always feasible to take notes immediately. This was especially the case during active participation through the act of stewarding. Instead, I would take 'headnotes' and

wait until the end of the day and write up my fieldnotes in as much detail as I could (Emerson et al., 2011; Mughal, 2015), the aim of this being to provide a 'thick description' based on 'detailed, context-sensitive, and locally informed fieldnotes' (Emerson et al., 2011: 14; Geertz, 1973). In addition to writing about my observations, I would also note any relevant sources or observations that sparked particular questions for investigation, recording an 'internal monologue' (Hurn, 2018: 14). This field notetaking process is argued by Emerson et al. (2011) to be intuitive: based on what the researcher thinks will be interesting to the reader at a later date, but also based on empathy and what the researcher thinks is important to the group being studied. I would then clarify my observations with participants during interviews after the observation periods. All of those I spoke with whose responses have been used within this thesis were informed verbally of the research. However, as a public space it was impossible to gain consent for observations from all people present at the shows.

I also subscribed to the two main monthly cat fancy related magazines in the UK that numerous participants referred to on a regular basis and often contributed to themselves, *Catworld* and *Your Cat*. These magazines frequently include segments on pedigree cat breeds and shows and have been influential as sources for this research and keeping up to date with the latest talking points within the cat fancy.

Online Ethnography

The internet has become a part of daily life for many. It has provided 'new forms of social life, new types of community, new ways of forming a community, new cultures, new things to research and new ways to research them' (O'Reilly, 2012:

173). As I will discuss in chapter six, as a serious leisure activity, breeding and showing cats acts as a significant contributor to a participant's identity, and this 'identity work' (Sanders, 2003; Snow and Anderson, 1987) extends to use of social media. As such, I realised early in the research planning process that I would need to engage with the online dimensions of the cat community. Sin made a similar realisation after leaving her research fieldsite and noted, 'I was no longer "playing" or "not doing work" when I plow through the numerous feeds and updates on Facebook' (2015: 676). By performing an online ethnography in addition to my face-to-face participation, I have conducted what is referred to as a 'blended ethnography' (Kozinets, 2010: 65). My engagement has mostly focused on Facebook as the most prevalent form of social networking within the community, but I also used relevant online website forums where applicable.

As stated by Dalsgaard (2016: 97) 'if his or her interlocutors use Facebook, so should the ethnographer'. It could be suggested that online ethnography is inferior to face-to-face ethnographic encounters, but I agree with Madden (2014) that the most important element is doing as participants do, which in the case of the cat fancy includes online social activity. Furthermore, Anderson's (1983) concept of 'imagined communities' suggests that online sociality is as real as offline (Madden, 2014). Using Facebook and engaging with cat fancy online groups allowed for continual communication with participants outside of the in-situ fieldsites (Sin, 2015). I will discuss the implications and significance of social media on the relationships and culture of the cat fancy in more detail in chapter six. Here I will outline how I approached internet resources within the research.

Known also as 'netnography', 'cyber-ethnography', 'virtual ethnography', online ethnography is a growing field and methodology for exploring 'the Internet's influence on contemporary social worlds' (Kozinets, 2010: 1). Research utilising

social media and the internet are not a replacement for more 'traditional' forms of fieldwork but can be complementary to it (Sin, 2015). Kozinets (2010) suggests that social experiences within the online realm are significantly different to those in the real world, providing distinctive research opportunities and challenges. However, this is not to state that the 'offline' and 'online' are disparate spheres with the internet disembodied from 'real life' (Miller and Slater, 2000): 'online communities are not virtual. The people that we meet online are not virtual' (Kozinets, 2010: 15).

Online ethnography brings unique challenges to fieldwork, one of which is new ethical considerations which I will discuss in due course. Additionally, there is always the risk of communication being fragmented and interrupted due to technological issues, often beyond the control of the researcher (Kozinets, 2010). There is a multiplicity of online tools available for social networking and internet use that are employed for different purposes (Tosun, 2012). Facebook does not account for all online-based communication within the cat fancy. Furthermore, inequalities of the internet might mean that those with whom I interacted online are not representative of the entire cat fancy. As an example, older people are generally not as avid users of internet/social media, whilst there is increasing evidence to suggest that younger online users are opting to use other platforms to Facebook, such as Instagram and Snapchat (Sulleyman, 2018). To counter these potential issues, I also continued to recruit participants for semi-structured interviews during onsite fieldwork at shows.

There are questions surrounding the authenticity of online profiles. In brief, Dalsgaard (2008; 2016) suggests that people have become concerned with 'face-work' and how they present themselves to others on their online profiles. There

is concern that when conducting online research that the researcher will not be interacting with who they think they are due to levels of anonymity (Kozinets, 2010). However, most members of online groups related to the UK cat fancy are known by others in person preventing some of this risk and I have also been able to meet many of my online contacts at shows.

In addition to concerns around authenticity, there can also be issues of representation as Facebook algorithms might mean a researcher is not exposed to all relevant data. To help overcome representation concerns, I spent time each day reading and engaging with new posts on the relevant Facebook groups, and I set up notifications to alert me to new posts.

Maintaining contact outside of in-situ fieldwork has resulted in me being able to remain informed of changes to show policy and general cat fancy politics (see Dalsgaard, 2016). I took an 'active analysis' role whereby I was also a participant within the online cat fancy community (Farrimond, 2013: 181). I also took an active role in some of the cat fancy groups that I was a member of, posting and commenting on posts. This active participation was to gain a deep understanding of the online community, as Kozinets states, 'lurking, downloading data, and analysing while sitting on the sidelines are simply not options' to achieve 'quality ethnography' (2010: 75). Rather than 'lurking', active participation online provides similar benefits to ethnographic fieldwork as discussed for participation in person offline, giving embodied understanding of the context. Facebook groups are private spaces within the wider interface that can be open (posts visible to all), closed (posts visible only once accepted as a member), or secret (people need to be invited) (Baborska-Narozny et al., 2016). I only included groups within this research where I was an accepted member of the group. This active role

developed over the period of fieldwork, where I became online 'friends' with close participants and shared messages, posts, and Facebook 'likes' with them.

As well as voice communication with participants in person at shows and by phone, we also interacted via written posts and using Facebook Messenger. This textual form of communication presents novel challenges. The extra time provided to participants to think about their responses can increase reflexivity but also result in less spontaneity in their response (Dalsgaard, 2016). Furthermore, textual communication can result in the loss of emotion, non-verbal cues, and cause miscommunication (Terras et al., 2015). However, the use of video, photos, and emoticons can act as a compensatory strategy to overcome the lack of physical contact (Terras et al., 2015). Additionally, similarly to telephone interviews, using such technologies can result in accessing those who prefer the level of anonymity provided by online communication (O'Reilly, 2012).

Human Participants and Sampling

The vast majority of participants within this study were members of the cat fancy community, as either breeders, exhibitors, or involved with institution or show management. A small number were more external to the actual activity, as interested parties, such as feline behaviourists and veterinarians who directly interact with the cats and cat fanciers. The cat fancy participants took on varying degrees of involvement depending on their level of commitment to the research. There were around five participants who acted as gatekeepers to the wider cat fancy community. A number of these became key participants throughout the fieldwork and as is common with long periods of ethnographic fieldwork, have become friends (Sin, 2015). There was a need to ensure that I also made

contacts outside of these gatekeepers to avoid becoming associated only within these networks (Walsh, 2006).

I made initial contact with participants for this research by searching for and joining Facebook groups related to the cat fancy in the UK. I also joined a popular UK-based forum website related to pet keeping with a particular section dedicated to cats.

To remain respectful of social media etiquette, I explained the purpose of my research to the Facebook group 'admins' and requested their permission beforehand to post publicly to the group asking for interview participants. The group admins operated as gatekeepers for gaining access to the online cat fancy sphere. Often, the admins would also offer to take part in the research and they would occasionally corroborate my post request, acting as trusted insiders helping me gain further access and trust within the group. On the forum, I would start a new thread introducing myself, the research, and inviting people to contact me privately to partake.

In the public Facebook posts, I would briefly outline the main focus of the research and make it clear that all participation was voluntary, anonymous, and could be stopped by the participant at any time during the research process. I requested that those interested send a message privately to myself to protect their anonymity. In response to these messages I would then provide further details on the research, answer any questions from the participant, and share the information sheet and consent form. We would then arrange a convenient time and location to speak in person. These interviews acted as a useful way to begin to understand the politics of the cat fancy and work out informed ways to access

the wider community. As participants self-selected themselves, it is likely that they had a high level of engagement with the subject area.

For the interviews, I used snowball sampling by asking participants if there was anyone to whom they recommended I speak. I had a great deal of success with using this approach. However, I have been careful to avoid the pitfalls of snowball sampling for selecting an unrepresentative sample. There is the risk of better-known people being put forward or it can exclude those who may have smaller networks, such as introverts or those new to the cat fancy (Bernard, 2006; O'Reilly, 2012). As such, I also selected people who were at shows and interested in speaking with me once I told them about my research in conversation. As mentioned above, I also utilised social media groups on Facebook and a popular UK pet forum to recruit additional participants. Many of these participants were keen to support the research. I believe this is in part due to concerns surrounding the declining nature of the cat fancy as will be discussed extensively in chapter eight and that participants hoped to promote the merits of their activity.

Over the period of research, I became integrated into the practices of the cat fancy. I am, however, wary of describing this integration as moving from 'outsider' to 'insider' access. The boundary between 'outsider' and 'insider' is not fixed and we should 'abandon these constructed dichotomies and embrace and explore the complexity and richness of the space between entrenched perspectives' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009: 62). My identity was perceived differently by the different people I encountered (Bucerius, 2013). Some saw me as a fellow 'cat lover' and someone who they could bring into the activity, while others saw me more simply as a researcher or someone of whom they should be suspicious. This wariness was demonstrated by one of my participants, Abbey, who informed me:

[I] just need to tell you though, I could never trust you since breeders spy on each other, send others to other breeders' houses ... Some breeders do whatever they can to destroy others. No disrespect to you but I do not know if you are really another breeder in disguise as [someone] doing "research".

The same sentiment was expressed by Antonia who invited me to join her at shows so I could learn about the exhibiting process. She told me, "part of the problem is that breeders can be very cagey so for every one that responds you might get ten that don't ... Breeders can be really funny with people, new breeders, new exhibitors, new people in general". Additionally, some participants had concerns that they would be recognisable due to the combination of breeds that they are involved with. I was told by one breeder, "I suppose it'll be obvious it's me as the only UK breeder to breed [breed 1], [breed 2] and [breed 3]". What were access difficulties also provided invaluable insights into the social organisation of the cat fancy and the anxieties of its human actors (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). However, I also note that many people were extremely welcoming and helpful once they were aware of my researcher status or once I became further integrated within the group. As found by O'Reilly (2012) people are often more than happy and flattered to have someone else interested in them.

Representation

The majority of human participants in my research were female. This is representative of the cat fancy in general, as well as other dog and horse-based leisure pursuits (Baldwin and Norris, 1999; Birke and Hockenhull, 2015; Dashper, 2016; Gillespie et al., 2002; Hultsman, 2012; 2015). This female interest was mentioned in 1903 in one of the first books about the cat fancy, written as an instructive to fanciers about cats and showing: 'dogs are more essentially the friends of men, and cats may be considered as the chosen allies of womankind'

(Simpson, 1903: vii). Although a sweeping generalisation, my research suggests that this does seem broadly still the case in terms of active members of the cat fancy judging from attendance at shows and participation in online cat fancy groups (Jones, 2005). I noted some occupational diversity, with members of the cat fancy spanning a range of jobs across the socio-economic spectrum. My sample lacks ethnic diversity, but this again appears to be representative of the cat fancy community in the UK. The age range of my participants spanned from mid-20 to early-70. I was unable to secure contact with the over 80s who represent a small part of the cat fancy. This is possibly, in part, due to my recruitment methods using the internet and social media as a tool and the use of snowball sampling.

I have been fortunate to interact with both 'key informants'⁴ and 'specialised informants' who are those with 'particular competence' within the field of study (Bernard, 2006: 196). I have spoken with trained judges and members of the institutions' management, as well as veterinarians and cat behaviourists. I have developed a close relationship with a handful of key participants who have been willing to spend many hours explaining the social world to me from their perspective, answering my questions, connecting me with contacts, and helping to integrate me and provide me with access to areas of the cat fancy that may otherwise have been difficult to experience. However, as a quarrelsome social world as I will discuss in chapter six, I had to also be careful that association with key participants would not prevent access to other individuals (Bernard, 2006). Furthermore, I recognise that due to the connections that I have made throughout this research I will have experienced particular perspectives within the larger

⁴ I prefer to use the term 'participant' to account for the active role of my participants in producing this research and to avoid terms that can imply a hierarchical relationship, such as informant (see Trier-Bieniek, 2012).

social group, especially along particular 'political fault lines' (Emerson et al., 2011: 4). Such fault lines exist between breeds, within breeds based on different aesthetic styles, norms of care, and between different cat fancy organisations.

Analysis

As noted by O'Reilly it can be difficult to describe the process of analysing ethnographic data and between ethnographers there is 'an implicit understanding of how data are analysed' (2012: 181). Hammersley refers to it simply as the 'interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions and [that] mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations' (1998: 2).

From extensive participant observation at shows, I had collated field notes and jottings in several notebooks written while in attendance at cat fancy events and during participation in online forums and Facebook groups, as well as jottings and photographs taken on a smartphone and a collection of gathered documents and magazine articles. I wrote my notes up in full in a word processing programme after each related event, adding any initial interpretation that I could later return to (Bryman, 2008; Hurn, 2018). Additionally, I had over sixty full interview transcripts written verbatim from my semi-structured interviews. All of the interviews and fieldwork notes from both the online ethnography and participant observation at shows have been interpreted and analysed thematically. I used the software tool NVivo to store the transcripts and enable searching of a large quantity of narrative-based interview data. I conducted a 'descriptive analysis' that takes this data and looks for 'patterns, regularities, or themes' (Angrosino, 2011: 67). Using what Bernard refers to as an 'ocular scan method', or the process of numerous re-readings of field notes, followed by an 'interocular

percussion test' (the process of recognising patterns) (2006: 406), I highlighted key quotes and sections in the transcripts and field notes to represent the patterns that were forming between participants. Seidman refers to this analysis process as 'a close reading plus judgement' (1993: 120). Throughout this process of analysis I was also still collecting data and due to the iterative nature of ethnography the data analysis and fieldwork continued to shape one another (O'Reilly, 2012). I also explored the emerging key patterns or themes with reference to existing literature, forming a theoretical understanding of these areas in what Angrosino (2011) refers to as 'theoretical analysis'.

The quotations and vignettes that have been selected and referred to throughout what follows have been chosen from this process of close reading as being illustrative of the key themes and commonalities that emerged during the fieldwork process. I have presented the spoken words of my human participants as a way of giving voice to their experiences and what they see as important. Of course, it is not possible to represent verbatim all data gathered from my participants, as such I have had to select excerpts that were representative of the patterns that emerged and those which informed my interpretation of the social world of the cat fancy. However, I have aimed to be reflexive in my selection process and to provide a polyvocal account (Riemer, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

Ethics of the research have been considered throughout the 'lifecycle' of the research period (Farrimond, 2013) to minimise possible harms to all participants, human and other-than-human. A consent form was provided to human participants prior to the semi-structured interviews taking place. This document

informed participants as to the purpose of the research, their level of involvement, and the measures that had been put in place to ensure their anonymity and the protection of their data. Pseudonyms were given to all participants, including other-than-human animals, to maintain anonymity as many of my human participants were wary that their cats would identify them to the wider community. Human participants were offered the chance to review their transcript after interviews had been conducted and transcribed. I found that it was commonplace for people to refer to others and their cats' names in conversations, particularly for cats that were doing especially well in the showing ranks. Due to the strong community and the small population of some of the rarer cat breeds, in cases where the breed could identify the participants the breed was also obscured. Any other identifying markers such as occupation or location were also altered to protect identity. Furthermore, there were a number of times during the interviews where sensitive information was shared with me by participants and I was asked not to directly use the information in this thesis which I respected despite the insights this may have provided.

As mentioned above, throughout the course of the fieldwork, a number of participants have become 'friends' and I was even given an unexpected Christmas gift by one particular participant. The friend-interviewee boundary can become indistinct over multiple interactions (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002), presenting ethical considerations. I have tried to be aware of avoiding bias towards those I have developed 'friendships' with during the write up phase. Walsh (2006) advises taking a position of a 'marginal native' maintaining distance from those studied, 'cultivating empathy but never sympathy, rapport but never friendship, familiarity but never full identification' (Schwandt, 2007: 220). However, research is complex and maintaining these binary boundaries in

practice over extended periods of time is difficult. Furthermore, we need to be 'fully authentic in our interactions with our participants' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009: 60). Yet, as pointed out by Hendry (1992), expressing opinions freely with participants as might be expected from a 'friendship', can result in relationship deterioration also affecting the research detrimentally. As such, she claims 'one can really only pretend to be a friend' (Hendry, 1992: 172). This level of dishonesty and the idea of 'doing rapport' presents an ethical challenge, especially in cases where I may disagree with some of the viewpoints of my participants but encourage their continuance to get a 'good' interview, where it can seem necessary 'to smile, nod, and appear to collude with views' (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002: 113). One such instance included being asked to advertise a participant's litter of kittens, in exchange for continued access to her experiences. However, I did not feel comfortable with this transaction and it required negotiation to avoid supporting a situation that I felt ethically troubled by. As such, I have tried to remain alert to these difficulties throughout the process.

Online ethnography and the recruitment of participants on social media present unique ethical considerations. The researcher/participant boundary can become blurred when using social media accounts. Using my personal Facebook account to recruit participants on Facebook groups resulted in a number of participants sending 'friend requests' and this also occurred as I began building friendships within the activity, often an inevitable consequence of longitudinal fieldwork. I accepted these 'friend requests' to build rapport. Yet I was careful not to post information on my own personal profile that could influence the researcher/participant relationship.

Participant consent is always important to fieldwork. However, within online ethnography there are additional considerations. Kozinets (2010: 56) refers to the

ability to use 'invisible lurking' as a positive aspect of online ethnographies in terms of remaining unobtrusive, as well as being able to track the development of conversations over time. The procedure for the use of public online materials without consent are contested (Heyes, 2017) and the opportunity to 'lurk' can be ethically problematic (Farrimond, 2013). As such, I was consistent in making sure that admins of the groups were aware of my intent and purpose for joining groups and in groups where I was taking an active research role, I would advise potential participants of my position. However, as noted by Sin it is unlikely that even when granted consent that participants are always aware when posting that they are being researched, where due to the scale of Facebook 'our presence as researchers can possibly become rendered as invisible' (2015: 680). There is also the risk that quoting from social media groups and profiles verbatim could result in participants being identifiable through an internet search engine, even when personal details are obscured. As a result, I have been careful as to which posts I have quoted verbatim and I have gained informed consent from the original poster where possible. Researchers have the same responsibility to participants 'in the virtual world as in the non-virtual one' (O'Reilly, 2012: 74).

Chapter Summary

As a multispecies ethnography, the research has drawn on a wide set of qualitative methods. I have conducted semi-structured interviews and informal opportunistic conversations with various members of the cat fancy. These interviews provided the opportunity to collect in depth narratives of people's experiences and relationships within the fancy. I also undertook immersive participant observation as a visitor to the shows and as a steward assisting with the judging process. These observations enabled the collection of non-verbal

data and provided insights into how people behave. To 'bring in' the cat's perspective as much as possible from my inevitable human positioning, I have used knowledge of species-specific behaviour to inform focused periods of observation of the cats and their interactions within the show environment. Participant observation also provided the chance to build rapport with participants, interact with the cats, and experience parts of the activity inaccessible to visitors to the show. Finally, outside of in-situ field sites, I conducted extensive online ethnographic fieldwork, actively participating in online groups and forum pages dedicated to the cat fancy. As a blended ethnography, I was able to continue to engage with social interactions outside of show events.

During the written presentation of the fieldwork, I have faced challenges in finding a balance between providing descriptive details on my participants without revealing details that could identify them to others. As a close community, it has been important to many of my participants that they remain anonymous. At the same time, I have wished to represent my participants as individuals with discrete, rich experiences and relationships.

Following this explanation of the methodology adopted in my research, in the next chapter I set out to provide the historical and social context underpinning the emergence of the cat fancy.

Chapter Two - From Mouser to the Catwalk: The Journey of the Domestic Cat

Contemporary 'Western' cat breeding practices, which are central to the cat fancy, involve considerable manipulation of feline bodies. To set this manipulation in context, I will explore the role that animal 'domestication' has played in the generation of contemporary human-animal and specifically human-cat relations. Due to the limited direct research on pedigree cats and the cat fancy, I will draw on other animal fancies, especially dogs. These fancies are interlinked and arose from the same socio-historical developments providing insights into the cat fancy.

It is commonly argued that the process of plant and animal domestication began at least 14,000 years ago, most likely in Western Asia and initially as an experimental and unconscious process (Anderson, 1997; Derry, 2015; Diamond, 2002; Wilson, 2007). For many species, it has been contended, there were multiple and complex domestication episodes rather than singular events (Dobney and Larson, 2006; Trut, 1999). Through this process, although different between species, animals experienced broadly similar morphological alterations, generally including a reduction in brain size (see Zeder, 2012), decreased overall body size, earlier sexual maturity and increased fertility, changes to coat colour, paedomorphosis or the retention of juvenile characteristics, and diminished sensing abilities (Derry, 2003: 1; Trut, 1999). Such changes to species resulted in various phenotypes derived from the animal's 'wild' ancestors as well as the creation of distinctive types (Derry, 2015). Furthermore, animals experienced behavioural changes, becoming more docile and thus increasing the possibility for further interaction with and use by humans (Anderson, 1997).

Processes of domestication had profound implications, enabling the development

of agricultural economies, substantially altering the landscape, and changing interactions between humans and with other animals (Anderson, 1997). There have been what might be considered negative consequences for humans, with the subsequent move to agriculture involving a reduction in leisure time due to increased workload, decreased nutritional diversity, reduced stature, magnified risk of disease and higher exposure to pathogens or 'poisoned gifts' (Clark, 2007: 63; Diamond, 2002; Serpell, 1996). It has been suggested that humans also became domesticated in the process of animal domestication⁵ (Leach, 2007). Rather than concerning one species, domestication involved multiple species, as well as the environment as a whole (Lien et al., 2018; Swanson, 2018). It is also important to note that domestication is arguably not unique to human-animal relationships, with similar processes occurring among other-than-humans, such as between leaf cutter ants and fungi (O'Connor, 1997; Zeder, 2015).

The narrative of domestication has often been told through a nature/culture binary. The move towards domestication and subsequently agriculture has been seen as a transition from nature and 'primitive' hunter-gathering modes of subsistence to 'civilisation' and culture, representing a linear process of 'development' through a hierarchy of societies with 'Western' colonising powers at the top (Anderson, 1997; Ingold, 2000; Kuper, 2005; Lien et al., 2018; see Morgan, 1877; Shaler, 1896). This understanding of a nature/culture binary contributes to ideas of human exceptionalism by denoting an additional dichotomy of domestic/wild, whereby a species can either live within the domus under human control or in the wild as nature (Tsing, 2012).

⁵ There is also argument that humans have continued to be domesticated through dominance-driven processes, such as experienced by women and servants (Howell, 2000; Tuan, 1984).

Definitions for domestication vary substantially due to it being a fluid process. Dobney and Larson (2006) argue that attempting to apply a static term can result in losing the nuances of the flux of domestication relations. I will not attempt to provide a reductive definition of 'domestication' and will instead focus on its wider meaning and implications for human-animal interactions.

Most scholars agree that domestication is a two-way process between humans and other-than-humans, though there are contrasting viewpoints emerging around the power relationships involved (Zeder, 2012). Some have described domestication as emerging as a biological and economic process based on human domination and control (e.g. Clutton-Brock, 1987; Ingold, 2000), while others have referred to a mutual development or symbiosis (e.g. Budiansky, 1999; Coppinger and Coppinger, 2016; Leach, 2007; O'Connor, 1997). Ingold (2000) portrayed a transition from a relationship of trust between hunter-gather and prey (see Nadasdy, 2007), to pastoralism as a process of domination and control. However, others have argued that this conceptualisation of domestication can present the animal as a passive agent and is not appropriate for all human-animal interactions (Fijn, 2011; Hurn, 2012; Schroer, 2018). They assert domestication should be perceived as a spectrum of different relationships (Hurn, 2012; Russell, 2007). This notion of a spectrum differs from the dichotomous perception of 'domestic' and 'wild' as antonyms, an opposition that fails to account for the diversity of human-animal relationships that exist cross-culturally and between individuals, spatially and temporally (Dobney and Larson, 2006; O'Connor, 1997; Russell, 2007). The suitability of the spectrum analogy is evident when looking at the emergence of the domestic cat. The cat can be a beloved housebound companion and simultaneously a 'feral' cat living completely isolated from human maintenance.

In the symbiotic or co-evolutionary approach to domestication, it is deemed that other-than-human animals benefitted from a closer relationship with humans including protection and food (Budiansky, 1999), leading to the creation of a type of social contract based on reciprocity (Armstrong Oma, 2010). Fijn prefers to use the term 'co-domestication' as it refers to 'the social adaptation of animals in association with human beings by means of mutual cross-species interaction and social engagement' (2011: 19). Zeder (2012) takes a position in between these views, arguing both human and other-than-human benefit in domestication, but due to the capacity for human social learning the relationship has become increasingly dominated by humans. Russell (2002) also draws attention to the agency of other species and the role of relationships, while emphasising the human social side of the relation figuring in the ownership of animals.

There are also multifarious views on the drivers of domestication processes, with some scholars arguing that domestication and the development of agriculture emerged as a deliberate response to the impact of climate change on environmental conditions and food supply (e.g. Serpell, 1996), while others contend it was an unconscious process (Anderson, 1997; Diamond, 2002). Domestication is often associated with the advent of agriculture, yet Wilson (2007) suggests the development of the built environment preceded agriculture and enabled domestication to occur, whereas Zeder (2015) maintains agriculture developed over 1,000 years after initial domestication. Additionally, the origin of agriculture should not be seen as a straightforward development in a single location but as developing in multiple locations with hunting and farming coexisting (Miklósi, 2015). Domestication also likely occurred in multiple locations for some species, such as the domestic cow (*Bos taurus*) thought to have originated in the Fertile Crescent, India, and North Africa (Diamond, 2002: 705;

Lien et al., 2018). Domestication cannot be considered a completed or unidirectional process (Anderson, 1997; Lien et al., 2018; Power, 2012) and this can be demonstrated by the 'remaking' of the dog through everyday relations in the household, such as discipline and 'breed' selection for traits (see Power, 2012), or the domestic cat that can revert to a 'wild' or 'feral' state relatively quickly. However, Zeder (2012) argues there is an inability for 'feral' animals to completely revert to their wild ancestors, even over many generations, demonstrated by the lack of increase in brain size, and the fact that certain behaviours continue, such as the cat's tendency to follow a generalised diet compared with the wild cat's specialised diet.

Emphasising variation within the domestication process, Zeder (2012: 240) categorises the pathways leading to domestication and resulting relationships into 'commensal', 'prey', and 'directed'. Commensal relationships refer to animals (such as the cat and dog) attracted to human settlements in search of food sources; prey relationships are most likely the way the majority of farmed animal species became domesticated, with humans beginning to manage wild prey when availability was low; directed domestication is based on a more deliberate human use of the resource using knowledge gained from previous interactions with other species. This could include species such as the horse (*Equus caballus*) and donkey (*Equus africanus asinus*), thought to have been domesticated through their use as 'beasts of burden' (Zeder, 2012). Some commensal relationships, or synanthropic selection (see Leach, 2007), such as with house sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) and mice (*Mus musculus*), are problematic for the traditional domestication concept as the animal is changed as a result of interacting with humans but not deliberately (Cassidy, 2007; O'Connor, 1997). These examples demonstrate the diversity existing within the process of

domestication and illustrate the difficulties associated with attempting to define the concept.

There have also been multiple attempts to consider why certain species became domesticated while others did not. One nineteenth century exploration into plant and animal domestication was carried out by Francis Galton (1865) who devised a criterion that animals had to meet to become domesticated. It has since been applied by Clutton-Brock (1987). Galton's six-fold criterion included 'hardiness' (providing the ability to survive in different environments), 'fondness for man [sic]' or being tameable, 'desire for comfort' that prevents animals from attempting to leave humans, 'usefulness to man [sic]' that stops humans from disposing of the animal when no longer desirable, 'breeding freely' within captive conditions, and 'easy to tend' (1865: 131-136). A similar notion has been explored by Diamond (2002: 702) who proposed that species that did not become domesticated would have a specialised diet, slow growth and long periods between offspring, an unfriendly disposition, resistance to breeding in captivity, non-hierarchical and non-leadership-based social structures, and flighty disposition around predators and enclosures. Out of these criteria, Zeder (2006; 2012) argues it is tamability which has had the most profound impact in facilitating domestication. The role of tameness within domestication has been demonstrated through experiments on the Silver Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) which found selecting for tameness over thirty generations resulted in morphological changes including floppy ears, curly tails, and shorter legs and tails (Trut, 1999). It has been pointed out, however, that these approaches are one-sided and reflect human-led control over other animals rather than acknowledging the influence of the other-than-human animals within the process (Russell, 2007).

Scholars have attempted to document the process of domestication through

stages. Bulliet (2005) takes a human-dominated perspective and refers to linear stages of human-animal relations as 'separation', 'pre-domesticity', 'domesticity', and 'post-domesticity'. Separation refers to a period where humans began to see themselves as distinct from other animals, pre-domesticity is characterised largely by a symbolic relationship with other animals which developed to domesticity where humans perceived other animals as either tame or wild and began to use animals for their purposes more strategically (Bulliet, 2005). Domesticity was followed by an ambiguous relationship between humans and animals under post-domesticity. In post-domesticity, humans live closely with anthropomorphised 'pets' yet are disconnected from the animals they consume (Bulliet, 2005). However, it is important to note that this 'post-domestic' relationship is not fixed, for example pigs (*Sus domesticus*) are increasingly being kept as companions yet are normatively perceived at a distance as 'food' animals (Hurn, 2012). As such, Bulliet's approach fails to acknowledge the complexity of human-animal relationships.

A further example by Leach (2007) breaks domestication into four stages but unlike Bulliet (2005) recognises the continuity and flux of domestication by stating that each stage does not result in an end to the process of domestication. Stage one, Leach (2007) argues, began to occur as a form of coevolution between humans, plants, and other animals through unconscious selection 10,000-14,000 years ago, mostly based on geographical variations. Stage two 2,000-5,500 years ago continued to see unconscious selection, in addition to breeding that maintained geographical variations. These variations were in place by 4000 years ago within cattle, dogs, and horses (Derry, 2015). Stage three beginning 300 years ago takes the form of more deliberate genetic manipulations through inbreeding and crossbreeding techniques creating many of the animal breeds we

know today. This stage represents the move from co-evolution to a largely human-driven process of artificial selection (Gardiner, 2018). Finally, stage four accounts for the most recent advances in biotechnology that allow for modification at the molecular level. In this research, I will mostly explore stage three, whereby deliberate breeding techniques have manipulated the animal bodies of relevance to this study. Molecular level manipulations will also be discussed where relevant. However, to date companion animal breeding has not utilised these technologies to the same scale as animals bred for use in laboratories and as food.

Overall, these discrepancies demonstrate that notions of domestication have a 'problematic history' that have been and continue to be highly contested over time (Cassidy, 2007: 3). I recognise that domestication is complex and messy at both the conceptual and the processual level. As such, I concur with Cassidy's overview that domestication is:

An ongoing relationship between people, animals, plants, and the environment. This relationship may be exploitative or mutual, intentional, or serendipitous, it does not preclude reversals, and although it may appear to go through distinct phases ... one tendency does not replace another but merely comes to the fore under particular sets of circumstances that emerge from a combination of social and environmental factors (2007: 11).

Domestication is an enduring process that can take a variety of forms over time and space (Cassidy, 2007; Hurn, 2012; Russell, 2007) and where humans and other species live in 'complex relations of dependency and interdependence' (Tsing, 2012: 144). Human-animal relations can also be described through Haraway's (2003b) notion of naturecultures, that denies the nature/culture dichotomy seeing them as 'mutually interactive' (Maurstad et al., 2013: 323). My ethnographic study of the cat fancy delves into precisely these relations of dependency and interdependency.

The (Semi) Domestic Cat

I now turn to a consideration of the domestication of the cat, which is of course a precondition to the production of breeds in the world of cat showing. There are an estimated 600 million cats globally that fulfil a range of niches and often cross the normative dichotomies of wild/tame and pet/stray (O'Brien et al., 2008; Lipinski et al., 2008). Jaroš refers to pet and feral cats as possessing distinct *umwelts*, where they 'live, act, and communicate in different worlds' (2018: 4). However, many of their behaviours are very similar (Farnworth, 2015). The process that saw the cat become a part of the human domestic sphere is disputed, with some questioning whether the cat should even be considered 'domestic'. Some scholars (Bradshaw, 2013; Bradshaw et al., 1999; Lipinski et al., 2008) prefer to refer to the cat as not fully domesticated or as semi-domesticated given that cats' innate hunting ability enables them to live independently of the household. In addition, the majority of cats globally are able to breed freely with minimal human interference, and the average domestic cat closely resembles the wildcat ancestor (Driscoll et al., 2009a). Furthermore, cats do not meet all of Clutton-Brock (1987) and Diamond's (2002) criteria for domestication. Cats are thought to be obligate carnivores meaning they have specific nutritional requirements that can be, and would historically have been hard to fulfil, and they are territorial in behaviour which can present problems for humans and other animals within the domestic sphere (Driscoll et al., 2009b). This unusual domestication status has been a point of discussion for many years. For example, Galton referred to the cat as not adhering to his domestication criteria and stated 'the cat is the only non-gregarious domestic animal. It is retained by the extraordinary adhesion to the comforts of the house in which it is reared' (1865: 136). In support of domestication status, cats have experienced

morphological changes from their ancestors such as shorter legs, smaller brain, and longer intestines (Driscoll et al., 2009a).

For many years it was believed the cat became domesticated in Ancient Egypt from the African wildcat (*Felis silvestris lybica*) (Serpell, 1996). This belief likely stems from the well-known symbolic relationship between Ancient Egyptians and felines depicted in surviving artwork and from the mummification process (see Malek, 1993). However, Vigne et al. (2004) argue that recent feline (*Felis silvestris lybica*) remains excavated from a human grave in Shilloutokambos, Cyprus present evidence of early taming dating back 9,500 years. The cat had been placed deliberately in the grave only 40 centimetres from the human body and there were no signs of butchery, arguably indicating a close relationship between the human and cat (Vigne et al., 2004). The Mediterranean Islands are not believed to have had 'native' cats, leading to the conclusion that the remains on Cyprus indicate their introduction by humans (Vigne et al., 2004). Further remains have been found in Quanhucun, China, dating to 5,300 years ago (Hu et al., 2014). However, these remains have since been found to belong to the Leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) (Vigne et al., 2016). Whether these feline remains indicate cat domestication or cat taming is open to debate (see Bar-oz et al., 2014; Rothwell, 2004). Although the Cypriot remains most likely indicate an intentional burial, it is perhaps too far a stretch to conclude they are evidence of taming as the cat may have been a wild commensal buried with the human for other reasons, perhaps symbolic or spiritual. Regardless, the remains do demonstrate a long history of human-feline relationships.

Linseele et al. (2007) conducted research on felid remains from Hierakonpolis, Egypt dating to 3700 BCE and predating the predominant era of symbolic relations with the cat by two thousand years. The remains revealed healed

injuries indicating captive conditions of at least four to six weeks. Initially the remains were believed to be *Felis silvestris lybica* and were used as evidence of early taming prior to full domestication in the Middle Kingdom of Egypt (20th to 19th century BCE). However, after further analysis the remains were discovered to belong to the Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*) (Linseele et al., 2008). Again, this discovery should not detract from the significance of human-feline relations throughout recent history but indicate the difficulties in drawing firm conclusions about the ancestral origins of today's domestic cats. Significantly for this research, these archaeological investigations indicate a close association between humans and felids for at least the last 9,500 years.

Research utilising mitochondrial DNA data has linked the domestic cat's origins to Western Asia in the Fertile Crescent 9,000-10,000 years ago (Driscoll et al., 2007; Lipinski et al., 2008). Lipinski et al. (2008) suggest the process most likely started earlier than this with the beginnings of an agrarian lifestyle from 10,000 to 11,000 years ago. These claims are credible due to evidence from contemporary domestic cats that have DNA corresponding with wildcats from the region, in addition to a high genetic diversity within the domestic cat population in the area (Kurushima et al., 2012). Serpell (2014: 86) also points to the ancestral links to *Felis silvestris lybica* due to an identified propensity for tameness and the etymology of the word 'cat' in English, French (*chat*), German (*katze*), Spanish (*gato*), Arabic (*quttah*), and Latin (*cattus*) appearing to relate to the Nubian word 'kadiz' from the region. Kurushima et al. (2012) conclude from reviewing the literature and conducting DNA analysis on Egyptian cat mummies that the domestication process was initiated in the Fertile Crescent in Western Asia with cats taking a commensal role, before the Ancient Egyptians began to control and breed cats in vast numbers.

It seems most plausible that cats were first attracted to early agrarian settlements in search of food, which was readily available in the form of rodents attracted to grain stores (Driscoll et al., 2007; Menotti-Raymond et al., 2008; Vigne et al., 2011). It is highly unlikely humans would have deliberately attempted to change cats due to their natural ability to provide the valuable service of hunting (Lipinski et al., 2008). It is, however, possible that they may have been granted protection and allowed to stay (Vigne et al., 2004). Conversely, Serpell (2014) argues that the domestication of the cat was most likely preceded by a social relationship between wild cats and humans with humans keeping cats as companions. However, cats most likely diverged from their ancestors as a result of their distribution over time and place rather than through intentional human selection (Driscoll et al., 2009b). The domestic cat is the only member of the Felidae family that has become domesticated, despite anecdotal and scientific evidence suggesting other species are also tameable (Cameron-Beaumont et al., 2002; Faure and Kitchener, 2009). Cameron-Beaumont et al. (2002) propose that the domestication of *Felis silvestris lybica* occurred primarily due to human need in the Fertile Crescent in reaction to the growth of the agrarian lifestyle, despite the obstacles to domestication due to the wild cat's characteristics mentioned previously, particularly the cat's territorial nature.

Despite earlier human-cat relations discussed above, there is considerable evidence that Ancient Egypt played a key role in the formation of human relationships with cats. Following the religious significance attributed to the cat after 2,000 BCE, the exportation of cats was heavily restricted by the Ancient Egyptians preventing their spread until the Romans took control in 30 BCE (Linseele et al., 2007; Serpell, 2014). From here, domestic cats began to be distributed and to disperse themselves across the globe, eventually reaching

every corner except for Antarctica and some isolated and/or protected islands. By the tenth century, domestic cats were a common sight across much of Europe and Asia (Menotti-Raymond et al., 2008). In the UK, domestic cats have been present since at least 2,000 years ago with the Roman occupation (Faure and Kitchener, 2009). Cats were also taken to other parts of the world by colonialists and as such can be considered 'creatures of empire' (Haraway, 2016: 15).

Following a period of persecution and association with demonic forces during the Middle Ages in Europe (Menotti-Raymond et al., 2008; Serpell, 2014), contemporary cats are now a prevalent companion and pest controller across the world, not to mention a popular cultural phenomenon on the internet (see Myrick, 2015). However, they are not universally popular and arguably of any species cause the most dichotomous and contentious response between humans, where 'the same cat can be a cherished member of one household and a hated intruder on the premises in the neighbourhood' (Griffiths et al., 2000; Jaroš, 2018: 6; Lockwood, 2005; Okely, 1983; Ritvo, 1987; Sandøe et al., 2018). Within some groups, cats can be wholly despised. Okely (1983: 92), for instance, describes how Traveller-Gypsies in the UK see cats as heavily 'polluting' and hence 'untouchable'.

Selective Breeding

As described above, unconscious selective breeding of animals is believed to have commenced in the Neolithic period during the initial domestication phases (Quinn, 1993). From here, regional strains developed in response to geographic and environmental conditions (Derry, 2015; Ritvo, 1986; Theunissen, 2012). Jung and Pörtl (2019) suggest that some of this selection was also based on the

capacity of animals to perform specific functions. Animals and plants were likely spread through trade and with travelling humans (see Leonard et al., 2002 on dogs). In Ancient Greece, for instance, there were numerous dog 'breeds' that were most likely local variations and the Romans also transported local varieties (Leach, 2007). Selective breeding has been driven more deliberately since the late seventeenth century onwards by a desire to transmit desirable characteristics, based on ability, appearance, and productivity, with the ultimate purpose for human utility (Turner, 2010: 2). This relationship has persisted with other-than-human animals being used for multiple reasons including (but not exhaustively) food, clothing, transportation, pest control, protection, symbolism, and companionship (Alexander, 2014: 7; Quinn, 1993). Flint and Woolliams (2008: 573) identify four main reasons including for usable products such as food, fibre, transport; for medical and scientific research; aesthetic, cultural or ethical reasons including breeding for conservation; and as companions.

Selective breeding techniques, such as inbreeding, outcrossing, and linebreeding, have led to increasing phenotypic and genotypic differences within species, and enabled the construction of 'breeds' for all domesticated species. Returning to consider the power relationship within the domestication process, the increased implementation of selective breeding and biotechnological developments has contributed to a relationship defined by human control over other-than-human others (Anderson, 1997). Through selective breeding it can be argued, for instance, that dogs (and some cats) have been shaped 'to be dependent on their designers' or captive by their design (Horowitz, 2014: 7).

During the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, the human-domesticated animal relationship took a more deliberate form of manipulation, by building on a

growing awareness of the regional variations within species (e.g. Buffon, 1749-1804 on the variations within the dog). Largely regarded as one of the first animals to be deliberately selectively bred, horses used for racing purposes were bred from three imported Arabian stallions in the UK and this saw the beginnings of the association between animal breeding and the importance of genealogy (Cassidy, 2002a; 2002b; Derry, 2003; 2015; Ritvo, 1986; Russell, 1986). Robert Bakewell (1725-1795) began to use selective breeding techniques in controlled experiments to maximise the productivity of farmed species, especially sheep and cattle, while minimising the energy required by the animal to survive (Derry, 2003; Ritvo, 1986; Wood and Orel, 2001). Bakewell initiated artificial selection by separating male and female individuals and methodically choosing which to mate, in addition to utilising inbreeding to fix desired physical traits (Wood and Orel, 2001; Wood, 2007). He utilised progeny testing and exchanged animals with others involved within the Dishley Society to test rams with a larger number of ewes (Wood, 2007). Overall, Bakewell aimed to produce a breed in which the same characteristic traits would appear in every individual. Three important principles from Bakewell's methods influenced the future of animal breeding, including utilising inbreeding to create and maintain breeds, the attribution of economic value to animals which expressed certain breed characteristics, and the gendering of breeding methods with the idea that type should be fixed through the male lines (Derry, 2003: 4).

The first dogs to be recognised as a breed were foxhounds, with breeders keeping pedigree records from 1753 onwards (Ritvo, 1987; Wallen, 2011). The perceived value of lineage and purity resulted in the spread of selective breeding and the creation of multiple systems for recording individuals of different species. The General Stud Book for thoroughbred horses was introduced in 1791, initially

as an attempt to limit fraud and cheating within the racing industry (Derry, 2003). The Shorthorn cattle stud book followed in 1822 (Calvert, 2013; Derry, 2003; 2015). The focus on lineage and ancestry is a recurrent theme in contemporary pedigree breeding and will be discussed in more detail in relation to cat breeding discourses in chapter five.

The Rise of Companion Animal Exhibitions

In Britain, pet-keeping practices began to increase in the eighteenth century, continuing a practice that some argue has been a part of human sociality in various forms, often with tamed non-domesticated species, for millenia (Bradshaw, 2017; Serpell, 1987). Rising companion animal guardianship coincided with greater economic stability and an associated rise in disposable income for some sectors of society, leading to a rise in consumerism that affected all income groups (Tague, 2015). Changing financial practices created greater wealth and a burgeoning urban middle-class (Power, 2012; Tague, 2015; Turner, 2010) resulting in pet-keeping infiltrating wider segments of society rather than being largely associated with the wealthy upper class (Bradshaw, 2017). International travel and trade through colonial expansion and conflict created a desire for 'exotic' goods and animals that was also driven by a popular interest in natural history and curiosity for animal life driven by the Enlightenment (Power, 2012: 372; Tague, 2015). Additionally, there was a move towards a separation of humans from animals used as livestock within the domestic sphere, with only certain animals being given access to the home (Bradshaw, 2017; Bulliet, 2005; Tague, 2015), as well as the rising use of machinery replacing the dog's utility role (McCarthy, 2016; Turner, 2010). These factors contributed to a growing acceptability and popularity of pet-keeping practices, though for some the

concept of pets remained a 'wasteful extravagance' (Tague, 2015: 32).

By the late eighteenth century, there was increasing concern with animal welfare in the UK (Bradshaw, 2017; Kean, 1998; Ritvo, 1986; Tague, 2015). As part of this movement, changing sensitivities in Victorian culture led to the Cruelty to Animals Act in 1835 that banned leisure activities including bullbaiting and cockfighting (McCarthy, 2016; Pedersen et al., 2016). Bullbaiting with dogs had been a popular activity between the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries (Pedersen et al., 2016). The introduction of state regulations has been argued by McCarthy (2016) to have been based on a regulation of the 'working-class' population with other cruel 'upper-class' sports such as fox hunting continuing without regulation. Regardless, changing opinions on cruel dog leisure activities were occurring at the same time as changing attitudes towards companion species in general (King et al., 2012; McCarthy, 2016) and there was an inclination to create a more respectable human-dog activity for emerging Victorian sensitivities (Huff, 2002: 6).

With the increase in pet-keeping and concern for respectability came the development of the dog fancy that initially operated as a form of urban middle-class leisure activity representing a shift in the values placed upon dogs from the functional to the aesthetic (Ritvo, 1986). This focus on aesthetics was also part of farmed animal breeding in the Victorian era as is demonstrated by the popularity of farmed animal portraiture that contributed to the perception of the animal's place in a romanticised countryside (see Quinn, 1993). Breeding for aesthetics was also a feature of the developing rat fancy where particular coat colours and textures were selected and perpetuated (Edelman, 2002; 2005). The role of aesthetics is an important part of the discussion surrounding pedigree breeding, and its relevance to cat breeding will be covered in depth in chapter

four. The creation of the animal fancy led to breed standardisation with the goal of attaining desirable behavioural and physical traits celebrated by breed societies and at animal exhibitions. Further, the commercial value of 'pets' rose during this period with a connection made between 'affection and commerce' demonstrated by the rise in dog theft in urban centres such as London where thieves could hold pedigree dogs ransom for substantial sums of money (Howell, 2000: 38; Ritvo, 1986). The economic element to the value placed upon 'pets' has continued unabated. The growth in pet-keeping, the recognition of dogs as legal property and their removal from the street during the Victorian period can be argued to complete the dog's full incorporation into the 'domestic' sphere (Howell, 2000).

The first UK dog show in Newcastle in 1859 was initially aimed at the sporting gentry and did not open to 'pets' until the following year (Ritvo, 1986). The first 'all breed' show was held in Birmingham in 1860 (Worboys et al., 2018). Shows continued to grow in popularity and by 1863 a dog show in Chelsea, London had over 1000 entries (Ritvo, 1986). There were 380 shows across the UK by 1899 (Turner, 2010: 104). Claims of bias and corruption on the part of judges led to the development of breed standards to provide standardisation from 1865 onwards (Worboys et al., 2018). As with the decision to introduce the General Stud Book for thoroughbred horses, high levels of fraud and tampering at dog shows also led to the creation of an identifying system, which emerged through the establishment of the Kennel Club (KC) in 1873 (Ritvo, 1986). The KC created the first stud book for dogs in 1874, licensed shows from 1900, and disseminated rules to oversee the dog fancy to regulate both canine and human participants (Ritvo, 1986). Through shows, other-than-human animals were transformed, both physically and in terms of their perceived cultural value. Worboys et al. suggest

that:

Competition drove *specialisation*, by emphasising the differentiation of varieties; *standardisation*, by adapting physical form to new designs; *objectification*, by viewing dogs' bodies as being made up of quantifiable parts (so-called points); *commodification*, by promoting dogs as tradable goods; and *differentiation*, by proliferating breeds (2018: 7, emphasis in original).

Contemporarily, over 100 countries have a system similar to the KC (Collins et al., 2011).

As international travel increased in the nineteenth century people imported exotic animals in larger numbers, including 'different' looking cats. Bradshaw suggests cats did not become popular pets until the early twentieth century, previously seen as 'too "bohemian" and insufficiently loyal to rival the ever loyal and self-sacrificing dog ... and the cat's noisy and overt sexual behaviour jarred Victorian sensitivities' (2017: 53). However, despite this claim, the first 'modern' cat show based on aesthetic judgement was held at Crystal Palace, London in 1871 marking a transition in the cat's value from an earlier show held in 1598 in Winchester that judged cats on their utility value as pest controllers (Gregory et al., 2014). This 'modern' show took place as part of a continuation and fascination with the exhibition of 'exotic' animals during the Victorian period in the UK, in what has been termed the 'age of exhibitions' (Edwards, 2009). It was accompanied by the beginning of the deliberate manipulation of feline bodies through breeding to maintain and perpetuate aesthetic variations that had naturally occurred across geographic regions⁶ (Gregory et al., 2014). Bradshaw (2017) argues that the development of cat breeds created a change in general opinion towards the cat.

According to one of the founders of the first cat show, its origination was also

⁶ See chapter five on cat breeding for further analysis of the development, practices, and discourses of breeding.

driven by an altruistic motivation. Harrison Weir, an artist and writer, hoped the development of the fancy would lead to a 'permanent benefit in every way to one of the most intelligent of (though often much abused) animals' and he wished 'the too often despised cat will meet with the attention and kind treatment that every dumb animal should have and ought to receive at the hands of humanity' (1889: n.p). Rather than the common contemporary and often demeaning interpretation of the word 'dumb', in this case it likely implies Weir was attempting to represent the voiceless and improve the image of cats through their celebration. As discussed previously, since the Medieval period in Britain, cats had been viewed by many with suspicion and repugnance, yet likely escaped widespread annihilation in part due to their useful hunting abilities. Although examples exist throughout recent history of the relationship between particular human individuals and their cats as companions (e.g. Mark Twain), within the general population they were of low value. This attitude seems to have begun to change in earnest around the late 1800s as part of wider societal changes and taken advantage of by Weir. However, compared with dogs, many still viewed cats cautiously. Ritvo suggests this continued suspicion was because 'the dog's plastic body symbolised its desire to serve ... the cat's body symbolised its stubborn refusal. Unnervingly similar, in miniature, to its most ferocious wild relatives, the cat resisted breeders' attempts to modify its appearance' (1987: 22). Unlike dog breeds, cat breeds have much smaller and less obvious physical variations between them. However, as I will discuss, in more recent years, cat breeds have experienced high levels of morphological alteration, and the more 'wild'-like cat breeds are celebrated as being such. Yet these 'wild'-looking cats still represent a form of human mastery as 'living-room leopards' (Levy, 2013: n.p).

Produced in collaboration between Weir and the natural historian, Fred Wilson,

the first 'modern' cat show was deemed highly successful with the exhibition of 170 cats and attracting twenty thousand visitors (Gregory et al., 2014: 169; Hartwell, 2003-2015). These cats were mostly from 'aristocratic ownership and natural history connections', whereas the next show held later in the same year in December 1871 encouraged those from 'the working classes' with the aim of improving cat welfare (Hartwell, 2003-2015: n.p).

The show was split into different classes based on the look of the cat including factors such as coat colour, shape, and fur length (Hartwell, 2003). Based on these separations, Weir established criteria for each category to be used for the judging process and this developed into the 'points of excellence' which are still used today in an evolved format known as the 'standard of points' (Gregory et al., 2014; Hartwell, 2003). Initially cats were marked according to 'elegance of form, richness of colour and beauty, and evenness of markings' (Pond and Dunnill, 1985: 18). As will be discussed in the following chapters, the standard of points have continued to be of great significance to both the 'valuation' of pedigree cats and their breeding. The points system awards marks to cats that have the required features to a maximum of 100 points for the 'perfect cat' (Gregory et al., 2014: 169). Gregory et al. (2014) refer to the creation of these breed standards as being as important as the formation of a registry system for the development of the cat fancy. After the success of the two shows at Crystal Palace, further shows were run regularly across the country, sometimes as standalone shows, or as part of agricultural or dog shows (Pond and Dunhill, 1985). Today most shows are standalone. However, there are a small number that operate as part of pet, agricultural, or dog shows.

The National Cat Club (NCC) was founded in 1887 as a cat registry system with

Weir as its president. The aim of a registry is to keep a record of the genealogies of pedigree cats and breeder prefixes⁷ (Hartwell, 2007). In addition to operating the registry system, the NCC also licensed smaller clubs to hold their own shows across the UK (Gregory et al., 2014). In 1898, a rival to the NCC named The Cat Club emerged (Pond and Dunhill, 1985). Subsequently, in March 1910 the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) was formed to simplify the process and incorporate all operating cat clubs under one umbrella (GCCF, 2016a). 1910 also saw the publishing of the first feline stud book initially listing five breeds (Packer, 2018).

The Contemporary Landscape of the Cat Fancy

The GCCF still functions along similar lines to those described above in the UK. It operates as a registry body for pedigree cats, licenses cat shows run by the various cat clubs, and runs the Supreme Show every year. 'The Supreme', as it is known in the cat fancy, running since 1976, is seen as the equivalent of Crufts and is the culmination of the GCCF showing season. The GCCF currently oversees 164 breed and regional cat clubs across the country (GCCF, 2019c). It also has interests in cat welfare, manages the complaint process towards breeders, and runs the GCCF breeders scheme. As part of its welfare role, the organisation participates as a member of the Canine and Feline Sector Group which since 2013 has represented a range of animal-related organisations in the UK working towards improving welfare for companion animals through sector collaboration (CFSG, n.d). Welfare is a growing consideration within companion animal breeding and a point of contention within the cat fancy. I will return to

⁷ Breeder prefixes are the unique names given to each breeder and the cats bred by them.

consider its role in more detail later in this chapter and in chapter eight.

The GCCF is the predominant organisation in the UK. However, there are others with growing influence within the British cat fancy. The three current alternatives are The International Cat Association (TICA), Cat Fancier's Association (CFA), and Fédération Internationale Féline (FIFe). Originating in 1979, TICA operates as an international-level cat registry and has 13 cat clubs operating within the UK (TICA, n.d(b)). TICA offers a more open format; unlike the GCCF, it is not an imperative to be registered with TICA to show your cats with them, only to be eligible to win certain titles or awards (TICA, n.d(d)). The CFA, which began in 1906 in the USA, is beginning to grow as competition within the UK sector. FIFe also operates an 'open doors policy' and currently has three clubs across the country. These organisations introduce an international travel element to cat showing, offering the opportunity for cats to be shown in other destinations outside of the UK and it is common practice for judges to be flown in from other nations to take part.

The celebration of 'pedigree' companion animals is not only a popular activity in the 'West', but is growing in many parts of the world⁸ where economic prosperity is increasing. For example, there are TICA cat shows run in China, Thailand, Colombia and Brazil (TICA, 2017)⁹. However, the practices surrounding the exhibition of cats appear to be in a state of flux. Within the UK context and as I will discuss in detail in chapter eight, exhibitor numbers have been declining at many shows. However, pedigree cat numbers are predicted to increase as companions in the UK, especially in areas with high neutering rates of non-

⁸ 'Pet keeping' is not only a 'Western' phenomenon and is thought to have occurred across time and cross-culturally (see Bradshaw, 2017; Serpell, 1987).

⁹ Academic research on the contemporary growth of pet-keeping in other parts of the world is not extensive. However, there are some media articles available on such practices, including Kwok and Jourdon (2015) on China and Bradley and King (2012) on the global picture.

pedigree cats (Bradshaw, 2013).

Today animal breeding has substantial economic value (Hurn, 2008). Within companion animal breeding the direct commercial value is smaller than within animals used for consumption and high-value sport (Long et al., 2003; see Cassidy, 2002b). However, a glance at online pet-selling websites suggests that there are often substantial stud fees attached to 'champion' animals, while rare and designer breeds can be sold for thousands of pounds. As such, there is a market for those motivated by economic profits to breed companion animals, often in what is known as backyard breeding or puppy/kitten farms (Bond, 2007; see McMillan et al., 2011).

Cat Breeds

Most cat breeds have been created in the last 150 years (Gregory et al., 2014; Lipinski et al., 2008). Cat breeds can be divided into various categories, including 'natural breeds' that arose in geographical isolation with phenotypic variances arising from environmental conditions; 'established breeds' created through the selective breeding of 'natural breeds', such as the Abyssinian; 'variant breeds' or 'cross-breeds' which usually have a single allele variance (different variants or versions of a gene e.g. the gene for eye colour can have alleles for different colours) that has been introduced through 'outcrossing' with other breeds, such as the Tonkinese; 'mutation breeds' where a spontaneous mutation has occurred and been selected for, such as the Devon Rex; and 'hybrid breeds' created through breeding domestic cats and wildcats, such as the Bengal (Gregory et al., 2014; Menotti-Raymond et al., 2008). The popularity of hybrid breeds is noteworthy when it is considered that humans are deliberately choosing certain

wildcat species to mate with domestic cats under controlled conditions to create new and 'wild' breeds, while at the same time there is concern within the conservation sector for wildcat species, such as the Scottish wildcat, which is breeding with stray and feral domestic cats leading to what is seen as a dilution of the wildcat genetic pool (see Fredriksen, 2015; Pierpaoli et al., 2003). Despite this range of 'breeds', as has been mentioned in relation to the domestication of the cat, the majority of the global cat population experiences minimal interference from humans in relation to their breeding choice.

Within different countries and different registration bodies, breeds can be categorised differently, such as the Havana Brown which is treated as its own breed in the USA and as a variant of the Siamese in Europe (Lipinski et al., 2008). The varying opinions within the global cat fancy as to whether a cat breed should be classified as a variant or a separate breed depends on whether they are being categorised on phenotype, or if they are perpetuating genetic lineage. Hedhammar et al. (2011) suggest that variations should be considered as the same breed to encourage a larger genetic pool. Genetic studies have found that domestic cats have a population structure that relates closely to geographic area and also corresponds with the genetic structure of both pedigree and non-pedigree cats in the respective areas (Lipinski et al., 2008). Cats can be divided into Asian, Mediterranean, Western European, and East African (Lipinski et al., 2008). These regions have helped shape the 'natural breeds' recognised today. Behaviour has not been a major consideration for most cat breeds with the focus on phenotypic differences. However, Hart and Hart (2013) have demonstrated differences between breeds for factors such as activity level, affection, aggression, spraying and litter box use. Using veterinarian data, the Bengal, for instance, was found to be the most active, least affectionate, and most

aggressive, while the Ragdoll was the exact opposite (Hart and Hart, 2013; 2014). The 'hybrid' Bengal was established from matings between a domestic cat and Asian Leopard Cat, and the Ragdoll was initially a 'cross-breed' creation. These breed variations will be returned to in chapter seven.

Well-being Implications of Pedigree Breeding Practices

The breed standards have become deep-seated within the pedigree system and are perpetuated by a range of actors, including breeders, buyers, fanciers, and judges (Higgins and Nicolas, 2008). There are, however, welfare concerns surrounding the breeding of homogenous traits and selection for unusual features (Asher et al., 2009; Bond, 2007). Issues also arise from high levels of inbreeding and linebreeding¹⁰, the popular sire effect¹¹ and population bottlenecks¹². Inbreeding is thought to cause a reduction in biological fitness (Bateson and Sargan, 2012), though it is also argued it can be utilised as a way of maintaining the desired characteristics of valued ancestors and allowing the removal of disease carriers by highlighting recessive alleles¹³ (Mucha et al., 2011). Practices of inbreeding are also in conflict with the agency demonstrated by cats allowed to breed naturally due to their preference to avoid mating with kin (Ishida et al., 2001). Under selective breeding, reproductive decisions have been increasingly taken away from animals and determined by humans. Overall, the agency of cats can be said to be restricted by human driven breeding interventions in multiple ways as I will discuss in more detail in chapter five.

¹⁰ Inbreeding refers to mating between two closely related individuals, for example between parent-offspring or siblings. Linebreeding represents a milder form of inbreeding between less closely related individuals within the same family line. Precise definitions can vary between these forms of inbreeding.

¹¹ The popular sire effect is used to denote the practice of using the same individual repeatedly for breeding purposes.

¹² Population bottlenecks refer to the loss of genetic diversity within a given population often following a disaster of some description.

¹³ Genes are made up of alleles, most commonly a pair of alleles. The combination of alleles determines traits, for example, eye colour is determined by two alleles which can be homozygous or heterozygous.

Discussion of the well-being concerns linked to pedigree dog breeding has recently been boosted, in part by the 2008 BBC documentary, *Pedigree Dogs Exposed*, that helped bring the issue to public attention (Crispin, 2011). However, pedigree breeding has been a concern for many years. Darwin (1868) made note of conformation-related issues in relation to the large size of the Scottish Deerhound dog breed and their common predisposition to muscular problems (Asher et al., 2009; Collins et al., 2011; Summers et al., 2010). Furthermore, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) published a report in 1963 that connected thirteen health conditions to the breeding of pedigree dogs, including hip and elbow dysplasia and deafness (Asher et al., 2009; Crispin, 2011). The Orthopaedic Foundation for Animals was created in 1966 (Keller et al., 2011) and since then, knowledge of pedigree-related disorders has been rising. This growing knowledge is partly a reflection of an increased life expectancy for companion animals leading to a witnessing of previously unusual conditions, and high levels of obesity creating increased stress on the body especially in the case of conditions such as hip and elbow dysplasia (Asher et al., 2009).

Pedigree animals can be affected by both conformation and non-conformation related conditions. Conformation-related disorders are related to the animal's shape and therefore are most directly connected to the pedigree breeding standards. Asher et al. (2009) describe how conformation disorders can be related to general appearance, head, skull, mouth, eyes and ears, size of body, coat and colour.

Dog breeds with conformation-related brachycephalic features are a current hot topic within the wider discourse surrounding pedigree dog breeding, both within research and popular media (e.g. BBC, 2016; *Pedigree Dogs Exposed*, 2008).

Brachycephaly refers to the shape of the skull and a shorter nose than typical for the species. Typically affected dog breeds include Pugs, English and French Bulldogs, Boston Terriers, Pekingese, Boxers, and the Maltese (Meola, 2013). Such breeds have increased in popularity in recent years (Emmerson, 2014; Fawcett et al., 2019; Oechtering, 2010; Packer and Tivers, 2015). The KC experienced an increase of 450% in brachycephalic dog breed registrations between 2000 and 2010 (Phillips, 2016: 32), with registrations of Pugs increasing by 730% between 2002 and 2013 (Packer and Tivers, 2015: 219). This popularity is likely driven by the neotenic features of the dogs (Serpell, 2019; Teng et al., 2016), as well as being influenced by fashion trends. Symptoms associated with brachycephalism include snoring, panting, and overheating in response to exercise and temperature (Emmerson, 2014; Phillips, 2016; Roedler et al., 2013). The most extreme conditions can lead to brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome (BOAS) that affects the upper airway and causes 'resistance to airflow and restricted breathing' (Fawcett et al., 2019: 2). Furthermore, Roedler et al. (2013) argue that issues associated with brachycephalism are more complex than the commonly perceived respiratory conditions with other symptoms, that may include gastrointestinal issues such as vomiting and gastritis, bulging eyes that are at risk from injury and disease, sleep disorders, cardiopulmonary disorders, predisposition to skinfold dermatitis, dental disease, and increased likelihood of dystocia (Farnworth et al., 2016; Phillips, 2016; Turner, 2010). The symptoms of brachycephalism are occurring at a younger age with vets treating increasingly younger dogs, suggesting the condition may be worsening (Fawcett et al., 2019; Oechtering, 2010).

Knowledge surrounding brachycephalism is also beginning to extend to certain breeds of cats that have also been bred to have flat faces, including the Persian

and Himalayan, although in comparison with dogs, minimal attention has been paid to brachycephalic cats (Farnworth et al., 2016). To date it is unknown whether the range of conditions noted for dogs with brachycephalic features are also affecting brachycephalic cats to the same extent (Farnworth et al., 2016). Life expectancy for Persian cats is similar as for non-breed cats, suggesting that brachycephalism is not shortening life span, yet this does not mean cats are not suffering due to their morphology (Farnworth et al., 2018: 2; Keyes, 2010). Research by Malik et al. (2009) highlighted severe tear duct issues for brachycephalic cats, where tears are unable to drain effectively into the nasal cavity resulting in epiphora (excessive eye watering). Additionally, some Persians may be affected by the severe condition, syringomyelia (Malik et al., 2009), that is a common debilitating complaint for King Charles Cavaliers caused by a change in skull shape that results in pressure on the brain (Milne, 2018a; Oosthuizen, 2010, Parker et al., 2011).

In addition to directly associated disorders, morphological changes have had the unintended consequence of affecting natural forms of communication for dogs, such as the stiffness of the bulldog tail (Bradshaw, 2012). Brachycephaly may limit the animal's ability to express their *telos* or 'dogginess' as it can restrict the ability to exert oneself (Fawcett et al., 2019: 14). I would suggest this would also be an issue for cats, for example, due to cats using their ears as a form of communication (Bradshaw, 1992), the Scottish Fold's folded ears may be problematic for communicating with others.

The Scottish Fold cat provides an example of conformation demands that are detrimental to wider health, where a mutation affecting the pinna cartilage causes the ears to fold forward (Hubler et al., 2004; Gandolfi et al., 2016). This mutation is caused by the condition osteochondrodysplasia which also causes severe

skeletal abnormalities in other parts of the body (Malik et al., 2009; UFAW, 2011). Evidence suggests Scottish Fold cats are at higher risk of experiencing severe arthritis (Malik et al., 2009). Scottish Fold cats were first recognised as a breed by the GCCF in 1966 in the UK, but were removed from the list in 1974 due to these deformities (Malik et al., 1999). Despite this decision by the GCCF, the breed is still recognised by TICA which runs shows in the UK and there are a small number of people breeding Scottish Folds (TICA, n.d(c)).

Other affected breeds include the Sphynx cat that has been bred to be hairless and resultantly is at risk from sun damage, sensitivity to cold, increased risk of skin damage, heightened risk of yeast infections, and ear issues due to having no fur to protect from debris (ICC, 2017c; Milne, 2018a). Additionally, cats have evolved with barbed tongues to assist with grooming, raising questions of possible discomfort for the Sphynx, which has to groom bare skin (Halls, 2008). International Cat Care, a feline welfare organisation, claim that 'for a cat, a coat is essential. We should not be breeding hairless cats' (2017c: n.p). Another breed, the Devon Rex, is 80% more likely to suffer from malassezia yeast that causes skin disease (Turner, 2010). Despite limited research to date, large size is also believed to be a factor in an increased risk of hip dysplasia within some of the larger cat breeds such as Maine Coons (Keller et al., 1999; Loder and Todhunter, 2018; Turner, 2010). According to records held by the Orthopaedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) on the hip dysplasia registry, 99.1% of cats were Maine Coons (Loder and Todhunter, 2018: 306). However, despite the recorded higher prevalence of hip dysplasia in the pedigree cat population (12% rather than 6% in non-pedigree), the connection between genetics and the condition have not been properly established (Grierson, 2012).

Non-conformation related disorders are also affecting pedigree animals, with some breeds suffering more adversely than others. These are disorders that are not directly related to body shape, such as inherited diseases. These disorders have arisen accidentally as a result of poor breeding practices, with 300 out of 400 inherited disorders for dogs arising as mutations and not linked directly to breeding standards (Summers et al., 2010). Genetic disorders can include metabolic defects, neurological and sensory, immune system, blood disorders, and congenital defects (Summers et al., 2010: 39). Additionally, some dog breeds have been identified as having increased susceptibility to developing cancer, such as the Golden Retriever, which is at heightened risk of mast cell tumour, lymphoma, and hemangiosarcoma (Dobson, 2012). Inheritable diseases have become a growing issue for pedigree dogs due to a small founding population, inbreeding, and the popular-sire effect resulting in a detrimental reduction of the gene pool (Leroy and Rognon, 2012). However, not all breeds are at a heightened risk of developing particular diseases compared with the non-breed population (Oberbauer et al., 2015). Additionally, there is evidence to suggest behavioural characteristics can also be inadvertently inherited, including an increased predisposition to aggression within Cocker Spaniels (CAWC, 2007; Turner, 2010). Svartberg's (2006) study of behavioural differences between dog breeds in Sweden concluded breeders need to be aware of the inheritance of behavioural traits as domestication is an ongoing process. However, inheritable traits are typically very complex which makes them difficult to trace (Wood et al., 2004).

Cat breeds are affected by over 200 recognised hereditary diseases (Leroy et al., 2014; Menotti-Raymond et al., 2008). In the UK, Australia and New Zealand, the Burmese cat is at heightened risk of developing diabetes due to problems with

insulin secretion (McCann et al., 2007). Several other breeds, including the Abyssinian, Somali, and Persian, have a genetic predisposition to suffer from degeneration of the retina, and Persians and Exotic Shorthairs are at risk from polycystic kidney disease (Turner, 2010). Levels of inbreeding are variable between cat breeds and cannot be predicted based on popularity and age of the breed, but instead are affected mostly as a result of breed management practices (Kurushima et al., 2013). In terms of behavioural traits, Siamese have been found to be more likely to suffer from anxiety conditions and demonstrate behaviours such as pica, which is the tendency to chew material excessively (Bradshaw et al., 1997; Turner, 2010).

Chapter Summary

The domestication process is complex, messy, and defies satisfactory definition. It has emerged through human and other-than-human animal 'cross-species entanglements', but it has become increasingly asymmetrical (Pearson, 2017: 244). Discussion of this process is valuable for exploring how human relationships with companion animals develop over time and how humans have become increasingly involved in the manipulation of animal bodies. The cat provides an unusual example of the domestication relationship. Unlike the domestic dog, cats have not experienced quite the same level of genetic manipulation through deliberate selective breeding. Most selective breeding has only occurred within the last 150 years and influences a relatively small proportion of cats directly. The disputed (semi) domesticated status of cats implies that they have maintained a level of autonomy in relation to humans. The selective breeding practices that have created pedigree cat breeds, however, provide clear evidence of human determination, and also show the negative impacts of human

overdetermination.

This chapter has highlighted that there is a long history of co-becoming between feline and human. Cats have a heterogeneous history that has developed into the multifarious positions and conceptualisations of the domestic cat today. Cats are what Haraway (2003a; 2008b) terms 'companion species', '*a part* of us through thousands of years of coexisting and coevolving, but also *apart* from us' in their significant otherness (Dempsey, 2010: 1140).

The development of the animal fancy and the celebration of breeds has continued unabated since the first companion dog shows were held in the UK in the 1860s. The manipulation of animal bodies through selective breeding continues to have substantial consequences for the animals involved. Of particular pertinence to the cat fancy, there is growing awareness that selective breeding is having negative consequences on feline well-being.

Chapter Three – On the Catwalk: Champion Cats and The Show Experience

Leisure is a multispecies phenomenon (Dashper, 2019: 135). Yet other-than-human animal-based leisure activities have been largely neglected within research, and this is particularly the case for less mainstream avocations involving species other than dogs or horses (Carr, 2015).

In this chapter, I will explore the exhibition of cats in a competition format by outlining the cat show experience principally through the eyes of a visitor, a steward, and as an exhibitor, all positions I have both embodied and observed. I will detail the cat show structure before looking at the judging process and the aesthetic evaluation of feline bodies. Through a 'praxis of attentiveness' and openness to others (Warkentin, 2010), I also wish to focus neglected attention on the subjective experiences of the feline individuals without whom the cat fancy would not exist. Of course, it is impossible for me as a human to fully appreciate the experience and subjectivity of a cat at a show, for 'we do not know what animals think' (Räsänen and Syrjämaa, 2017: 19). Taking Nagel's (1974) argument on bats, it might be reasoned that I can only imagine what it is like for me to behave as a cat rather than what it is like to be a cat. However, I believe we can and should make 'educated guesses' about animal subjectivity as without this 'animals disappear from view' (Fudge, 2013: 60). Gruen (2015: 24) refers to 'inevitable anthropocentrism' whereby we are restricted to a human position, but she states that we can use empathy in an attempt to see things from the animal's perspective. This involves a recognition that the biology of other species prioritises the senses differently to us, as well as remembering that other animals have a form of communication which is 'fundamentally centred beyond the realms

of the linguistic' (Brown and Banks, 2014: 96). Warkentin contends that we can 'with careful attention, understand some basic qualities of gestures and behaviours to the extent that attentiveness to nonverbal communication can inform an ethical response, particularly in moments of direct human-animal interaction' (2010: 109). With this understanding in mind, I will focus on the observations of the cats in the show setting. First though, I will explain the process of a typical cat show.

Show Day

Cat shows¹⁴ are held almost every weekend across the UK at sports halls and community centres, usually on the periphery of major towns. The halls are often large, open spaces, too cold in winter and too warm in summer, and bathed in a similar artificial bright light. The show layout is generally consistent across the shows. Other than the colour of rosettes, which varies according to the club running the show, they look much the same. One visually notices row upon row of metal cages, known as pens, temporarily housing the cats for the day and offering a panoptic view of those cats. Around the edge of the hall are tables selling cat-related wares and clothing, and products such as litter, food, and toys. There is usually a raffle and people wandering around the room selling tickets. People amble about amongst the rows of pens, conversing with others, gazing at the cats. The predominant sounds are human voices with the occasional feline vocalisation and a background hum of sports hall ventilation systems. The smell is non-descript to the human nose unless you wander by a rubbish bin and experience a waft of used litter. At the end of the hall there is a row of decorated

¹⁴ Much of the following account will focus on the GCCF. It is currently the most popular show organisation in the UK and is the umbrella organisation for approximately 130 shows per year (GCCF, 2017a). However, I will also incorporate information from the other organisations where it adds a discrete perspective.

pens with large rosettes waiting for the 'Best in Show' judging ceremony at the end of the day. Competitions organised under the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) run for one day, most often on Saturdays, while The International Cat Association (TICA), Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) and Fédération Internationale Féline (FIFe) shows typically run across the whole weekend. In addition to the full day at the exhibition, many competitors travel hundreds of miles to reach the shows, with overnight stays in cat-accommodating hotels commonplace.

Prior to each show there are preparations that need to be undertaken by exhibitors. As anticipatory groundwork for showing in general, it is seen as advantageous to familiarise the cat with certain aspects of showing as early as possible to limit stress and to 'create' show cats. These preparations include bathing, grooming, habituating the cat to being in a pen environment and travelling long distances by car. It can also involve desensitising kittens to loud sounds, with some people using items such as vacuum cleaners in close proximity to accustom the cats to noise.

As direct preparation for each show, cats need to be made 'presentable'. Sienna, a retired teacher whom I met at a show near London, stated, "the journey starts a couple of days before the show ... making sure that you've got the bathing and the grooming [completed]." The time investment required can vary, especially according to the breed of cat being shown. Longhaired cats require a level of grooming that generally exceeds shorthairs. During a conversation with Sabrina, whom I met while we were both stewarding, she told me that she spends a minimum of five hours grooming her Maine Coon before a show and Victoria, a Persian breeder, estimated that it takes at least ten hours to prepare her Persians. This 'beautification' is often done in a way that accentuates certain key

morphological features (Grasseni, 2004: 50). As well as washing and brushing the cats, the fur may also be cut. According to Victoria when preparing Persians “you just take [trim] a little bit of the cheek fur and you just shorten it very slightly, it’s more the extra tufty bits ... so it gives them almost a smiling look”. Additionally, all cats are required to be flea treated, have their ears and eyes cleaned and claws clipped in advance of each show. Cats are regularly bathed a few days beforehand and products such as talcum powder are often used to try to remove grease from the fur. Shampoos, conditioners, and waxes are regularly used throughout the coat. Products developed for non-grooming related purposes, such as washing up liquid, are also applied in certain circumstances, for instance to remove grease from the male cat’s fur. This grease can build up in a condition known as ‘stud tail’. Persian cats often suffer from chronic epiphora (tearing of the eyes) due to their brachycephalic head shape, and this can stain the fur around their eyes. Exhibitors treat this staining as part of their ongoing grooming procedures with many recommending washing cats’ eyes daily. Interestingly, Plitman et al. (2019) note in their research that many brachycephalic cat guardians referred to epiphora as a maintenance issue rather than seeing it as related to health. There are no restrictions on what type of products can be used, as long as there is no evidence of them at the show.

Berry (2008) suggests some people go to the extremes of surgically altering their animals to make them look more aesthetically pleasing or to correct ‘faults’. Surgical modifications for non-health related purposes are generally frowned upon and exhibitors at GCCF shows are expected to sign a declaration when applying to the show that states their cats have not endured any surgery to correct ‘faults’ (GCCF, 2009). However, this rule would be difficult to observe and enforce, and there was no discussion of such practices throughout the fieldwork.

Instead participants told me that cats that have 'faults' are neutered and shown as 'Household Pets' rather than in the pedigree class, or they are not shown at all.

Show day starts early for both human and feline competitors with 'vetting in' usually beginning around 8.00am in advance of the morning's judging which starts at 10am. On arrival at the show centre, the cats are approved for admission to the show by a qualified veterinarian. There are usually a handful of vets available behind temporarily set-up tables outside of the show hall and the humans and their cats form an orderly queue to be admitted. As a form of surveillance of feline bodies and care practices, cats are checked for a range of infectious and contagious diseases. Exhibitors are required to provide certification evidence of vaccination for feline calicivirus (FCV), feline herpesvirus (FHV-1), and feline infectious enteritis (FIE). Vets also check for symptoms of ill health including runny noses, watery eyes and ulcers, as well as external parasites such as fleas, ticks, ear mites, and skin lesions. Cats who do not pass the assessment are refused entry to the show. Situations that unnaturally bring large numbers of individual cats together provide an opportunity for these diseases and parasites to spread within the group, as well as to other individuals these cats come into contact with outside of these situations. A cat could potentially contract a disease or illness which they can later pass on to other cats within the household. The GCCF therefore advises that following a show, cats are kept separate from other cats within the household to prevent the risk of infection: 'it is wise not to allow all your cats to mix with the show cat for a few days until any danger of infection is past, if this is possible without upsetting the cat' (2017b: n.p). However, the feasibility of maintaining separation within multi-cat households without purpose-built pens is low and the social implications for

bonded felines could be detrimental. Furthermore, as noted by Stull et al. (2016) there is more at play in the risk of disease transmission than simply proximity to an infected cat. Individual differences including age, health, diet, and preventative care play a part, as do population-level factors including herd immunity and disinfection procedures, in addition to environmental factors such as disease exposure levels (Stull et al., 2016).

Before they are admitted to a show, cats are also checked to make sure they are not showing any obvious signs of pregnancy or nursing. Finally, cats are inspected for any mutations or 'faults' not accepted at shows including folded ears, polydactyl cats, and curly tails (GCCF, n.d(a)). 'Faults' include male cats who have cryptorchidism (retained testicle(s)) or monorchidism (only one testicle), implying that there is certain value attached to the reproductive capabilities of the show cats. This vetting process works to shape cats in line with normative expectations of ideal felines and could be seen as a form of ableism by discriminating against those who do not conform (see Bunyak, 2019). At least one vet, known as the duty vet, is required to stay at the show until around 1pm, but it is generally expected that the vet will remain on site for the entirety of the show in case of any health concerns. The veterinarians are all paid for their time and their travel expenses are covered.

Once the cats have cleared their health check, competitors are allowed to enter the show hall to find and set up their pens. Each cat receives a number which corresponds to a pen in the hall. Each pen is typically two feet square and acts as the cat's temporary home for the course of the show, averaging between six to eight hours. The pens are barred (see figure 1. for an image of show pens) and are reminiscent of old-style zoo exhibits that prioritised full visibility of the animal for visitors (Franklin, 1999). The cats are presented in their respective breed

sections which include Persians, Semi-Longhair, British, Foreign, Burmese, Oriental, Siamese, and Household Pet. This categorisation according to breed alludes to the perceived importance of classification and is common practice within sites of human-animal interaction, such as zoos where animals are grouped by taxonomic distinctions (Anderson, 1995; Braverman, 2010; 2012; Franklin, 1999). The development of taxonomies can be seen as representing a ‘sweeping human claim to intellectual mastery of the natural world’ (Ritvo, 1987: 12). As well as breed, cats are also labelled with a further system of letters, known as a GEMS code, which categorises the cat according to their breed, coat colour and pattern. These codes act as an identification and description tool used for administrative purposes and by the judges to distinguish what the cat should look like and to check that the cats match their entry details. These codes and the sex of the cat are the only details that judges receive in an attempt to ensure anonymity.



Figure 1: Typical show hall and pen layout (Photo credit: Author, 2018)

At most GCCF shows, cages must have no pen decorations. Cats are put into their pens by their guardian and can be given some food, but this has to be removed before judging commences. Cats must be left with a white litter tray, plain white blanket, and a water bowl with the aim of keeping cages anonymous. In contrast, other show organisations encourage displays and decorations within each pen. The GCCF's season finale, the Supreme, also allows and encourages pen decorations. However, this show operates differently to typical GCCF shows following a similar format to the other organisations as judging is conducted in central locations with the cats taken to the judges to be evaluated rather than being assessed at the pens. Once pens are set up, usually by around 10am, all human competitors must leave the show hall to allow for the 'Open Class' judging to take place. At this stage, the judges and their stewards enter the hall to begin judging until around 12-1pm when exhibitors may return.

The period during which exhibitors are away from their cats is when the majority of socialisation between human competitors occurs, usually in the venue café. As well as socialising, some people use the time to go shopping, visit nearby friends, or sleep in their cars. It has often been noted that dogs can act as catalysts for social interaction with others (Graham and Glover, 2013; Irvine, 2013; McNicholas and Collis, 2000; Wells, 2004) and it appears that a shared interest in cats also facilitates conversation and friendships. A large number of participants in my research referred to the social aspect as a major motivation for their activity and a key reason for their enjoyment of the show. Social interaction has also been found to be important for those engaged with dog agility competitions in the United States (Hultsman, 2012). Laura, whom I met at a small Asian breed show, shared that she had been widowed for twenty years and that partaking in the cat fancy provided her with friendships and social activity that

she would not otherwise have. This was similar for Kim, a breeder of Maine Coons who has been exhibiting for over ten years, who told me, “I started showing when my husband was in the middle of his Masters and all our friends were having babies so I didn’t have much of a social life ... Most of my close friends these days are in the cat world”. Further social occasions also surround the show and there are often dinner events and ‘after-parties’. As Mia explained, “we make it a very social event with a show picnic, wine and evening dinner”. Additionally, partly due to the need for feline-friendly accommodation, it is common for participants to stay at the same hotels leading to social encounters outside of the show environment. As well as positive social interactions, conflict is also a feature of the showing world. I will return to the varied social relations within the cat fancy in more depth in chapter six.

Once the main ‘Open Class’ judging has finished at around 1pm, the show hall is opened to the general public until the end of the day at around 5pm. Each public visitor is expected to pay a few pounds, usually less than five, as an entry fee. This payment acts as a small revenue generator for the club organisers and goes back to supporting the show running costs. On entry back to the hall, exhibitors go to their pens to see what rosettes they have been awarded. The cats have to remain in their pens until the show has finished but many exhibitors spend time interacting with their cats and holding them beside their pens. The entry of the public provides an opportunity for breeders to canvas business and promote their breed. Mary, who has now retired from breeding Devon Rex cats, stated, “the rosettes attract the public, so if anyone is contemplating buying a kitten, then networking takes place and we have business cards made to hand out”.

During this period, visitors are able to ‘gaze’ upon each of the cats in their pens and talk to breeders and exhibitors about their cats. Many visitors also stop to

take photos using their mobile phones. Generally, the public spectate from a distance. In this respect, the show acts as a form of visual consumption, with a commercial and voyeuristic angle. The shows are a form of entertainment and spectacle, similar to other animal-based leisure productions such as aquariums and zoos (Acampora, 2005; Beardsworth and Bryman, 2001; Berger, 1980; Desmond, 2001; Milstein, 2009) or rodeos (Peñaloza, 2001). Building on Urry's (1990) concept of the 'tourist gaze', this visual consumption of other-than-human animals has been referred to as the 'zoological gaze' (Franklin, 1999). However, such anthropocentric looking, as will become apparent, is not as one-dimensional as it may first appear. The cats are also agents and 'gaze' back and upon each other (White, 2013).

Due to fears of spreading infectious diseases between the cats, certain biosecurity decisions are also made and enforced by individual exhibitors. Most commonly participants display laminated cards on the front of pens with requests such as, 'please do not touch me! Hugs and squeezes spread diseases'. On occasions where exhibitors have introduced me to their cats, I have been asked to use anti-bacterial gel before touching them. Despite such measures, transgressions through physical contact can and do occur, as I observed it is very possible for people to interact directly with the cats if they decide to do so. Breaches of biosecurity did not often occur through people opening the pen door and picking up the cats but instead through interacting and communicating with them through the pen bars. White (2013) describes a similar process within a shelter environment where shelter policies limit the physical contact between cats and potential adopters due to disease concerns. People nonetheless communicate verbally and physically with the cats through the cages. This desire to interact with and touch the cats is similar to the 'touching encounters' described

by Lorimer (2015: 150) where there is a demand for emotional encounters with captive beings, often in zoos and other institutions. Despite the biosecurity measures at shows and attempts to limit contact, cats are also regularly handled by friends and other members of the fancy, raising questions over whether the use of signs really stems purely from concern over disease or from a desire for control over who has access to the cats.

Wandering from pen to pen, one notices the array of different physical and emotional reactions from the cats to being in the show environment. Some are visibly stressed with ears flat and huddled in a corner, others are fighting for attention from the public by rolling on their backs and meowing, or pawing at the bars and seeking escape, while still others are hidden under their blankets, sham sleeping (pretending to sleep) (Atkinson, 2018), or sitting motionless, displaying possible signs of inhibition or learned helplessness (see Carney and Gourkow, 2016; Moody et al., 2018; Sundahl et al., 2016). One cat, Oscar, who I on several occasions helped to exhibit, would often hide under his blanket when not being judged and would only be enticed to come out for food before returning to his blanket again.

Several theorists have argued that the 'umwelt' or lifeworld of an organism is influenced by its physical characteristics, so that different species have distinctive experiences of the same environment (Huff and Haefner, 2012; von Uexküll, 2010; Warkentin, 2009). However, the concept of umwelt is not without issue. It is deterministic and depicts other species lifeworlds as static, denying the 'potentialities of emergent ways of life within and across species lines' (Lorimer, 2015; Schroer, 2019: 3). A being's umwelt will also vary individually, be affected by their interaction with and perception of the environment and others. Schroer refers to an underutilised aspect of von Uexküll's writing, that of the music

metaphor, that 'exposes subjects and their corresponding worlds not so much as pre-established entities that interact with each other, but rather as melodies in polyphonic musical compositions' (2019: 3). Taking this approach to the idea of umwelt emphasises the relational co-becoming of beings.

Due to the feline umwelt and cats' sensory abilities, the show environment will be particularly challenging for many cats taking part. Owing to their territorial nature, cats place importance upon familiar localities, making travel, as well as new and unpredictable environments, stress-inducing (Atkinson, 2018; Stella and Croney, 2019). Also, unfamiliar people and other cats within their personal space can also cause stress (Stella and Croney, 2019). While it could be argued some form of dog sport activity is an outlet 'for a bored urban dog's energy' (Nottle and Young, 2019; Włodarczyk, 2016: 67), the same motivation is unlikely to feature for cats and the unfamiliarity of each show setting will likely cause some cats stress. Each show is in a different location presenting novel environments for the cats. Nadine who is in her 40s and has six companion cats, told me about one of her cats' reaction to shows:

I'm selective with which shows I take him to because he's a sensitive boy and we're getting to learn now which venues he's happy at and what the venues look like. A lot of the venues are held at sports halls and if there's windows or balconies, he doesn't like that ... And he's quite sensitive to noise as well.

As part of the wider show experience, human and feline participants regularly travel hundreds of miles, even internationally, to attend shows with the cats confined to travel crates. Additionally, competitors often stay overnight in hotels, with any cats who are likely to spray restricted to the bathrooms to prevent incurring cleaning charges. There have been studies conducted on the stress experienced by cats and related welfare issues with confinement at shelters, vet

clinics and laboratories (Kry and Casey, 2007; Mariti et al., 2016; Stella and Croney, 2019), but little attention has been paid to cat shows.

Attempts are made at the shows to prevent visual interaction between cats located in pens next to one another as the pens have plastic walls or fabric drapes on the side and back. However, this intervention is based on ocularcentrism and cats are much more reliant than humans on the olfactory system for investigating novel objects and communicating with others (Bradshaw et al., 2012). This fact is well known in relation to dogs but less so with cats. At a non-GCCF show I visited near London, judging pens were set up in an 'L' shape. This arrangement meant the cats in the pens located at the corner of the 'L' were facing directly towards each other. As the cats were being put into the pens by their guardian ready for judging to commence there was an extremely loud vocalisation of hissing and yowling made by a male cat who was clearly upset about being so physically close to another cat. I later spoke to the guardian of the cat, who explained partly in jest, that this cat "didn't like longhaired cats". In addition to the range of different sights and smells encountered in the show hall, the regular use of antibacterial spray to control disease will remove the cat's own scent from the environment, despite scenting territory being an important way for cats to establish familiarity (Trevorrow, 2013). Cats also have sensitive hearing for prey detection purposes which may make certain noises more noticeable to them than for humans (Atkinson, 2018). Exhibitors have noted that their cats react negatively to the sound of applause or tanooy systems at shows.

Many exhibitors spend time interacting with their cats and holding them beside their pens and the bond between some of them is evident. The cats may meow and come to the front of their pen to greet the familiar face, while the human may

speaking gently to the cat and congratulate them on their win from the morning's judging. The cat is often rewarded with some attention and a plate of special food or a new toy purchased from one of the show vendors before the human returns to his or her socialising with other human competitors. Some do choose, however, to set up foldable chairs in front of their cat's pen and spend the afternoon with their cats, often accompanied by grooming and play using feather toys. This decision is likely in part due to a fear of sabotage and cruelty towards their cats by jealous competitors. I was introduced to Alyssa, who exhibits Maine Coons, by one of my other participants. She told me that people stay with their cats because "you need to make sure they're safe ... because some people have had things put in pens ... if you look at shows a lot of people will put the water and the food bowls at [the] back" to prevent poisoning. Pamela, a breeder of Exotic Longhairs, also made this point: "if you're smart you stand guard over your cat to make sure nobody does anything foul to it. Instances of cats being harmed are rare, but it happens, so I preferred not to take the chance". I will return to the tales of sabotage in chapter six. I believe, though, that some people also stay with their cats because they want to spend time with them. Alyssa explained, "I like to spend my time at the show with my cat because I don't want him to be sat there on his own". Furthermore, Hayley told me that she prefers to exhibit with a different show organisation to GCCF where she can remain with her cats during judging, because, "I personally like to be with my cats all day ... the point is I'm showing my cats, and if I was showing dogs I'd be with them all day, when I showed my horses I was with them all day". However, these comments were in the minority and in contrast to what has been found for dog sports (e.g. Hultsman, 2012), the opportunity for exhibitors to bond with their cats or a reference to the cat's enjoyment generally did not feature as a motivator for participation in the

activity. Only one participant in my research, Kylie, referred to their cat's enjoyment as justification for the activity. I met Kylie at a large show where she was exhibiting one of her cats and we later spoke by telephone, she told me:

I would not take my cat unless he enjoyed it. You can tell if a cat enjoys it. I do see some who are sitting in their boxes shaking and I think well you shouldn't have brought that ... But mine actually loves a day out. If I get ... the carrier, he jumps in it a meter high off the ground ... And if I'm there at the show, I just sit down in the chair and he's on my lap for hours or just sits on my shoulders and goes to sleep. So, he is so relaxed and laid back at the show. He loves it. The day that he doesn't want to get into his box or doesn't want to go into the car ... I know that's the day I stop showing him.

When asked why they show, the majority of my interviewees referred to their own motivations, rather than making any reference to their cat's experience. Reasons given usually related to the human social interactions or learning more about what judges are looking for. Jessica, who has been breeding Norwegian Forest Cats for around eight years, explained that she exhibits, "to know that you're keeping up, that your cats still conform to the standard. And it's sociable. It's people. It's nice to see what other people are breeding." The role of shows as both a social occasion and opportunity to learn was supported by Yvonne who used to show dogs before breeding cats. She told me, "it's fun and you get ... to compare your cat with other people's cats. See what else is out there if you will. And you also meet contacts and meet other people". Furthermore, Denise referred to the cat fancy as a form of escapism from her career in information technology: "it's a total contrast from my work which helps me switch off and de-stress".

The show culminates with the 'Best in Show' awards at around 3.30 to 4pm. There is always a feeling of anticipation leading up to the final session and as the loudspeaker announces the beginning of the ceremony people make their way towards the 'Best in Show' pens (see figure 2 for an image of the 'Best in Show' pens). A crowd will gather around to watch the final judging take place. Each

show runs the 'Best in Show' slightly differently, but in general a single judge or multiple judges will assess each of the cats that have won 'Best of Variety' for Household Pet, Persian, Semi-Longhair, British, Foreign, Burmese, Oriental and Siamese. A kitten (under 9 months), an adult neuter, and an 'entire' (non-neutered) adult of each breed all contend for 'Best of Variety'. The winner of 'Best of Variety', either a kitten, neuter or entire from each judging category, is brought forward to the pens to compete for 'Best in Show'. The 'Household Pet' category is usually split into 'Pedigree Pet' and 'Non-Pedigree', meaning a winner will be picked between these two for 'Best Household Pet'.



Figure 2: Best in Show (Photo credit: Author, 2017)

The judge will handle each of the cats in front of the crowd and perform the ritualised checks of key aesthetic features that I will discuss below. They will usually narrow down their choice to three cats before selecting their winner for overall 'Best in Show'. The audience will applaud, and the exhibitors of the winning cat will often shout with joy and receive congratulations from others nearby. As soon as the 'Best in Show' has been announced, everyone begins to

dissipate. Exhibitors hurry back to their pens to pack up and wait for the show manager to declare the show closed before they can head home or to their hotel, while any remaining visitors make their way to the exit and the show hall quickly empties.

Evaluating Feline Bodies

Judging practices can vary significantly according to the organisation and there are differences between the evaluation of pedigree compared with non-pedigree cats. This account will provide an overview of GCCF shows as it was in this type of show that I was provided with the opportunity to gain an embodied experience of the judging process by stewarding and assisting the judges. First hand exposure to the process of judging, as well as experiencing interaction with the cats, offered insights which could not be obtained from attending the show as a visitor. Taking the role of 'steward' also provided a noticeable difference in access. Firstly, I was granted admittance to the 'Judge's Room', a space restricted to judges, stewards, and show organisers. It also meant I could be in the show hall during the morning session when exhibitors and visitors are denied admission. As well as gaining access to different areas, I also perceived that I was treated differently by members of the cat fancy. At the numerous shows I had attended as a visitor, I had to work much harder to build rapport with nearly all conversations initiated by me. However, while embodying the position of a steward, new contacts would directly open conversation with me. I was seen as a member of the 'inner circle', the white coat I was required to wear acting as a 'passport' to restricted areas (Rice, 2013: 83). As noted by Walsh impression management is critical for building relationships in the field, including wearing appropriate dress for the setting, as well as 'the cultivation of demeanour, speech

and habits that fit' (2006: 233). I also noticed it became easier to engage with members of the cat fancy once I had shown myself as someone willing to participate. My involvement as a steward also no doubt helped to identify me to interlocutors as someone with deep interest in their practices, as well as someone they could trust (Okely, 2007).

Each judge works with a steward for the entirety of the judging segment of the show day. Stewards are typically organised in advance by the judge or the show managers. Stewards are accountable for ensuring the judge's paperwork is completed and submitted correctly, including the judge's expense claims for travel and accommodation and all documents related to the judging process. The main role of the steward is to accompany the judge throughout the hall while they assess the cats on their 'books'. Stewards are responsible for removing the cats from their pens and 'presenting' them to the judge.

I was apprehensive about handling the cats. During my work at a cat rehoming shelter I had become confident in interacting with stressed cats. On their arrival at the shelter I would check them for signs of ill health before washing them in a sink with shampoo and placing them into their temporary 'quarantine' housing where they would remain for a few days until ready for rehoming. I would often have to handle frightened cats and those not used to regular human contact and as such many of the cats I encountered were less than happy with our interaction. In the show hall environment, I felt as if my interaction with the cats was being closely monitored and as though the way I handled them would affect my integration into the group (see Cassidy, 2002b; Brown, 2016). I was very aware that I did not want to show any anxiety to my human participants or to the cats. In general, the cats I interacted with were reasonably amenable, except one who I decided not to pick up because as soon as I opened the pen door he began to

hiss at me and covered away to the back of the pen. If the decision had been down to me, I would have left him in his pen, but instead another steward intervened. The cat's ears were flat to his head as she pulled him from his pen and he was clearly stressed (see Moody et al., 2018). Despite this, he tolerated being quickly evaluated by the judge before being returned to his pen. By 'tolerated' I mean that he did not bite or scratch the judge but he was clearly not happy with the interaction.



Figure 3: Judging trolley (Photo credit: Author, 2018)

Typically, the stewards place the cat on a judging trolley and hold them in place for the judge to check them over and make their assessment (see figure 3 for an image of the judging trolley and a kitten being evaluated). The judging trolley is on wheels and is pushed from pen to pen. Unlike dog shows where the dogs are expected to perform by running around the ring with their guardian or handler at their side, the cats are taken from their cage and handled by the judge before being returned to their pen. Some judges will use wand toys, which are usually

colourful feathers attached to a long stick, to wave in front of the cat to induce a playful reaction. The judge will check certain features for 'faults', such as the mouth and tail. 'Faults' can be caused by injury or genetics. The judge will then run their hands over the cat, look at their coats, and lengthen their tails. If there are any concerns, the judge may ask a steward to find the duty vet to check the 'fault'. This occurred twice during my observations. On one occasion, the vet agreed the cat should be withdrawn from the competition due to an overshot bite (the upper jaw was longer than the lower) and the second time the vet thought the tail kink was insufficient to warrant withholding the cat. Judges may also request the opinion of a more senior judge or someone who has more experience of a particular breed. Through this process the judges seek support from another authority.

Most of the judge-cat interactions are conducted quickly and the cat is returned to her pen without incident. However, there are occasions where the judge may remain with an individual longer. One time this occurred when we passed the pen of a cat who was not listed on our books for that day. The judge immediately spotted the cat, she reached into the pen to take her out for a cuddle and introduce her to me. The cat was comfortable being handled and appeared to enjoy the attention. She purred and demonstrated affiliative behaviours by head bunting the judge. However, observing this interaction suggested the level of anonymity promoted by the procedures of these exhibitions is primarily one of appearance or tradition. In this case the judge had clearly interacted with this cat previously and remembered who she was. I will return to the role of anonymity within judging shortly.

At other shows, I witnessed judges speaking to the cats on their judging tables and asking them questions, such as, "aren't you lovely?" and "you're three

months old, right?” According to Irvine and Cilia this process of speaking with and for animals provides evidence that guardians see companion animals as ‘subjective beings with interests and reciprocal roles in the interaction’ (2017: 4). This kind of speech has also been noted in veterinary clinics with guardians speaking on behalf of their companion animals and their symptoms (Arluke and Sanders, 1996; Sanders, 2003). It was also common for judges to respond to cats verbally complaining by saying, “I know”. A similar response has been noted for vets reacting to distress calls from animals during examinations as a way of indicating their understanding of the animal’s experience and building relationships with the animal’s human guardians (MacMartin et al., 2014). However, although indicating fondness and recognition of the cats as subjects, this type of communication can also be seen as insincere or patronising. The cats may have been verbally expressing their complaint, yet the judges, showing recognition of this and speaking on the cat’s behalf, continued with their evaluations nonetheless.

I also observed some negative interactions during the judging process. During a stewarding occasion, I heard a cat yowl at the top of her voice and the slamming of a metal pen door. All of the judges and stewards in the room stopped what they were doing and looked in the direction of the noise. I took from this reaction of the other judges that this was not a usual occurrence. The steward had received a scratch from the cat during the process. The rest of the morning was filled with gossip surrounding this encounter and both the judge and steward involved were criticised behind their backs for their style and speed of handling the cats. Later in the day I went to see the cat in question and she was hiding. According to her guardian she was distressed for the rest of the show and she also had a mark on her face, possibly from hitting her head while being put back

into the cage at speed. Generally after a biting and scratching episode a cat will be given a biting certificate and disqualified from the show. Despite demonstrating clear discontent, the cat has to remain at the show for the rest of the day, often with a handwritten note on the pen to warn others of the possibility of being bitten. If another incident occurs at a future show, the cat will be disqualified from showing again in the future.

As one veterinarian, Jean, explained to me:

Cat behaviour is really difficult to understand and it's really misunderstood by a lot of cat lovers. And because they withdraw and freeze sometimes when they're in situations that are out of their control, I think there's probably thousands of cat breeders and showers who have got cats who are bloody terrified, and they think that they're just sitting there chilled.

Learned helplessness can result from the 'inability to reduce activation of negative emotion(s) through effective coping strategies' and it 'may result in behaviour that looks very much like freezing' (Ellis, 2018: 449). People often misread this freezing behaviour as positive compliance. This passive compliance has been similarly described by Sands (2019) in relation to greyhounds. Additionally, certain behaviours such as cats pawing at the bars of the pen can be interpreted as the cat wishing to interact with people as they walk by, but instead it could be a result of frustration from being cage-bound and even an attempt to escape (see Carney and Gourkow, 2016; Ellis, 2018). Vocalisations such as meowing and yowling can also be misinterpreted. Instead of being an attempt to gain the attention of nearby humans, these can be a sign of frustration (Ellis, 2018).

There are methods available to attempt to reduce stress for cats, including early handling during key socialisation periods, especially two to seven weeks of age (Lowe and Bradshaw, 2002; Rodan, 2010), petting cats in preferred areas particularly between the ears and eyes in the temporal region (Ellis et al., 2015;

Soennichsen and Chamove, 2002), minimising exposure to other animals including cats and dogs, and low stress handling techniques (Nibblett et al., 2015; Rodan, 2010; Rodan et al., 2011). Show pens could also utilise enrichments that allow for cats to hide. Hiding is a coping strategy used by cats to reduce their arousal (Ellis, 2018). However, it appears minimal attempts are made to try and reduce possible stress levels for cats at shows. The current pen set up with no hiding spaces presents minimal opportunities for the cats to avoid the human gaze, in the process demonstrating human power over the powerless (Milstein, 2009: 32). This anthropocentrism is further established by a preference on the part of some judges against igloos and covered beds as they are perceived as making it more difficult to remove the cat from the pen for judging. Poor handling and restraint are also widely recognised as causing acute stress and fear for cats in veterinary clinics, shelters, and research laboratories (Moody et al., 2018), yet none of the show organisations in the UK require stewards to undertake any training in low stress handling techniques. Becky who regularly stewards at numerous shows in addition to showing her own cats, explained that with stewarding and handling “it’s a learn on the job”, although advice is available through associated websites and the GCCF has a voluntary stewarding training scheme. Erica told me about a negative experience for her cat as a result of inadequate handling:

Milo was handled incorrectly and ... he was hurt, not badly, but enough for him to always remember it ... There are quite a few people that have had experiences with cats being mishandled, some are ok, and some aren't, as in can't be shown again. The stewards learn on the job effectively, but I do think, especially with the large breeds, stewards should be trained beforehand as it can finish a cat's career. Also, all the different breeds are handled differently, so the stewards need to learn very quickly, and a steward needs to be calm and confident as a cat, like most animals, will sense their nerves straight away.

My experience as a cat show steward made me keenly aware of the need for more extensive training for both judges and stewards in how to handle cats so as to optimise their welfare.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an ethnographic account of the cat show experience through a combination of human positions: visitor, exhibitor and steward. Using my knowledge of species-specific behaviour, I have also drawn attention to human-cat relationships and attempted to evoke the feline experience within this 'contact zone' (Haraway, 2008b). The shows act as a central point that bring together multiple actors within the wider cat fancy. They create the opportunity for the public to attempt to integrate within this world by interacting with breeders and their cats and provide the opportunity for breeders to promote their cats to potential buyers. Furthermore, they also represent the expression of the human gaze and human power over other species. The shows raise well-being questions for the cats involved, especially in terms of unnecessary stress. The experiences and subjectivities of the cats were given consideration by some of the participants I spoke with. However, often the cat's perspective was ignored and there were numerous cats demonstrating stress-related behaviours at shows, including hiding, reacting negatively to interaction, and most commonly displaying inhibition.

In general, environmental enrichment and opportunities for cats to express natural behaviours at shows are minimal despite evidence linking environmental complexity, such as hiding spaces and vertical places, with an improvement in feline well-being and stress reduction (Kry and Casey, 2007; Vinke et al., 2014).

As such, there is a failure within showing practices to attempt to engage proactively with the cat's way of being. Much more could be done by exhibitors and the organisations to attempt to respond to the feline umwelt and cat's individual responses to show practices, as well as improving handling techniques and creating environments that minimise stress.

Chapter Four - Learning to Look at Cats: Enskilment, Aesthetics and Feline Agency

This chapter explores how judges learn to look at cats through a process of enskilment. I will outline the criteria that have developed to distinguish ‘good’ examples of the breeds, how this is used by judges to evaluate the cats and how such systems impact upon the perceived value of the cats to cat fanciers. I will argue that aesthetic conformation and the cat’s appearance are critical for a cat to win at shows, yet there are other factors that also influence the judging process, including personal and relational bias, intersubjective relations between judge and cat, and the expression of feline agency, albeit limited and restricted by human power.

Standardisation of Feline Appearance

At shows, pedigree cats are judged against the same breed and sex in what are known as ‘classes’, and each cat is evaluated according to the relevant ‘standard of points’, more commonly known as ‘breed standards’. Judges use this written ‘standard of points’ as a guide, with marks out of 100 allocated to certain key features. The table below in figure 4 provides an example standard of points for a Maine Coon cat.

Head: Including general shape and proportions: shape, size and ear set; shape, size, set and colour of eyes; nose length and profile; cheeks, muzzle and chin	35
Body: Including shape and proportions; size, bone structure, muscularity and condition, height and thickness of legs; shape and size of paws; shape and length of tail	30
Coat: Including length and texture; frontal ruff; ear feathering and tufting; tail furnishings; paw furnishings	20
Colour and pattern	15

Figure 4: Standard of Points for the Maine Coon breed (GCCF, 2018b: 1)

In addition to this scoring method, judges and breeders are also provided with in-depth written descriptions of what an ‘ideal’ cat of that particular breed should

look like (see figure 5 for the description of a Maine Coon). These standardising elements create a sense of objectivity around the differentiation of cats and help to produce an institutionalised ideal specimen shared across actors.

Head	Medium in length, the nasal bridge being equidistant from the ear line and the tip of the nose, with the width being slightly less than the length of the head. Allowance should be made for additional breadth or jowls in mature males. The muzzle should be square with firm chin: chin, upper lip and nose leather should fall in a perpendicular line. Cheeks fairly full, with high cheekbones. Bite level. Nose of uniform width with shallow concave curve at the nasal bridge when viewed in profile, and without a sharp break or stop.
Ears	Large, tall ears, wide at base and tapering to appear pointed at the tip; set high but well apart.
Eyes	Full and round, spaced wide apart with a slightly oblique aperture and set. Shades of green, gold or copper; coat and eye colour may be unrelated. Odd or blue eyes are permissible in white cats.
Body and neck	Body large to medium size, solid and muscular with breadth of chest. Long body with proportionate limbs to create the characteristic rectangular appearance; square rump. Neck moderately long; particularly thick and muscular in mature males.
Legs and paws	Substantial legs with large round paws; toes carried close, five in front, four behind.
Tail	Long, at least the length of the back, wide at the base and tapering towards the tip.
Coat	Waterproof consisting of an undercoat covered by a more substantial glossy topcoat. Fur shorter on the head, neck and shoulders increasing in length down the back, flanks and tail. A fluffy appearance is undesirable. Breeches and belly fur full and shaggy. Frontal ruff beginning at the base of the ears; heavier in males than females. Tail fur long, profuse and flowing; not bushy. Ears feathered and preferably tufted at the tips; the ear feathering should extend beyond the outer edges of the ear. Paws tufted, with long tufts emanating from under the paws, extending backwards to create a snowshoe effect.
Coat colour and pattern	The Maine Coon is recognised in a variety of solid colours (including white in all eye colours); tortoiseshell; tabby colours (classic and mackerel patterns) with or without silver; shaded and smoke colours; bicour and part-colour (e.g. solid/tabby/tortoiseshell/shaded/smoke colour and white).

Figure 5: General type description for the Maine Coon (GCCF, 2018b: 1-2)

Within each judging class, rosettes are awarded for first, second, and third place, with those winning first prize being awarded a 'Challenge' certificate. Once a cat has achieved three 'Challenge' certificates at three different shows decided by three different judges, they will be awarded a 'Champion' title. At this stage, cats are entitled to compete against other 'Champion' holders. Three more wins at this level moves the cat to the next, known as 'Grand Challenge'. This stage is followed by the 'Imperial Grand Challenge' which requires five wins at 'Imperial Grand' level. The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) has recently introduced another class title known as 'Olympian' which is further split into Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels. According to Michael, a member of the GCCF committee, there is a need for shows to keep innovating and producing new levels of the competition to keep people interested. Neutered pedigree cats are eligible for 'Premier' certificates that operate in the same way as 'Challenge'. The distinction between 'entire' and neutered cats having to compete separately underlines the historical focus on breeding cats. As noted by Ritvo in reference to dog shows, 'they were identifying the strain to which the prize-winner belonged as promising breeding material, and they were endorsing a type toward which other breeders should aspire' (1987: 101).

There are also awards for 'Best of Breed' or 'Best of Variety' where all winners of the best of breed compete against one another, culminating in a winner for 'Best in Show'. Kittens can also be shown once over fourteen weeks of age. They are not eligible for titles until nine months old, but kittens are able to win rosettes and the 'Best of Breed' category (Gregory et al., 2014). This involvement of young cats at shows is deemed important to habituate them to the show experience.

There are also 'side classes', in addition to the Open Class, which are typically judged and awarded in the afternoon session once the public have entered the show hall. As with the morning session, the judges and stewards move around the hall visiting each pen for the class that they are judging. As the show hall is now full of exhibitors and visitors, navigating the narrow pen rows with the judging trolley can be a challenge. The side classes include prizes such as best 'kitten from other counties' or 'friendliest neuter or kitten' (ACA, 2017). These were described to me as "just for fun" and while at the show I noticed that as rosettes were being awarded for these classes most people appeared disinterested. It seems significance is associated with the main Open Classes that award titles and can result in progression vertically within the cat fancy.

Once the judge has finished his or her assessment for each cat, he or she will fill in a 'book'. The 'books' have detachable 'slips' which get completed and handed in by the steward to the event organisers. These 'slips' are clipped onto a large board that exhibitors are able to consult to see how their cat has done in the different judging classes (see figure 6 for an image of the boards where the slips are displayed). The slips state where the cats have placed within their class (e.g. first, second, third etc.). Some judges personalise their slips. One judge, Ella, uses stickers to show particular regard to certain cats and she told me, "heart stickers are for those who have really wowed me". Judges may also write additional comments on the slips, such as "lovely class".

Following the show, judges also produce written reports on each of the cats judged in the Open Class with feedback on why the judge made certain decisions and what the judge liked and did not like about the individual cat in question. This feedback is uploaded onto the GCCF website for exhibitors to refer to. Lange

notes that through the judging process and recording of scores the animal is transformed 'from a complex living creature into a commodified, transferable good' (2016: 48). I would agree with this statement in that the cats, and more specifically their breeder, are rewarded for meeting specific criteria as set out by the standard of points and breed descriptions that inform judging decisions. These judging and feedback mechanisms divide the feline body into specific parts, and place value on discrete forms and shapes that contribute to the overall value placed upon that cat by fanciers.

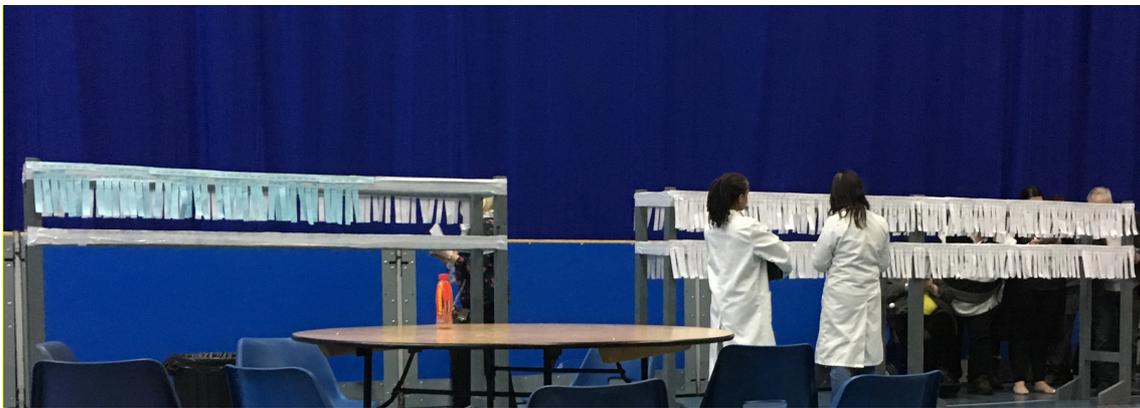


Figure 6: Award Slips on board for display to exhibitors (Photo credit: Author, 2018)

'Just a Moggy'

The majority of cats at shows are classed as pedigree, however, non-pedigree cats, commonly referred to as 'moggies' are shown as 'Non-pedigree Pets'. Pedigree cats that have a 'fault' or those which look like a breed without official papers are referred to as 'Pedigree Pets'. Both 'Non-pedigree Pets' and 'Pedigree Pets' are allowed to compete within the category of 'Household Pets', as long as they are neutered. As already mentioned, 'faults' include physical features that do not meet the standard of points for that breed. For example, returning to the above description for Maine Coons (see figure 5), their eyes are allowed to be 'shades of green, gold or copper ... Odd or blue eyes are permissible in white

cats'. Any non-white Maine Coon cat who has blue eyes, for instance, could only be shown in the 'Household Pets' section as a 'Pedigree Pet'. Instead of attaining 'Challenge' or 'Premier' titles, 'Household Pets' compete for 'Master' titles. Both 'Non-pedigree Pets' and 'Pedigree Pets' compete separately, until they reach the Olympian class where both groups merge to compete against each other. The amalgamation of 'Pedigree Pet' and 'Non-pedigree Pet' in the Olympian class was suggested by Emma to be more difficult for the 'Non-pedigree Pets' suggesting that there is greater value attached to being or looking 'pedigree'. I met Emma at a show in Nottinghamshire and during a conversation she explained:

Little black short-haired Shadow is now in with all the 'Imperial Grand Master' 'Pedigree Pets'. Well, he has won reserve 'Olympian' but he's not really getting anywhere. And I don't expect him to. Because when all is said and done, if I was judge in these and I was presented with two beautiful, prepared, very friendly, perfect cats and one was a white Maine Coon that the only reason it was there is because it's nose isn't the right shape ... and Shadow, well which one are you going to give it to?

The process of attaining titles is very similar as for pedigree cats. However, most significantly, these cats are not judged on a standard of points, but are judged according to 'presentation, condition, temperament and personality' (GCCF, 2017c: n.p) where 'the overall impression should be of a happy cat' (GCCF, n.d(c): 1). As such, this category is perhaps more subjective than the pedigree classes. One of my research participants, Sheila, believed this was problematic as the lack of a breed standard resulted in unpredictable results based purely on the judge's preference that day.

My observations indicated there was a distinct difference between the discourse and attitudes towards non-pedigree cats and those shown as pedigrees. Fox (2009) posits that there is a level of snobbery within the animal fancies towards non-pedigree and often other breeds as well. Most significantly, the 'Household

Pet' sections were usually located on the edges of the show hall and the 'Best in Show' accolades did not attract the same level of attention or prestige. When I remarked on this potential bias to research participants, however, they had mixed reactions. Emma felt in her experience non-pedigree cats actually attracted attention:

Shadow attracts quite a lot of attention. I think probably more from the public than the pedigree breeders. But it's quite unusual to have just a plain black-haired, short-haired cat at a show, so we've had people ... the public who have stopped and said things like, "oh that's the first black cat I've seen today".

In the show hall, a short-haired black cat is unusual and attracts attention but outside of the cat fancy, research has shown black cats take longer to be adopted from shelters and are more likely to be euthanised (Lepper et al., 2002; Delgado et al., 2012). In contrast to Emma, Sienna explained that she had chosen not to revisit a particular show because she had felt, "Household Pets are deemed the sort of peasants of the show world and [we] were shoved right in the corner and it was just, I felt like we were the paupers and we paid exactly the same as the breed entry and I just wasn't impressed with it really".

The use of the word 'peasants' by Sienna and the importance placed upon the pedigree cats at shows, invokes some human-based class systems. Pedigree cats themselves were occasionally referred to as having a certain 'class' status, signifying that they are seen by fanciers to embody and express forms of distinction (Bourdieu, 2010). Becky explicitly used a class idiom when she told me about the strained relations between her pedigree Burmese and her non-pedigree cats, referring to the non-pedigrees as 'peasants' from the 'council estate':

But Burmese are quite strong characters and they were like, "who are these inside?" And we had big jokes because of them being pedigree, we

made the joke that they were turning around saying “these peasants have come off a council estate, get them out of my house”.

Judges of the ‘Household Pet’ category do not need to be trained to make their assessment, representing a further discrepancy in the way that the cat fancy treats pedigree and non-pedigree cats. Ella told me that:

In a lot of cases the people judging the ‘Household Pets’ aren’t what we call ‘proper judges’, they aren’t pedigree judges. They’re quite often long-standing members of clubs who have done a lot for the club and are being honoured by being invited to judge at that show for ‘Household Pets’ because you don’t need to be qualified to judge them.

Kim also believed there was a prejudice demonstrated towards ‘Household Pets’ by judges:

When I did a show a couple of months ago with Nero ... the judge ... that I know quite well ... he said, “why do you have a housecat?”. So, I explained he was a rescue, blah-de-blah, but a lot of the European judges are sort of like “why are you wasting your time having a housecat to show when you’ve got Maine Coons?”. So, I don’t necessarily think everybody appreciates them the same as pedigrees ... A lot of people at show are often surprised when they’re walking around and they see my pen, I’ve got my Maine Coons and I’ve got my black and white housecat as well. “Ooh, what breed is he?”, “Oh, he’s a housecat, he’s a domestic, he’s a moggy”. “Oh, I didn’t know you could show housecats”. And that’s really nice, so it is just about educating people that housecats have got as much of a place on the show bench as the pedigrees.

By taking her non-pedigree cats to shows, Kim is attempting to overturn the prevailing attitude that these cats are not appropriate or are less valued for showing purposes. It appears, however, that her attitude is at odds with the majority within the fancy. The higher value placed upon breed cats could be seen as a form of ‘breedism’, similar to speciesism that represents prejudice based on species membership (Ryder, 2000), and will be further apparent in the varying care practices directed towards breed and non-breed cats explored in chapter seven.

Learning to Look at Cats

The process of judging cats and selecting the 'right' cats to breed and put forward to the show bench operates through an interaction of the senses, particularly vision and touch (see Grasseni, 2004). Despite being multisensorial, the visual predominates within the cat fancy. Vision 'needs educating and training in a relationship of apprenticeship and within an ecology of practice' (Grasseni, 2004: 41). Rather than being simply mechanistic or automatic, ways of looking are influenced by culture and are acquired or learned (Grasseni, 2007). Vision can also be described as 'perspectival and lodged within endogenous communities of practice' (Goodwin, 1994: 606). Within the fancy, certain aesthetic ideals have developed and are disseminated across actors, influencing decisions surrounding which individual cats are considered 'good examples' of the breed and which cats are used for breeding to perpetuate those ideals.

As well as sight, touch is a large part of judging through the process of interacting with the cats during their evaluation. Judges feel the cat's body and fur, along the back to the tail, they will often pull at their tail and legs, and feel underneath the cat, as well as touching around the face and ears. Dashper refers to how those involved with horse leisure develop an 'embodied way of knowing' how to act and move (2017a: 165). Within the fancy, judges learn how to touch the cats and what they need to be feeling for in particular breeds. Whilst stewarding for Isla, she told me how she usually liked to remove the cats from the pens herself instead of the steward, in the process providing the opportunity for her to "judge the cat by feel" without any interference or judgement by others. Furthermore, she claims that she does not use her eyes for judging, relying on touch instead. Unlike others, she rarely used the judging trolley, instead holding the cat in her arms and performing the assessment using her hands.

Cat shows operate not only as the space for the skilled assessment of feline bodies, but as a learning opportunity for wider members of the community, especially for breeders. This learning is reinforced through the show reports which indicate what the judge liked, areas for improvement or where the cat fails to meet the required standards. At the other registry body shows, the judges perform their evaluations and talk through their observations in front of an audience of exhibitors, breeders, and visitors. Practices such as these public evaluations work to socialise people into a 'community of practice' (Grasseni, 2005: 44).

Ingold describes enskilment as 'understanding in practice' and 'an education of attention' (2000: 416; 37). It is the embodied process of becoming skilled through apprenticeship, knowledge forming through interaction with a wider environment (Ingold, 2000). This learning process shapes the participant's perception. More simply described, enskilment is 'the apprenticeship of *particular* skilled visions that are *specific* to *situated* practices' (Grasseni, 2007: 3, emphasis in original).

In the cat fancy, judges must, initially at least, learn 'on the job' how to tell a 'good' example of the breed. They also undergo a long and arduous training process which requires a high level of commitment and engagement. They are provided with training materials and a folder containing the list of GEMS codes and the standard of points for each breed, which could be seen as examples of textual and visual representations that help to create shared perceptions within the group (Goodwin, 1994). Those interested in becoming a judge must also follow and assist senior judges as stewards. Judges are required to train separately for each breed category that they wish to judge (Gregory et al., 2014). Once they have attained a certain number of judging experiences as a steward, the individual can

qualify to become a 'probationer judge' who is allowed to assess kittens and side classes (Gregory et al. 2014). To apply to become a 'full judge', individuals must undertake tutorials and breed seminars held by the Breed Advisory Committees (BACS) for each breed (Gregory et al., 2014). The BACs oversee the training process for judges, ensuring each new judge has been assessed correctly by an already qualified judge. Lisa, a Norwegian Forest Cat breeder who also assists with a BAC, explained that the BACs also operate to:

Provide feedback to the judges of where they need to improve or if they are using incorrect terminology. We get a lot of problems where if they've been judging Maine Coons they'll use Maine Coon terms and we want them to use the more Norwegian type terms.

Once a judge has passed they are made available on the 'judges list' for the respective breed. According to Martha (a judge and BAC member), this administration system within the BACs was introduced to overcome the issue of judges not being selected on merit:

Before the BACs came into being, successful breeders were invited to become judges by their breed clubs and then went before a panel of judges for this to be confirmed. Sadly, this often led to a case of who you know, rather than what you know! So, the BAC system was developed to put the promotion of judges on to a more formal platform with a consistency of approach and expectations of training across the breeds and [to] remove this element of nepotism.

The training procedure highlights the value placed upon a merit-based system of training and apprenticeship, enabling the 'skilled vision' to become institutionalised.

Despite the formalised and systemic nature of the training for judges, there is a sentiment shared by some within the cat fancy that knowing a 'good' example of the breed is about having an 'eye' for it. Ella stated, "it was pointed out to me in my very early days of stewarding for judges that they thought I had a good eye for a cat and I was an intuitive and instinctive judge ... and not everybody is". This idea of an innate eye for recognising a 'good' cat is in contrast to the idea of a

'professional vision' or the training of an 'eyes-on' skill as described by Grasseni (2005: 45). It is possible, however, that Ella's 'eye' experienced training early in life, in her childhood upbringing within a farming family (see Grasseni, 2004). During a further conversation, Ella explained:

I come from a farming background ... So, I've spent a lot of time with all kinds of animals for most of my life. And I was finding that I could pick out the winning Hereford, the winning Cotswold sheep. And my Grandfather said, you've either got an eye or you haven't and it isn't really something that can be taught.

Whether innate or not, the judge's 'eye', becomes educated and further 'skilled' through involvement in the various levels of training and governance within the cat fancy. However, as I will discuss below, there are subjective and intersubjective elements that influence judging performances and complicate or interfere with the skilled vision.

'It's Just like a Beauty Contest': Aesthetics of Cat Shows

Aesthetics refers to a reaction of pleasure or displeasure 'taken in the look, feel, or meaning of something' (Brady, 2009: 9). The aesthetic evaluation of animals has been a feature of animal breeding since at least the Victorian period, when the animal fancy developed (Holloway and Morris, 2014). Hirschman (1994) refers to the tendency for some humans to keep companion animals as 'ornaments', exclusively for aesthetic indulgence. This might be said particularly of species such as tropical fish or koi carp, which provide minimal direct interaction opportunities (Bradshaw, 2017; Parsons, 2007) (though recent research suggests that fish in fact have rich social lives and that they are able to recognise their guardian's faces) (Balcombe, 2017). The relationship between aesthetics and animals has, however, been largely overlooked within scholarship in preference for art and landscapes (Brady, 2009; Parsons and Carlson, 2008)

and this is especially the case for companion animals. For Rolston wild animals are aesthetically pleasing through their movement and their being both 'kindred and alien' to humans (1987: 190). Parsons and Carlson (2008) attribute aesthetic value to animals based on their 'functional beauty', meaning an animal will be seen as beautiful based on features that have a particular purpose. Brady (2009) expands on this to also include 'expressive qualities' referring to the emotional connection humans often make with other animals. This has further been touched upon in relation to 'cute aesthetics' by Dale et al. (2017) which has direct relevance to the breeding and showing of companion animals, especially those selected for neotenic features. This 'cute' response, it has been argued, creates a nurturing reaction in people towards companion species (Serpell, 2019).

Within the animal fancy, aesthetic value has been institutionalised and attempts have been made to standardise and quantify judgements made on this value. Pedigree cats are judged at shows primarily based on aesthetic evaluations made by the judges relating to their conformation to the institutionalised standard of points in the case of 'pedigrees' and according to the judge's preference for temperament and general appearance for the 'Non-pedigree' and 'Pedigree Pet' competitors. For both of these judging methods, the decisions are made based on socially constructed ideals of beauty for specific breeds and cats in general. Through this process, the breeders are celebrated for their success or failure in 'creating' aesthetically accurate representations of the breed standards. In this way, the cat as an aesthetic piece becomes a marker of the breeder's skill in a similar way to a piece of art acting as an 'index' of the artist's skill (see Gell, 1998). Judges develop the knowledge to appreciate and evaluate the breed characteristics, and in doing so they confirm and perpetuate ideas and ideals of pedigree feline 'beauty'.

More than Beauty

Judging can also be argued to be a 'relational aesthetic process'. The judgement passed on an animal's aesthetic quality will be affected by previous judging decisions (Holloway and Morris, 2014: 5). It also does not seem that cat fancy aesthetics are purely based on a breed standard of points as the ideal of beauty, at least from the perspective of breeders and exhibitors. Throughout the fieldwork, I have encountered cats who do not meet their breed standards or the 'ideal specimen', yet are still exhibited in the 'Pedigree Pet' section. Even within specific breeds, there are variations within what is considered ideal. These differences are especially apparent across breed registries. As an example, the breed standards and appreciated aesthetic of the Russian Blue vary significantly between the United States, parts of mainland Europe, and the UK and there is a distinction across countries and registries as to the extent of brachycephalic features preferred on Persian cats. According to Victoria (a breeder of Persians), North American registries select for a more "ultra-type" (more extreme brachycephalic features) than the main UK registry. This example represents how aesthetic values vary between cultures and 'are always embedded in a social framework' (Gell, 1998; Layton, 2003: 449).

Berry (2008) argues that human beauty and other-than-human animal beauty are both social constructions based on similar factors of proportion, looking healthy, and neotenic features that are subject to external influences including the media. These normative beauty standards are enacted upon the less powerful, especially in the case of other-than-human animals, often with the avoidable poor health outcomes I have described previously in chapter two (Berry, 2008). As similarly discussed by Grasseni (2004: 42) in relation to cattle breeders, the

'structuration of perception' on animal beauty (in the present case feline), is produced from exposure to shows and interacting with other breeder's cats. Notions of the 'perfect specimen' are also produced through materials such as posters, books, and websites (see Grasseni, 2004).

Peñaloza (2001) draws a comparison between human beauty pageants and animal shows, whereby in both situations the individual is gazed upon and evaluated by the judges and public, with similar language used to describe both. The objectification of any individual can be seen as demeaning and as stated by Parsons and Carlson 'a theory of aesthetic appreciation of animals may seem as ill-conceived, retrograde, and tasteless as a theory of catcalls and wolf whistles' (2008: 117). Appreciating aesthetics is not necessarily inherently unethical, but I would argue that imposing aesthetic conventions on others who are unable to make active choices as to whether or not to adopt them, and making decisions with serious life consequences for cats based purely on aesthetic considerations, is ethically problematic.

A number of participants also referred to cat shows as being comparable with human beauty contests. After meeting Marina at a show in Swindon, she told me, "it's so much a matter of personal taste you know, up to a point really, it's just like a beauty contest" and Rachel who breeds Norwegian Forest Cats said, "I have a friend in Norway who breeds Norwegian Forest Cats who basically picks it up from the garden and takes it to a show because it's a Forest cat. But I appreciate that this is a beauty contest ... and there should be some effort put in". Despite continued participation, Pamela was critical of shows for being, "a little reminiscent of those ghastly American mothers who campaign their daughters in beauty pageants". It could be argued that beauty contests enshrine patriarchal

notions of ideal femininity and masculinity in ideal human physiques (see King-O'Riain, 2008). In the same way, cat shows can be said to represent and confirm human dominion over animals and specifically felines through strict control over their bodies and behaviours.

Within the cat fancy the judges play a key role in reproducing ideals of 'beauty', some of which can be harmful for the individual cats bred to look certain ways. Diana, a breeder and veterinarian, shared that she felt judges were selecting for morphologies that are putting cats at health risk, such as the extreme flat face of brachycephalic Exotic Shorthair and Persian cats or the increasingly exaggerated ear shape and position of the Siamese and Oriental. At the shows I attended, I observed Persians disproportionately selected as winners of 'Best in Show' which I found surprising considering the increased attention towards brachycephalic health issues within wider welfare discourse as discussed in chapter two (e.g. Farnworth et al., 2016). The GCCF encourages judges to penalise cats with extreme brachycephalic features including 'reduced nostril aperture, exaggerated depression of the nasal bridge, abnormal bites or abnormal position of the nose leather' (2017d: n.p). However, according to Diana, there is a level of tension between those concerned with welfare and some judges who are "stuck in their ways" and unwilling to accept that certain breeds could and should look differently. A similar situation has emerged in response to changes in the breed standard for British Bulldogs to select for fewer wrinkles and non-pinched nostrils as a result of increasing scrutiny (Pedersen et al., 2016).

Judges are expected to refrain from giving awards to cats with 'withholding faults', such as folded ears or extra toes to attempt to try and 'eliminate defects' (GCCF, 2009: 14). However, Ella informed me that this rule is not always enforced. As an illustration, Persian cats are often allowed to compete and win with overshot bites.

As such, it seems judges hold positions of power that can perpetuate the breed standards and generate what Holloway and Morris (2014) refer to as 'aesthetic truths' or beliefs in a particular aesthetic. These 'truths' are tied to individuals or institutions that are 'constituted as authorities able to speak such truths' (Holloway and Morris, 2014: 7; Srinivasan, 2013). According to Diana, 'truths' related to breeding ideals have resulted in some breeders reproducing cats for two different markets. She noted one breeder who bred Persians with less extreme features to appeal to the pet market, while also breeding the same breed with the extreme features that the judges are rewarding at shows. Holloway and Morris (2014: 15) refer to a similar process within breeding of farmed animals where there can be different 'truths', one breeding ideal can be focused on 'aesthetic perfection' while another can be focused on 'production-orientated qualities'.

As well as the focus on visually observable aesthetics, cat shows, once again like human beauty pageants, also require some evidence of 'temperament' on the part of cats, usually in the form of social skills or personality (Berry, 2008). Some breeds such as the Ragdoll are explicitly judged for personality, they 'should be relaxed in temperament, gentle and easy to handle' (GCCF, n.d.(b): 1). Cats who are deemed as not meeting these standards of behaviour are demerited. As with the 'Household Pet' section, the temperaments sought in show cats focuses on handleability and docility. As such, it could be seen as an expression of human dominion over other species and the creation of docile feline bodies (Foucault, 1977).

Even for breeds whose evaluation is based purely on physical conformity to a points-based standard, personality is likely to influence the judge, either consciously or unconsciously. The judging process, then, is to some extent

intersubjective. '[T]he animal can be seen as an active participant in the evaluative moment' (Holloway and Morris, 2014: 5). The cats help to train the judges and stewards in how to handle and interact with them. They also contribute to shaping ideas of the 'ideal' cat through their encounters.

Even with a power imbalance between humans and other animals, 'animals are not mere objects but act as agents' (Räsänen and Syrjämaa, 2017: 18) and this is pertinent to the positionality of the cat within the cat fancy, where despite unequal power relations, cats as minded individuals do have some agency. This argument can seem surprising when like horses used in competitions (Dashper, 2017b; 2019) cats do not provide informed consent for their participation in cat shows. Yet that does not mean cats are not also actively engaged within complex human-animal interactions. Dashper (2016) argues that even though horses have minimal choice when used for horse riding lessons, they are still active participants and able to influence the lesson by choosing to respond or not to the trainer, as well as directly influencing the lesson through their personality and mood. As such, even when judgements are thought to be made entirely according to the standard of points, a cat which reacts positively towards the judge and perhaps demonstrates affiliative behaviours may influence a more positive evaluation, while a cat which demonstrates agency through resistance in the form of biting or scratching will be disqualified from the class. Sophia told me a story about her cat, Pepper, who demonstrated agency through preference and resistance that was likely also influenced by fear and stress:

Pepper ... was an excellent show cat. He sailed through showing ... until he met a judge that he did not like and from then on he was fine for a while with anyone else but not this judge. He would always tense up at this judge, even just being near him. Eventually he started to worry about showing and started to get growly and upset on the show bench but would always jump into my arms after the [judging] ring had finished and snuggle.

It could be said, then, that some cats have the capacity to shape and even resist the judging process.

Displays of resistance have often been used to describe animal agency within human-animal interaction 'contact zones' (Haraway, 2008b e.g. Hribal, 2010; Gillespie, 2016; McFarland and Hediger, 2009; Warkentin, 2009). Foucault (1998: 95) stated that 'where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power'. Cats are sometimes capable of challenging the interactions and specific situation in which they find themselves (see Pearson, 2017). It is also important to note that resistance does not have to equate with violence (Bear and Holloway, 2019; Gillespie, 2016). For example, cats could be argued as demonstrating resistance to showing by refusing to leave or making it difficult to remove them from their pens for judging. Equally, though, a lack of resistance does not mean that the animal is happy with the situation; 'just as humans respond with frequently radical variability in response to oppression or violence against our bodies, animals too respond in a variety of ways' (Gillespie, 2016: 129).

Sophia referred to another of her cat's responses to showing in a way that indicated an expression of agency through resistance: "Poppy decided showing was not for her ... She showed us this when she bit a judge and that told us that this was not the thing that she wanted to do in life" so they stopped showing her. However, the success of resistance is also bound up within wider power relations and the actions of humans (Carter and Charles, 2013). This role of human power is demonstrated by Antonia who shared:

At home he is the most placid cat, he will cuddle up next to me and he'll be on his back with his legs up in the air, demanding belly rubs ... Soon as he goes to a show, he's hissing at me, he won't come out, he hates coming out of the pen. But that's because he's in his teenage phase at the moment.

The actions taken by Antonia's cat could be seen as an expression of resistance and lack of consent to being handled. Antonia argued this was due to him experiencing a 'teenage phase', so she was choosing to ignore his agency by rationalising it (and arguably belittling him) and continuing to show him. This example demonstrates how other-than-human agency can be limited by human power (Dashper, 2017a). The varying tolerance levels to resistance by cat exhibitors are similar to differences within human parenting styles (Birke and Thompson, 2017).

Chapter Summary

Cat shows operate as a space for the development and perpetuation of cultural practices that support the perceived importance of the 'ideal' cat. The shows have a central role in the visual enskilment and training of those that will drive decisions which impact upon the future manipulation of feline bodies. Judges make aesthetic evaluations of the cats utilising the standard of points. The authority afforded to them through their apprenticeship and their judging decisions go on to influence breeding decisions and practices within the breeder's home. As such, judges are driving how breeds look and develop and they have influence over morphologies that can have detrimental welfare implications for individual cats.

The system of judging is overseen by the BACs which try to ensure judges are adhering to the expectations of the institution. Yet there are discrepancies in judgements as to what is desirable and acceptable. These inconsistencies in the judging process are demonstrated by the different attitudes towards Persian cats, where the institution-level is promoting welfare improvements that do not align with some of the judging decisions. Overall, there is a focus on aesthetic

conformation attained through vision and touch, yet other factors also influence the evaluation process so that it is difficult to define and stabilise ideas of cat 'beauty'.

It is apparent that despite illusions of an objectivity, judging decisions are also influenced by social connections, intersubjectivity, and feline agency. The cats have a degree of agency in how they respond for judges, but their resources for expression of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with situations in the show environment are limited. Occasionally, when cat fanciers are receptive, these cats can succeed in communicating their distress and can avoid further exposure to shows. Carr noted in relation to dog showing that:

While it may be unfair to label all breeders and show competitors as 'uncaring', the rules and standards that drive the processes of dog shows objectify dogs. In the process they ignore the rights of dogs in preference of meeting an ideal imposed upon them for no other reason than fashion (2014: 37).

I would argue that this idea of objectification operates in similar ways in the cat fancy, where the focus on aesthetics and corresponding breeding practices and rhetoric can lead to a reduction or limitation of the ways in which cats are valued.

Chapter Five - Shaping Cats: Breeding, Eugenics and Biopolitics

Popular media (Brandow, 2015; Pedigree Dogs Exposed, 2008) and various scholars (Borneman, 1988; Cheang, 2006; Coppinger and Coppinger, 2016; Harrington, 2009; Huff, 2002; Iliopoulou et al., 2018; McCarthy, 2016; Ritvo, 1986; 1987; Skabelund, 2008; Swart, 2003; Ucelay-da Cal, 1992; Worboys et al., 2018) have all made a connection between the conventions of animal breeding and human eugenic theory, ethnocentrism, race, nationalism, and class. As such, I wish to explore the relevance of these discourses to pedigree cat breeding practices. I will outline instances of what could be considered rhetoric and practices of eugenicism and 'biopower' (Foucault, 1977) within the cat fancy. I will argue that the cat fancy operates as a mode of control over feline bodies, both at population and individual levels, by attempting to restrict and direct reproductive agency in line with breed standards and their associated evaluative logic. Further, the cat fancy works to shape and discipline humans into cat fanciers with a shared understanding of what constitutes both the 'ideal' cat and the 'ethical' breeder, that is, a breeder who is considered to act in the 'best interests' of their cats and the breed as a whole. I will begin by introducing the governance structures at play in the cat fancy, before delving into their interconnection with specific breeding practices. I will then consider the implications of these breeding practices for the cats involved.

Governance within the Cat Fancy

The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) is the main registration body in the UK. It claims to be 'about far more than just showing and registering cats' (GCCF, 2019a: n.p), however, and also provides 'information, advice and

expertise to help you breed, own or choose the right cat for your circumstances and life style [sic] (GCCF, 2019b: n.p). It is formed of a 'board of directors' and a 'council of delegates' including elected positions of Chairman and Vice Chairman, and representatives from each of the cat clubs that sit within the GCCF. The cat clubs are either regionally based such as the London Cat Club or breed based such as the Maine Coon Cat Club. Each breed has at least one breed club dedicated to it. The clubs run annual shows, aim to ensure the 'welfare' of their breed, and some provide a rehoming service for pedigree cats. Each club sends delegates to partake in GCCF Council meetings, vote on policy changes, and speak on behalf of their club. Clubs are also responsible for selecting members to sit on the Breed Advisory Committees (BACs) for each breed.

The BAC committees convene around three times per year and seek to oversee the health and morphology of breed populations. Audrey, a secretary for a BAC, explained the process to me as follows:

What the BAC do is safeguarding that breed. They're looking at breeding policies, they're looking at registration policies, they're making sure that the standard of points, the health parts are actually right. They are concerned about conserving that breed and improving it ... Doing things right for that breed. But at the same time what they do is they have a duty to, I'm not using the word police, but I have seen it, to look at the pupil judges' progress.

Martha, who has had involvement with at least six different BACS, told me that their role involves:

Compiling registration policies that determine how the kittens bred are registered with GCCF to ensure that the purity of the breed remains intact, to breeding policies that advise breeders what matings they can or cannot do, any health issues to note and be aware of.

As can be seen from the above quotes from Audrey and Martha, the BACs act as an authoritative outlet for disseminating policy and discourse around the breeding of pedigree cats to the wider cat fancy community, including monitoring the performance of the judges. In this way, they can be seen as enacting a form

of surveillance (see Braverman, 2012). They also contribute to the production of 'best practice', such as determining what ideal representatives of the breed should look like through the creation and adaptation of the 'standard of points' (see chapter four), influencing 'good' welfare practices, and designing, disseminating, and monitoring breeding policy that influences decisions around which cats are acceptable to be used for breeding purposes. Through these processes, breeders are guided towards institutional norms of 'good' cat care and 'ethical' breeding. I further interrogate the meaning of the term 'ethical breeder' to members of the cat fancy in due course, but in brief, it is a term used to refer to breeders who follow the norms of care and conduct sanctioned as acceptable by the cat fancy institutions and wider community. These practices include only selling kittens once they are over 13 weeks of age, registering kittens with a registration body, vaccinating and maintaining certain standards of health, and ensuring all cats are neutered if not being used for breeding purposes. Furthermore, as noted by Audrey, the BACs are concerned with "safeguarding" the breed or what Martha refers to as ensuring "the purity of the breed remains intact". I will explore such notions of 'purity' in more depth below in reference to the perceived importance of maintaining the 'pedigree' to cat fanciers. First, though, I will outline the relevance of eugenics and biopower to cat breeding.

Eugenics and Biopower

Similarly to the GCCF, species-specific institutions and breed-specific organisations have materialised for all domestic animal species. The Kennel Club (KC) founded in 1873 is one of the best-known examples of such an institution. During the eighteenth century, breeding associations began to emerge, allowing breeders to exchange their animals across larger distances which enabled them

to analyse progeny over a wider scale for their 'inheritance capacity' (Müller-Wille and Rheinberger, 2012: 65), or what was seen as 'the strength of the transfer of inherent characteristics' to offspring (Wood and Orel, 2001: 246). The development in the institutional regulation of breeds throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century occurred simultaneously with attempts to quantify differences between groups of humans (Rosenberg, 2011). Kennel clubs have been referred to as the emergence of 'eugenic dog-breeding programs' by Coppinger and Coppinger (2016: 183).

Eugenic theory developed as a potential tool for managing population 'fitness' based on an 'evaluative logic' that hierarchised humans according to their perceived value to 'the state, nation, the race, [and] future generations' (Bashford and Levine, 2010: 3). Francis Galton (1822-1911) popularised the term 'eugenics' in 1883, adopting the word from *eugenes* in Greek meaning as 'good in birth' (Paul, 1998: 3). Eugenics aims to intervene at the populational level to influence life with the intention of enhancing traits perceived as superior and depress those perceived as inferior.

The idea of the inheritance of physical, mental, and moral traits through notions of 'good' and 'bad' blood has been integral to the formation of eugenics (Paul, 1998: 1). Typically, eugenic praxis takes one of four forms: it can aim to prevent life through reproductive technologies including sterilisation, abortion, and contraception, it can endeavour to create 'fitter' life, frequently through policy such as public health programmes, it can generate more life, such as policy incentives for multiple births, and at its most extreme it can end life, including through extermination and non-treatment for certain conditions (Bashford and Levine, 2010: 3). These practices led to eugenic theory being divided into 'positive' and 'negative' forms. 'Positive eugenics' represents theory and policies

aimed at selecting and promoting certain traits for reproduction. Such interventions can include social support, for example family allowances and housing improvements (Weindling, 1999). 'Negative eugenics' is aimed at removing particular traits from the population through procedures such as coerced sterilisation and euthanasia (Bashford and Levine, 2010). As will be shown below, the cat fancy applies both positive and negative forms of eugenics to the breeding of cats.

Related to eugenics, 'biopower' represents a transition (which Foucault traces to the seventeenth century) from a sovereign mode of power where control over life and death is exerted as form of punishment (Foucault, 1998: 135). Biopower emerged in two ways. Firstly, as anatomopolitics, or 'disciplining productive, if docile, bodies' (Rosenberg, 2016: 52) through 'individualisation, surveillance, and regimes of training and acculturation' (Wadiwel, 2018: 81). Secondly as biopolitics, whereupon life is fostered at the population level with power exerted on life to 'administer, optimise, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations' (Foucault, 1998: 137). Despite retraction from sovereign power, violence remains part of the biopolitical process and is rationalised as being for the 'good' of the population with remnants of sovereign power remaining (Srinivasan, 2013; 2014). Wadiwel suggests that in a biopolitical framing, 'rather than viewing power as using episodic violence as the main mechanism of control, power instead is seen through instruments that continuously regulate the biological life of populations' (2018: 80).

Although Foucault did not focus extensively on eugenics, eugenic discourse can be seen as an example of Foucault's biopower (Müller-Wille and Rheinberger, 2012; Weindling, 1999). It involves investment in the value of specific traits and in 'truths' around how traits are reproduced. It necessitates interventions and

regulations at the individual and population level with the aim of fostering desired traits, in the process managing the 'fitness' of life. Further it requires the participation of individuals and populations in maintaining the value of these traits and in supporting their reproduction.

The relevance of biopower to the lives of other-than-human animals is increasingly recognised (Chrulew and Wadiwel, 2017), particularly with regards to farmed animals (Coppin, 2003; Holloway et al., 2009; Holloway and Morris, 2012; Rosenberg, 2016; Shukin, 2009; Twine, 2010; Wolfe, 2012) and wildlife species and conservation (Chrulew, 2011; Lorimer, 2015; Srinivasan, 2014; Youatt, 2008). However, with the exception of a few notable examples (e.g. Bunyak, 2019; Haraway, 2003b; 2008a; Srinivasan 2013), the engagement of biopolitics with companion animal breeding and exhibition practices has been largely overlooked. In a 'posthuman' world where the boundaries between nature/culture and human/animal are being contested, there is a need to explore biopolitics from a perspective that includes other animals (Skoglund and Redmalm, 2016). As a circumvention of the anthropocentricity of the initial formation of the concept, Blue and Rock have utilised the term 'trans-biopolitics' to acknowledge the place of other-than-human animals in 'the classification and evaluation of life as it unfolds in complex, technologically-mediated networks' (2011: 354).

The Foucauldian notion of 'subjectivity' has also been discussed in reference to eugenics (Danahay, 2012) and animal breeding practices (Srinivasan, 2013). Subjectivity refers to the conditions that enable individuals to work upon themselves and their own behaviours in reference to truth discourses and the observed behaviours of others. Srinivasan (2013) refines the concept of

biopolitics to include other animals by rethinking Foucault's idea of subjectivity as 'agential subjectification'. In this argument, the human source of the intervention internalises 'truths' surrounding practices such as neutering and euthanasia and acts on behalf of the other-than-human animal (Srinivasan, 2013). Skoglund and Redmalm (2016) suggest that norms exist around many aspects of companion animal care including feeding practices, reproduction, and training and exercise regimes, with the aim of ensuring a stable and healthy population. The cat fancy attempt to govern and impart regulations upon those operating beneath them that shape cats into 'ideal' specimens and cat fanciers into 'good' breeders. However, it is not entirely a process of top-down control, with elements of self-governance within clubs and by individuals.

Pedigrees

Pedigree has a long history of association with the development of eugenic theory. Galton argued that it was possible to create conditions for the development of 'a highly bred human race, with no more tendency to revert to meaner ancestral types than is shown by our long-established breeds of race-horses and foxhounds' (1865: 319). He advocated using evidence from the selective breeding of other-than-human animals to support human eugenic practices (Thompson, 2000/2001). Practices of animal and plant breeding developed during the seventeenth century onwards offered a blueprint that eugenic advocates attempted to adopt (Skabelund, 2008). The breeding of thoroughbred horses beginning in the seventeenth century has been argued by Derry (2015) to have influenced the development of thinking around heredity, as well as animal breeding practices more generally. Alexander (2014) states that animal breeders acted as both inspiration and validation for eugenicists through

their use of pedigree stud books and record keeping. This connection is further demonstrated, for instance, by two human genealogies, *The New Peerage* (Debrett, 1769) and *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage, and Knightage* (Burke, 1826), which were published around the same time as a number of other animal stud books during the nineteenth century (Calvert, 2013; Ritvo, 1987). Sax identifies dog shows as popularising 'feudal concepts of a natural hierarchy by birth' and mirroring the perceived importance of 'pure family lines, ... 'pedigree', in aristocratic houses' (2000: 83). As Russell states, 'the parallels between on the one hand, the human obsession with title, hereditary position and social caste, and, on the other, animal pedigrees, are too obvious to need emphasis' (1986: 19).

As described in chapter two, the importance of evidencing lineage for proving 'purity' within animals began to form with the development of stud books. Derry (2003) argues that these records contributed to the international success and popularity of the Shorthorn cattle breed developed by Bakewell. Notions of 'purity' and 'lineage' become associated with status and increased economic value and this was further accentuated in the late nineteenth century as pedigree breeding expanded (Derry, 2015: 179). The stud book was critical in 'institutionalising and professionalising' the dog fancy and these documents have played an important role in the ongoing development of all breeds (Huff, 2002: 7).

'Pedigree' and the recording of an animal's lineage are still deemed critical today in determining that animal's success and value (Cassidy, 2002a). At cat shows where identifiable items are allowed in the cages, such as the Supreme, it is not uncommon to see printed pedigrees displayed in frames on the top of the pens as can be seen in figure 7. These are family trees that trace a cat's lineage over

the generations, demonstrating the perceived importance of ancestral connections. One of my participants, Yvonne, told me:

We still have Great-Great Grandma and Grandad, Grandma and Grandad, Great Grandma and Grandad, all the way down and now we're now looking towards keeping next year, a Great-Great-Great Grandchild ... If you came and you were interested in a Maine Coon kitten ... we can show Mum, Dad, Aunties, Uncles, Cousins and all the way back to Great-Great Grandparents. So, as you see, for instance, the Great Grandma and you see the Great Grandchild, you can see the similar resemblance, just like you can if somebody were to show your Great Grandma and Grandad to you, you'd be able to pick out some of your features in their photo.



Figure 7: Printed pedigree alongside rosettes on top of pen (Photo credit: Author, 2017)

This focus on ancestry is further revealed through the naming of the cats, with the name of the breeder passed on to each generation maintaining reference to the family line and a link to any exhibition successes with the breeder (see Hurn, 2008). Unique prefixes are purchased from the GCCF by breeders for £75. This name becomes associated with each breeder and every cat bred by them thereafter. The prefix is attached to each cat's name and remains with them throughout their showing and breeding 'career' regardless of 'ownership'. A

registered pedigree cat's name consists of both the breeder's prefix which sits at the front of their name and an individual show name. For example, a cat's name could be Lovelycats (breeder's prefix) Snowflake (show name). It is also common for the cat to have a different name when at home or a shortened version of their show name. The use of multiple names is similar for show horses who often have a long show name, in addition to a 'barn' or 'stable' name (Coulter, 2018; Dashper, 2014).

The prefix not only links the cat to the breeder in success but also in failure. Audrey explained, "if I was a breeder I would be over the moon if somebody wanted to exhibit, but mind you it would only be the cats that I deemed good enough to go out on the show bench because I think that's only fair on the breeder, 'cos it's their name at the end of the day". Abbey also expressed a similar point:

You can also sell [a] pet kitten and register them as not for show because when owners take them to show it's your cattery that is being shown. Your breeder prefix or cattery name is in front of the cat's name and people recognise cattery names.

It is clear that there is a concern for some breeders surrounding becoming linked to 'unsuccessful' show cats. In addition to significance for human ideals of success, the role of lineage was also important in mitigating the grief associated with the loss of an individual through a perceived ongoing connection with the dead animal's offspring (Wanner, 2016). At the same time, the loss of a breeding line due to death or for health reasons was upsetting for many. Candice, a breeder who was new to exhibiting, shared the story of a recent experience, where the Mother cat had to be spayed due to pregnancy complications and the single female kitten born died. She said, "it's always heart-breaking but we had to spay Nala too, so [the] baby was my last chance to keep her line going" (see chapter seven for more on the emotional entanglements within breeding).

Within the UK cat fancy, a cat needs to be registered with the GCCF or alternative registration body to qualify for the label as 'pedigree' kitten. This registration system produces yearly reports which outline the population numbers of the breeds registered and the change in numbers from the previous year, acting as a population census. The significance of this registration process to fanciers was noticeable in online groups. There are regularly posts from cat guardians with pictures of their cats asking questions such as, "what breed is my cat?" or "is my cat [x] breed?". Cat fanciers often respond with comments including, "unless you have papers or have seen parents' papers, they aren't a breed" or "unless he was purchased from a reputable breeder then he is almost certainly a domestic short hair". The GCCF (Gregory, n.d.) advises that all 'pedigree' kittens are registered at four to six weeks of age and states that this documentation ensures that the cat is a 'pedigree' and therefore that the sale of the cat complies with the relevant acts of parliament. These acts include the 'Sale of Goods Act' (1979), now replaced by the 'Consumer Rights Act' (2015) that demands 'products' are of a satisfactory quality, fit for purpose, and as described, and the 'Trade Descriptions Act' which prohibits 'misdemeanors of goods, services, accommodation and facilities provided in the course of trade; [and] prohibit[s] false or misleading indications as to the price of goods.' (1968: 1).

The fancy registers act as a record to indicate which cats are deemed 'suitable' for breeding purposes. As such, the institution regulates which cats should and should not be bred from. There are currently three GCCF registers, 'full', 'supplementary', and 'reference'. Packer (2018) refers to such systems of registration as introducing 'breed barrier' rules that restrict the genetic pool for particular breeds. A cat listed on the 'full' register is deemed to have met the criteria for that breed, usually meaning that their ancestors within the last three

generations were also registered on the active register as members of the breed. 'Supplementary' is used for cats that do not meet the criteria for 'full' but are still acceptable for the breed. Finally, 'reference' is used for cats that do not have the breed pedigree, such as those being used in an outcrossing programme, and resultantly are deemed ineligible for showing as a pedigree.

Individual breeders also have some power over this registration process. Breeders may decide to list their cat's offspring on either the 'active' or 'non-active' register. If a cat is listed on the 'active' register then this indicates that they may be used in the future for breeding purposes. If a cat is listed as 'non-active' then the breeder has decided that the cat should not be used for breeding. 'Non-active' registration is used most commonly by breeders who are selling their kittens to 'pet homes' for cats that they have determined are not 'good' examples for perpetuating the breed. The governing body can discipline those who do not conform, for instance stud (intact male cat) guardians who allow matings with cats listed as 'non-active'. Discipline can take the form of monetary fines or disqualification from being able to register and exhibit cats with the GCCF.

The organisational structure and system of registration underlying the cat fancy institutions resonates with both eugenicism and biopower. The cat fancy enables and encourages the recording of 'lineage' and 'pedigree' and drives the narrative surrounding their perceived importance. As authoritative institutions, they impart norms of care and ideas on the notion of 'good' and 'ethical' breeders upon those who fall under their power structures. These norms are specifically targeted at a breed population level with significance placed upon the improvement of the breeds and ensuring that all cats listed under the umbrella of a particular breed are considered 'good' examples with the required traits.

Reproductive and Genetic Interventions

Reproductive interventions that have been used on farmed animals since the early 1900s are beginning to be used on companion animals with increasing regularity (see chapter two for an overview of the development of selective breeding practices). Human interventions are a common feature of the breeding process for numerous other-than-human animal species, especially for farmed animals, 'high value' sporting animals including thoroughbred horses, and endangered species as a conservation method, such as through captive breeding programmes. Biotechnological advances are bringing new ways for humans to manipulate animal genetics, such as CRISPR technology which allows for gene editing through specific gene targeting (Ormandy, 2018; Packer, 2018). Biotechnology is now being applied more widely than in agriculture and laboratories, with cloning, back-breeding, and genetic engineering being discussed in relation to the concept of 'de-extinction', or bringing back extinct species (Sherkow and Greely, 2013). Within companion species, GloFish™ have been genetically engineered in the USA by inserting genes from jellyfish or sea coral producing florescent colouring and have been on sale as aquarium 'pets' since 2004 (Davies, 2014; Ormandy et al., 2011). To date, genetic engineering has been slow to be introduced into other companion animals outside of a laboratory setting (e.g. florescent cats, Wongsrikeao et al., 2011) and it is likely that there would be ethical concerns from the public. However, with technological advancements and declining costs, cloning is predicted to grow as a market for those who wish to be able to 'replace' their companion animals after their deaths (Heðinsdóttir et al., 2018; Long et al., 2003; also see Wanner, 2016 on cryopreservation of semen). Packer (2018) questions the ethics of such practices considering the high failure and mortality rates, as well as the risk of perpetuating

extreme morphologies. Moreover, biotechnological advances will likely play a more leading role within companion breeding, as demonstrated by the level of conversation surrounding the idea of 'hypoallergenic' cats (e.g. McCook, 2009; Venjara, 2013).

Cat breeders are able to use semen cryopreservation, artificial insemination, and in vitro fertilisation in their breeding programmes (Goodrowe, 1992). Long et al. (2003: 144) suggest that the collection and use of frozen dog semen is growing and that there are now 148 facilities available for storing frozen semen in the USA (see Wanner, 2016). To date, the use of artificial insemination has been minimal within everyday cat breeding, partly due to cats not responding positively to direct human intervention during mating. Also, an additional complication is introduced by cats being induced ovulators meaning that they require external stimulus to release eggs, rather than ovulating cyclically. It appears that most work has been completed in this area on domestic cats as test subjects for preserving endangered wild felids (Goodrowe, 1992). Biotechnology offers opportunities for increased power over and regulation of feline bodies.

With dogs humans can directly intervene as 'shooters' who assist in the breeding process by holding either dog in place. As noted above, cats generally will not tolerate any level of direct intervention in the form of human handling during mating. However, it is possible for those with breeding queens who do not wish to mate their cat in a given season to utilise induced ovulation to their advantage. In this case, the breeder can use an instrument to artificially simulate the act of copulation which ends the estrus period until the next reproductive cycle (Hart and Hart, 2014). Moreover, there is growing chemical control over reproductive cycles, such as the use of temporary contraceptives in the form of tablets or injections, such as progestins, typically megestrol acetate (Brown, 2001; Murray

et al., 2015). These progestins are used to prevent estrus from occurring. Light availability can also be altered; reducing the number of hours that the cat is exposed to light to under eight hours can inhibit estrus (Kutzler, 2015). Kim told me how she uses deslorelin (brand name 'suprelorin') implants to reduce mating behaviours within her male cats when they are not, what she described as, "working". The choice of word 'working' was used several times by Kim and reminded me of the language around human 'sex workers', implying that the stud cat had a defined duty to perform. The language of sex work was also invoked by Sienna who told me that with stud cats, "you sort of rent him out, pimp him out". Hurn (2008) also made the connection between commercial other-than-human animal sex and human sex work in regard to the level of exploitation involved for both. Lisa used 'suprelorin' on her male cats as a way to regulate their reproduction, but also to control 'problem' behaviours, such as spraying. She asked me:

Have you heard of the suprelorin chip? What I've tended to do is I like to give it to them when they've just had their first litter ... and I find it's quite nice because at that time they can be a bit of a pain and a bit of a pest. And I find it just calms them down a bit so they're not spraying all the time ... So, when I had Frankie and Ragnar what I'd do is chip them alternate years, so I'd have one having a rest and one not.

It is possible to take cats to a veterinarian to seek an 'abortion' if an accidental mating has occurred that is not to the breeder's preference. For those presenting to a vet with a pregnant cat which will not be used for future breeding, the vet will often suggest the animal is spayed and in the process the litter 'removed' (Eilts, 2002). According to Goericke-Pesch et al. (2010) there are two potential options for preventing pregnancy, either preventing implantation or terminating the pregnancy. Estrogen injections can cause pyometra and aplastic anaemia making it unadvisable for use with pregnant queens (Goericke-Pesch et al.,

2010). Antiprogestins, though, have been found to have few side effects in cats and can be used on day five and six after a mating has taken place to prevent implantation (Goericke-Pesch et al., 2010).

In addition to direct reproductive interventions influencing breeding outcomes, there are an increasing number of mediations at a genetic level such as genetic screening programmes available for breeds susceptible to breed-related health issues (see Lyons, 2012; Slutsky et al., 2013). These techniques are a recent development, but it falls under the remit of BACs to impose breeding policies that incorporate requirements for screening of deleterious conditions. To provide an example, Maine Coons have been found to be predisposed to hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), where the heart muscle thickens. Breeders are required to screen their cats to identify if the gene mutations for HCM are found. If the cat is found to have the homozygous gene then breeding is not recommended by the BAC (MC BAC, n.d.). Occasionally, breeding of cats with the heterozygous gene is permitted when trying to 'clear lines' (MC BAC, n.d.: 10). How these recommendations can be enforced in reality is open to question. Other breeds, such as the Bengal, are also affected by higher levels of HCM but genetic tests are not yet available. One breeder, Diana, told me that she wouldn't sell a cat that had the gene for HCM to another breeder but that she might still breed from the cat because she would be careful about who they were mated with in line with her genetic understanding. This implies that Diana perceived herself qualified over others to make informed decisions on the manipulation of genetics through mate choice to prevent a re-emergence of the HCM-related gene. It also demonstrates the scope for individual interpretation of the guidelines by breeders based on their perceived level of knowledge.

The availability of genetic tests for breeds was argued by Antonia as the reason why she believes pedigree cats can be healthier than non-pedigrees:

Moggies have the highest rate of HCM out of any type of cat ... My moggies, I love them to bits, but to me they are a ticking time bomb because I have no idea what they have or don't have. Things like PKD [polycystic kidney disease], same thing again. And unfortunately, you think for moggies there are no gene tests. Whereas with HCM and PKD, in Maine Coons at least there is, they have identified genes for them.

Through this process of screening and testing, 'suitable' animals are selected and deselected for breeding. Other tests are also used in the evaluative selection criteria. All white cats must be checked for unilateral and bilateral deafness before being added to the active breeding register by using a Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response (BAER) which records brain waves or an Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) test which measures sound vibrations (GCCF, 2019d: 3). These interventions parallel an increase in the use of genetic technologies in human breeding. Bland and Hall (2010) suggest that biotechnological advancements demonstrate eugenics in action at the individual rather than government level. Genetic technologies such as preimplantation genetic diagnosis that screen for certain diseases are often termed 'repro-genetics' and are argued to differ from state-led coercive eugenics by being used at the behest of individuals (Silver, 1998). Since the 1953 discovery of the helix structure of DNA there have been increasing fears that society will see a return of eugenic discourse and praxis (Ekberg, 2007; ASHG, 1999; Paul, 1998). Others have suggested that eugenics has persisted since its supposed decline (Spektorowski and Ireni-Saban, 2014) and the assumption that WWII saw a regression in eugenics has been challenged (Paul, 2016). Raz argues that there is an 'intriguing realisation that eugenics, viewed as dystopian and authoritarian in most of the twentieth century, is in the process of being reinterpreted today as utopian and liberal' (2009: 602). Rose (2001) refers to an evolution from the 'eugenic body' to the 'genetic body' that

has emerged from biotechnological advancements and the molecularisation of the body, which also meant a 'shift from a biopolitics of populations to an ethopolitics characterised by the individual management of the "somatic" self' (Braun, 2007: 10). In other words, eugenic decisions being left to individual choice.

According to Paul (2014) anti-abortionists argue that genetic technologies are indeed a form of coercive eugenics. Some have also maintained that despite the focus on individual choice, societal-driven, informal coercion remains (Koch, 2004; Parekh, 2013). Even if there is no direct coercion by government, decisions may be culturally or market-driven. This view underscores the intricate and pervasive action of biopower within the population.

Returning to the case for other-than-human animals and especially cats, decisions on the uses of genetic technologies are generally made by individual breeders, often in consultation with authority figures such as veterinarians, BACs, and the overarching institutional bodies. For many of the breeds with genetic tests available, testing is only a recommendation rather than compulsory. However, there are increasing regulations within institutions that enforce such testing, making it less of a reproductive choice. Those breeding Persians, for instance, are required to test all breeding cats for PKD¹⁵ before they can be registered on the 'active' GCCF register and used in future breeding. Rising 'welfare' scrutiny from external influences (see chapter eight) is also driving increased monitoring.

New reproductive technologies generate new forms of knowledge and practice relating to the control of cats. They move biological scrutiny and surveillance, and

¹⁵ It is estimated that around 38% of Persian cats globally have PKD (Lyons et al., 2004).

the exercise of biopower, into new spheres. The aim always remains control over breeding processes and the reproduction of and removal of certain traits to create 'desirable' cats. Cat bodies and their reproduction are disciplined through methods such as neutering and drug use, in an effort to control and direct their reproductive capabilities.

Choosing Mates

Turner (2010) argues that values in contemporary 'Western' human relationships and reproduction, such as individuality and consent, do not extend to the breeding of other-than-human animals which is still based on twentieth century notions of 'blood' and 'lineage'. For example, the breeding of thoroughbred racehorses is heavily interconnected with ideas of blood, with 'good' blood believed to be available in limited amounts through the 'sire' line (Cassidy, 2002b). Within the cat fancy, one of the most significant interventions within the breeding process is that humans select sexual partners by choosing which cats can mate with one another and force interactions between them by placing them within confined living quarters until mating has taken place. Bekoff and Pierce (2017) refer to human reproductive control over other animals as a denial of their freedom.

Outside of human intervention, cats are polygamous and can experience superfecundation whereby there can be kittens born within the same litter from different 'sires' (male parent) (Kustritz, 2006: 146). Studies on group-living populations have found that although female cats will mate with multiple male cats, mating success is based on dominance particularly due to age and size of the male cat (Hart and Hart, 2014; Natoli et al., 2007). This research implies that there could be a selection process in place but whether this is driven by conflict

between the multiple males within the group or a choice by females is debateable. Research by Natoli et al. (2000) found that female cats do not demonstrate preferential mating with particular male cats and they suggest that this results from the cat's ancestral behaviours based on large territories and minimal interaction opportunities. Other research has found cats select against mating with kin by removing young males from social groups and that female cats select non-related mates over relatives by refusing mounting attempts (Ishida et al., 2001; Mucha et al., 2011). However, despite not knowing exactly how cats select their mates, it is likely that there is an element of choice. The biology of the cat and feline behaviour differ from the breeding practices and decisions imposed upon them by humans. As such, breeding practices represent a true human intervention and neglect of consideration for the feline Umwelt.

Within the cat fancy, the decision as to which cats should be mated is decided by individual breeders and in collaboration with other breeders within the community. As a heavily human-driven process, indicators of being a 'good' breeder and judgements as to the 'right match' are usually based on phenotypic selection. Through this process of selection for particular traits, animals are controlled in trans-biopolitical terms (Coppin, 2003).

One participant, Louise, gave over agency within the reproductive process to her queens:

Some breeds call earlier and more frequently than others, some lose condition easily, some do not, so I am guided by her as to when I would first mate her ... I breed a queen when it suits her, for maybe two to four litters before spaying her rather than to any human's schedule. One rule does not fit all, and the queen's hormones have not read the books.

Here the cats are recognised as active participants in the process, rather than being merely acted upon by humans. However, Louise does have ultimate control, the cat guiding rather than dictating her actions. There are multiple online

posts surrounding feline reproductive agency with people seeking advice for cats who they believe are 'refusing' to mate, implying a recognition of resistance. One person suggested that "some queens are just fussy, they don't always like the stud that you put them with, maybe she just doesn't like that boy". Others note that "inexperienced" stud cats can be slow to learn and one person stated, "It helps, I am told, if one of them knows what they are doing!"

The majority of people without their own breeding male cats will take their 'calling' queen to a stud cat ('calling' is a term similar to 'in heat', used to describe when a female cat is in estrus). Stud cats are either considered 'open' or 'closed'. 'Closed' studs are only mated with cats belonging to the breeder's household and a small number of trusted breeders, whereas the services of 'open' studs will be available to purchase by a larger number of people. All cats used for stud purposes must have a 'Certificate of Entirety' registered with the GCCF (GCCF, 2019d). According to Antonia, the 'stud fee' is dependent on what the breeder wishes to charge. She has been "quoted anything from 200 to 400 pounds". As part of the agreement between the queen and stud guardians, blood tests may be conducted beforehand to ensure that cats are free from sexually transmitted diseases (feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukaemia virus (FeLV)). Additionally, stud owners will request to see vaccination records and registration documents for the queen which indicate that she is listed on the 'active register' and therefore permitted to be bred from. The queen will usually be left with the stud guardian for a few days for the encounter to take place. The two cats will be kept confined within a pen to encourage interaction between them. The female cat will often be left there for the entire period of estrus to ensure a number of matings have taken place before being collected by her guardian. The stud owner will keep a close eye on both cats during this period, and John, a LaPerm breeder,

told me that “some use baby monitors” to maintain surveillance when away from the pen. If the cat has travelled a long distance, it is not uncommon for the cat to be left with the stud cat until she begins to ‘pink up’, where her nipples turn pink in colour indicating pregnancy.

According to many of the breeders I spoke with the choice of mating is based on increasing genetic diversity, minimising the risk of deleterious health issues, and improving the ‘look’ of the breed. According to John:

You need to look for a cat that has features that will complement those of your own cat so you have a chance of breeding kittens which are better than their parents and improving the breed. If you feel that your cat could be better in a particular feature, then you look for a match that is strong in that feature and try to avoid doubling up on a fault.

As can be seen from the above, breeding decisions and the care of cats are entangled with wider motivations linked to maintaining or improving the breed as a whole.

Within some breeds, distinct ‘lines’ have emerged, especially across registries which can also influence the choice of mate. These variations in preferred look can create differences in opinion and conflict surrounding the ‘ideal’ specimen (Fox, 2009). The Maine Coon is an example breed that has multiple ‘lines’. Hazel, who is in her late 30s and exhibits her Maine Coons, explained the differences across registries:

Different cat societies look at different things. For instance, the GCCF will look at Maine Coons and look at more the American look, so the really profound muzzle, the ears needing to be completely straight up, while TICA looks more at the European standards of Maine Coon which means the muzzle is a little bit softer, the ears are still upright but the ear set is slightly to the side.

Furthermore, the stud cat can often be selected based on networks between breeders. As such, due to the political nature of the fancy, alliances are likely to have influence on mating. Pamela explained that “there are cliques within areas

... mostly containing people who buy cats from each other or use each other's stud cats", while Hazel stated that finding the services of a stud cat is based on, "knowing people in the breeding world. It's a lot of word of mouth, building up a reputation." This was further expressed by Antonia, who told me that the process of breeding a cat involved sending your queen to a stud and "that will be either to your mentor who may have a different ... blood line to your queen, so you can put her to him. Or you go to another breeder who your mentor recommends you to." Additionally, Alexandria, a Suffolk breeder who I spoke with on several occasions, said, "I think a lot of people co-breed so you can build up a relationship with one or two breeders who are in your breed because then if you've only got one stud you can swap studs." This practice likely narrows the genetic diversity further within certain breed 'lines' across social connections.

Outcrossing

To overcome some of the issues associated with 'closed' breeding and reduced genetic diversity, the GCCF has an 'outcrossing policy' where it encourages breeding between permitted breeds, it states:

Outcrossing is the introduction of new genetic material into a breeding line or a breed's gene pool. It involves the mating together of cats of different varieties, different breeds or of a pedigree cat to a foundation cat of unrecorded ancestry as part of a planned and coordinated programme to improve the genetic diversity and genetic health of a breed. It can sometimes also be used to introduce new, desirable traits to a breed. It is one of the most important tools that can be used by breeders to maintain or improve their breed's genetic health and guard against the negative health consequences of inbreeding and closed gene pools (2017e: 3).

Outcrossing is perceived as beneficial for increasing genetic diversity by introducing new individuals from outside 'lines' into what would otherwise be a 'closed' breed. Outcrossing and bringing in diversity is often termed 'genetic rescue' and could overcome some of the issues associated with pedigree

breeding (see Windig and Doekes, 2018). However, where outcrossing has been utilised with dogs, it was found that it needs to be regular with minimal backcrossing to be effective at continuing to reduce inbreeding coefficients and this is likely similar for cats (Windig and Doekes, 2018). This demonstrates the complexity involved with genetic decision making, especially by those with a folk knowledge in genetics as held by many who breed as a hobby. Additionally, it must be noted that such practices of controlling for and selecting for 'fitter life' can be seen as a form of eugenic praxis, although interestingly in the case of pedigree breeding, this is often necessary as a means to overcome the unintentional introduction of deleterious diseases through earlier eugenicism that used practices such as inbreeding to select for other factors, particularly aesthetics and conformation.

Any outcrossing in the cat fancy is closely monitored by the BACs and only outcrossings between sanctioned breeds are permitted. For example, the Birman is only permitted to be bred with the Persian. The breed often chosen as acceptable for outcrossing will generally have similar phenotypic features to prevent the offspring produced from deviating too far in looks from the 'form' of the breed. The offspring from outcrossing are termed 'variants' and cats cannot be shown or recognised as full pedigrees for that breed for a set number of generations of being bred back with the same breed. This rule implies that the value of an individual cat to the fancy is based on the production of cats that will be eligible to be classed as a member of the respective breed in the future.

There are a number of breeds where breeding is permitted with non-pedigree cats from the breed's purported place of origin. These are termed 'foundation cats'. Within the GCCF, the breeds include the Norwegian Forest Cat, Siberian, Turkish Van, Manx, Egyptian Mau, Khao Manee, Korat and Singapura. In these

cases, although the specifics vary, cats can be either bred with an imported cat from the place of origin, or an imported cat can have an ancestor within their pedigree from the place of origin. Additionally, there are a handful of breeds where non-pedigree cats without a link to a place of origin can be used in outcrossing, these include the Australian Mist, LaPerm, Russian, and Sphynx. The use of non-pedigree cats in outcrossing programmes was explained to me by Cora. She had purchased a domestic tabby kitten from an advert in a newspaper with the aim to use the cat for breeding purposes as part of an outcrossing programme. The cat was checked for various genotypic and phenotypic characteristics utilising gene tests for coat colour and disease carriers.

The decision to encourage the breeding of non-pedigree cats to perpetuate a particular breed highlights the entanglements of harm and care within transbiopolitical decision-making. The general narrative within the fancy is that non-pedigree cats should be neutered before they reach breeding age and they cannot be shown over six months of age if not neutered (GCCF, 2017b). This rule includes cats shown under the 'Pedigree Pet' section for those deemed unsuitable examples of the breed. Neutering is generally advocated as being for the good of the cat by reducing the risk of disease transmission such as FIV, reducing the likelihood of accidents from roaming, and decreasing the risk of breast cancer (Blue Cross, 2018). O'Neill et al. (2015) found that neutered cats had greater longevity than non-neutered. Additionally, ideals of responsible pet ownership disseminated by animal welfare and veterinary organisations also heavily promote neutering of all cats to prevent what is seen as an overpopulation issue of too many 'homeless' cats (Cats Protection, 2019; Crawford and Calver, 2019; ICC, 2017b; RSPCA, 2019; Welsh et al., 2014). The neutering and spaying

of cats represents a form of anatomopolitics by disciplining and producing 'docile' bodies, in addition to an example of eugenic praxis by preventing life. It is often advocated for the welfare of the animal both in terms of health impacts and reducing 'unwanted' pregnancies, yet also correspondingly removing animal sexuality and controlling the population for human benefit (Palmer, 2001; Srinivasan, 2013). Undesirable behaviours for the household are also a factor with intact male cats more likely to wander, express aggression, and mark territory, while intact female cats can spray, wander, leave stains, and attract other cats (Grier, 2006). As such, neutering can be seen as an attempt to 'civilise' cats (Fox, 2006: 526; Grier, 2006) and through this process it can be seen as 'an act of considerable control' (Smith, 2003: 186). In addition to motivations for feline well-being and population management, breeders also neuter cats, particularly using 'early-age neutering' (before four months of age), to control their breeding lines and prevent others from breeding from cats bred by them without express permission, thus controlling competition within the fancy and the perceived risk of backyard breeders (see Gagnon et al., 2019).

Within the fancy, there is a strong rhetoric demonising non-pedigree cat reproduction, and the health of the breed population is deemed to have priority. A further example of this prioritisation is in the breeding of hybrid cats, such as the Bengal. The Bengal is the result of deliberate matings between a domestic cat and an Asian Leopard Cat (*Felis bengalensis*). In the higher generation Bengals, known as F1, F2 and F3, the percentage of Asian Leopard Cat is higher making the individual cats inappropriate for keeping as traditional pets. Due to their wild nature, special captive housing requirements and distinct daily care needs are necessary to keep higher generation Bengals (Bradshaw et al., 2012). It is not until the fourth generation (F4) that they become considered as 'pets'. As

such, these higher generation cats are used solely for breeding purposes to create the Bengal. It is generally considered unnecessary to still need to use Asian Leopard Cat's to create Bengals due to the number of existing Bengal cats available for breeding purposes. However, some breeders still do keep and use Asian Leopard Cats in their breeding lines.

Both the use of wild cat species and non-pedigree cats to create and 'improve' breed lines show how certain individual animals only have value to the cat fancy in their reproductive capabilities. The practice can be seen as an example of 'violent care' where sacrifices in well-being, such as captivity, are made at the individual level to care for the breed as a whole (van Dooren, 2014). Violent care emerges through the categorisation of beings in what van Dooren (2015) refers to as a 'conservation ontology', with particular practices justified based upon an animal's position within these categories (Hurn and Badman-King, 2019). In the example described here, the categorisation of a breed as needing protective care to exist and proliferate justifies a sacrifice in well-being for individual cats. Unlike van Dooren's (2014) discussion surrounding violent care within the conservation of endangered whooping cranes (*Grus americana*), however, it is the idea of breed which is being prioritised rather than that of the species, though it still occurs at the expense of individual flourishing.

The Life of a Stud Cat

Breeders will often attempt to ensure that queens are kept separate from intact males to prevent unintended mating, especially when cats are 'in season' by keeping them indoors and within separate living quarters. This separation acts as a denial of normal sexual behaviour and a restriction of reproductive agency,

similar to the decisions regarding the use of contraceptives to prevent estrus. Due to the natural tendency for male intact cats to spray, they are often kept in outdoor enclosures year-round. The outdoor pens can vary greatly in size and design. Some incorporate areas of height for the cats to climb and will also include an enclosed bed area that is separate to a run or exercise area (see figure 8).



Figure 8: Example outdoor enclosure (Photo credit: Author, 2017)

The GCCF provides guidelines on the specific needs of stud cats, such as separate housing, and notes the ‘frustration and loneliness’ often felt by stud cats that are not provided with adequate human company (2016b: n.p). Boredom, the ‘negative affective state caused by a lack of desired stimulation or behavioural opportunities’, has been found to be of welfare concern for other-than-human animals in captive conditions, especially where daily tasks such as finding food are taken care of by human guardians (Meagher, 2019: 21). Furthermore, the Canine and Feline Sector Group (CFSG) report into cat breeding noted ‘stud cats kept permanently in a pen or outdoor shed with a very limited environment’ were a potential welfare problem (2015: 16). Similar problems are discussed by

Cassidy (2002a; 2002b) and Hurn (2008) in relation to horses used for breeding. The opportunity for interaction and socialisation is at the human's discretion. Diana provides her stud cats with what she called a "neutered girlfriend" to keep them company in their outdoor pen if they will accept her. This neutered female cat, or 'girlfriend', is moved inside when the stud cat is with a queen for mating purposes. Denise also houses neutered female cats with her stud in an outdoor pen, "we have three neuter girls and they take it in turns with him, because they like a break from time to time. And he's quite happy with anyone as long as he's got company". This does not always work though. Diana described one of her cats as a "sex pest" who she has to keep on his own. Trudy also keeps her stud cats in an outdoor enclosure, and she houses the father and son together, "I don't like keeping cats on their own if possible and we gave it a go to see if it would work and they get on absolutely brilliantly. It is a bit unusual perhaps for stud cats but I'm not the only one who does that". Hayley also told me that she keeps her stud cats in outside pens, "I have outside stud pens where my boys go once they start looking vaguely interested in anybody or anything ... I just spend time out in the cattery with them giving them love. But they're lovely, stinky and greasy, and 'happy as larry'".

Outdoor enclosures, however, are not utilised by all. Kim told me that she built an outdoor enclosure initially to house her two studs but she has since moved them back into the household: "I hated them being out at the end of the garden. It absolutely broke my heart. Particularly one winter, they were out there ... it was just miserable, I hated it". She even accepts one of her male cats spraying on the kitchen surfaces, "when it comes to a choice of that happening or him being shut away at the end of the garden, we'd rather he lived in the house. We just put up with it, we just spend a lot of money on disinfectant".

Another breeder, Olivia, uses what are known as 'stud pants' on her intact male cats. These items of clothing are like nappies for cats and aim to contain spraying behaviours and prevent mating:

Now when they come in to socialise with the girls, they've got stud pants. If you look at my Facebook, you'll see some funny photos with their embarrassing frilly stud pants, or rainbow stud pants, it's quite funny ... It took years to source some decent ones ... And I get them now from Hong Kong because I just can't find decent ones in the UK ... Initially all I could find is these girly dog period pants or incontinence pants for old dogs.

For Hazel, the requirements of housing stud cats have meant that she only has queens and seeks the services of other breeder's studs:

My partner is very disturbed by the way stud cats tend to be kept in pens outside because of course the smell of spraying and he just couldn't manage to do that. And I have to say I agree with him. It's a necessary evil and I have a lot of respect for my breeder friends who have studs. I just, I'm too soft-hearted, I couldn't do it.

The above comment by Hazel implies a perception that the conditions that many stud cats live in are less than adequate but that this is necessary to continue breeding practices within the household. The male cat's (especially emotional) well-being is sacrificed to perpetuate the creation of pedigree litters and sustain the fancy. As such, the husbandry practices surrounding male cats used for breeding purposes foreground their reproductive capacity but advocate the control and restriction of sexual agency. This control is similar to Cole's discussion of how Foucault's concept of docility applies to animals, where containment enables surveillance and 'facilitating the monitoring and correction of "poor" performance' (2011: 86). In the case of stud cats, poor performance could be indicated by mating with the 'wrong' cat breaching the breeder's plans, or spraying and fighting with other cats within the home. It is also gendered with a focus on the male's virile nature. For instance, Lisa told me that she was trying to choose a name that was "something virile for my stud boy". Additionally, other participants referred to their stud cats using language such as "randy", or as

mentioned above, “sex pest”, therefore justifying their requirement for confinement to separate living quarters (see Cudworth, 2011 for similar language surrounding gendered farmed animals). In comparison, female cats with litters often live within the home in ‘kittening pens’ to provide comfort and socialisation opportunities for the kittens which is seen as important for producing ‘good pets’.

Failed Predictions and Selecting Kittens

Ella told me a story about her cats, Opal and Pearl:

Her [Opal’s] second litter she had three, and one of those lived for two weeks, the other two were fine but from a quality point of view they were dreadful ... I’ve still got photos of them, and I used to show novice breeders to show how you can put the two Grand Champion cats together and get rubbish. And yet Pearl who never got a Challenge certificate ... produced the most fabulous litters to type and most fabulous temperaments.

As demonstrated above, notwithstanding attempts at influencing breeding outcomes through the control of reproductive agency, predictions can fail. Pearl took on increased value, despite not being perceived as ‘aesthetically’ adequate for exhibition, for her ability to produce litters with ‘good’ type and temperament. However, Opal who was expected to produce ‘good’ kittens due to her own physical characteristics only had value as a show cat rather than for breeding purposes. Jessica also shared a similar point surrounding the unpredictability of selecting cats for breeding and showing stating, “you will find the perfect breeding cat may be the worst possible show cat and the best show cat can be a terrible breeding girl”. Through the breeding process, breeders learn about the individual cat’s idiosyncrasies and adapt their decision-making accordingly.

In addition to selecting which cats to mate, breeders also make decisions as to which kittens are ‘good’ examples of the breed to be used for future breeding and those that should be sold to ‘pet homes’. Hayley told me that she sometimes does

not decide on a kitten until he or she has reached over four months of age because:

You can assess type from around six weeks of age. Six weeks is quite a good point and then again around ten to eleven weeks you get a good idea of what they're going to be like ... But I have had a kitten with really lovely show quality ears, complete all his vaccines at thirteen weeks and I'm like, "yeah this one is going to be really nice, I might enter it in a show" and literally a couple of weeks later, ping those ears go up to a first degree curl ... Obvious ear faults are quite visible by about eight weeks but for the actual degree of curl, you really do have to wait it out.

In contrast, Cora told me that you 'know' a good kitten when you are breeding. She claims that she is able to tell while a kitten is still 'wet', meaning seconds old, if that kitten will be a 'good' example of the breed. She believes that under these conditions you are able to see all of the kitten's physical features clearly. Cora claimed that 'good' breeders have an eye for a 'good' kitten, just as we saw Ella claim that good judges sometimes have an eye for a 'good' cat in chapter four.

Yvonne told me that producing 'good kittens' was based on research and knowledge, yet that there could still be failed predictions:

I mean there's always the odd one that throws a curveball but because we are so careful about what we breed, I mean you've always got a variation in your litter ... but the hope is by being so careful about what you do and doing your research ... that you will get kittens what are better than the basic pet quality.

In contrast to the importance of analytical aesthetic selection, Kim told me, "in terms of selecting kittens that I keep, I mean I am rubbish at it and I always go with my heart, not my head." Producing the 'ideal' specimen is, therefore, a combination of factors including specific knowledge and intuition, in addition to accident. Notions of 'the eye' and 'intuition' exist alongside and in tandem with more scientific predictions based on informed genetic work. Eugenics in practice, then, is a lot messier than in the abstract. Efforts to exercise agency over feline reproduction manifests in a wide variety of techniques and practices, none of

which, either alone or in combination, are entirely effective at securing and maintaining complete control. Furthermore, disciplining within biopower operates within 'a wider power spectrum' with the other-than-human animal also influencing human agents (Skoglund and Redmalm, 2016: 247). There are also resistances to biopower at a range of scales (see Coppin, 2003; Holloway and Morris, 2012; Lloro-Bidart, 2014). Resistance can emerge from human management practices, different 'truths' held by individuals and groups, external environmental conditions, as well as from other animals who can unconsciously or directly resist (Coppin, 2003; Holloway and Morris, 2012). At the same time, a form of genetic agency, distinct from the more direct agency exhibited by the cats themselves, creates genetic expression beyond the current control of fanciers.

Breed Tails: Cat Breed Mythologies and Origin Stories

Breeds have been culturally and physically produced and controlled through organisational power utilising stud books, breeding standards, and exhibitions (Haraway, 2003b: 112). Breeds can be seen as 'an exemplary example of artificial or domesticated nature, cultivated and shaped by human interference and providing one of the definitive feats of human civilisation' (Fox, 2009: 97). Turner (2010) argues that breeds are one of the most interesting aspects of human-animal interactions, with implications for how we value animals. This question of value is significant considering that consumption activities related to companion animals have been increasing, including rising ownership of 'pedigree' and 'designer' breeds, and media attention surrounding celebrities with pedigree companions (Bettany and Daly, 2008: 409; see Beverland et al., 2008; Ghirlanda et al., 2014; Harrington, 2009; Herzog, 2006).

Wallen (2011) suggests that the creation of breeds in itself is a form of violence for its elimination of the non-breed animal. He states that each breed of dog is the result of violence 'since a breed exists only through the elimination of curs' (2011: 125). Rosenberg argues that as 'admission of racial views has become highly coded and hidden, the dog is a convenient wrapper for subtle racial messages and associations' (2011: 117-118). Discourses of race, ethnicity, and eugenics often collide with other-than-human animals. The rhetoric surrounding the 'extinction' of dingoes (*Canis lupus dingo*) in Australia due to breeding with wild domestic dogs is shared with the discourse that existed around miscegenation in the twentieth century (Probyn-Rapsey, 2015). Furthermore, Ucelay-Da Cal (1992) refers to breeds as the codification of physical characteristics, particular moral values, and nationalisation, and makes the connection between animal management and political racism. He notes similarities between practices under the Third Reich and contemporary animal management practices, such as the use of tattoos to identify dogs, and pet controls and the prohibition of entry to Jewish people.

In addition to notions of 'purity' that are apparent across the discourse on both ethnicity and animal breeds, there are also national associations. The connection between nationality and specific breeds has been demonstrated in particular with dogs. Swart (2003) discusses three different dog breeds in South Africa, the Rhodesian Ridgeback, Boerboel, and the Africanis, and how the breed mythology surrounding these dogs relates to different ideas of South Africa, particularly around notions of settler and indigenous Africa. Additionally, breeds can be associated with patriotism and nationalism, such as the German Shepherd that became associated with German and Japanese nationalism and military power in the 1920s onwards, resulting in attempts at dissociating the dogs from this

discourse by labelling them as Alsatians by the British KC (Skabelund, 2008). There was a decline in popularity and scapegoating of 'German' dog breeds such as the German Shepherd and Dachshund during WWI in Britain (Howell, 2013; Skabelund, 2008).

The framing that surrounds pedigrees and breed mythologies are of substantial relevance to this research. Breeds are social constructs that vary over time and place with changing fashions (Iliopoulou et al., 2018; Quinn, 1993). Some dog breeds have been found to experience surges or 'boom and busts' in popularity in association with the release of movies starring particular breeds, for example, the re-release of 101 Dalmatians in 1985 led to an increase in registrations with the American Kennel Club (AKC) from 8,170 to 42,816 over eight years (Herzog, 2006: 390; Ghirlanda et al., 2014). The use of social media and celebrity endorsements have been held responsible for the exponential increase in the popularity of French Bulldogs, which have overtaken Labradors as the most popular breed in the UK after almost thirty years (Farstad, 2018; Plitman, 2019). Success at the American equivalent of Crufts, the Westminster Show, was not correlated with an increase in popularity of particular breeds (Herzog and Elias, 2004). However, shows have been found to influence in other important ways, such as perceptions of ideal weight (Such and German, 2015).

Dog breeds, then, have been found to grow in popularity based on fashion rather than breed characteristics including health, longevity, and behaviour (Ghirlanda et al., 2013). At the same time, negative framing can also influence breeds. Although not technically considered a breed but a collection of phenotypically similar dogs, dogs classified as 'Pitbulls' are now victimised under the Dangerous Dogs Act (1991) yet were once valued widely as family companions (see Iliopoulou et al., 2018; McCarthy, 2016). Furthermore, the 'Pitbull' has become

associated with certain segments within society. Guardians have been characterised as ‘thugs’, ‘gangstas’, and ‘white trash’, ‘clearly linking the dog with racial, class, and gender stereotypes’ (Iliopoulou et al., 2018: 3). Each breed has its own narrative that accompanies and interacts in sophisticated ways with its genetic history (Lipinski et al., 2008).

Turner (2010) suggests that origin stories play an integral part to a breed’s perceived value (see Cheang, 2006). Interestingly, Fox and Gee (2016) suggest that origin has become more important to guardians with the advent of genetic testing, even for pets from a non-specified breed. For older breeds where physical documentation of the breed’s origin are minimal, fictitious narratives have emerged (Felius et al., 2015). Coppinger and Coppinger (2016) propose that some dog breeds, such as the German Shepherd are perceived as being ‘closer’ to wolves. Furthermore, the Greyhound is often presented within rescue circles as one of the oldest dog breeds dating back to Ancient Egypt as an attempt to combat their association with the racing industry, despite evidence to the contrary that places its origin within the last 400 years (Madden, 2010).

My research found place of origin to be a significant recurring factor within cat breed narratives, and a number of cat breeds similarly have romanticised origin stories. These ‘romantic origins’ can be argued as ‘invented histories’ that became fixed to particular ‘exotic’ breeds (Fox, 2009: 99). The Birman is mythologised as originating from the temples of Myanmar where they were believed to be sacred and host the souls of dead Kittah priests (Madden, n.d; TICA, n.d(a)). Despite often being referred to as the ‘sacred cat of Burma’, the breed almost went extinct following WWII, with only one pair surviving. The breed was recreated through ‘outcrossing’ with other breeds and there is some discussion as to whether the contemporary breed should be associated with

Burmese origins at all (Halls, 2008; Hartwell, 2016). A cat historian told me that she believed, “the modern Birman to be French in origin. I will concede that it may have been bred to resemble cats seen in Burma”.

The Egyptian Mau is associated with romantic links to Ancient Egyptian ancestry.

The CFA states that:

When an Egyptian Mau poses regally on a judging table and gazes out with its haunting, imperious eyes, one can envision these creatures gracing ancient Egyptian temples. And grace them they did. The Egyptian Mau was worshipped by pharaohs and kings (n.d: n.p).

Lipinski et al. (2008) warn that Egyptian Maus are at risk of losing their genetic history due to breeding with other breeds from other geographic locations. However, as noted by Kurushima et al. (2012) all contemporary domestic cats show evidence of an ancestral connection with the Ancient Egyptian cats through their mitochondrial DNA.

One breeder, Rachel, imported her Norwegian Forest Cats from Norway, when asked why, she responded:

I kind of didn't want [for example] Polish Norwegian Forest Cats ... The judges in England with the GCCF ... they only see the English cat, so they see them over and over again ... they're one or two big breeders who ... take six cats to a show, so our judges see them and eventually I think you become used to it, and you feel that is the right type ... I wanted to keep mine as close to Norway as they were, and as close to the original standard of points as they should have been.

The above quote from Rachel demonstrates the perceived importance of origin to her and keeping her cats similar to the 'original' breed standard because she wanted to keep her “lines as Norwegian as possible”. At the Westminster Dog Show's 'Meet the Breeds' cat exhibition, these origin stories are perpetuated through what are described as 'elaborately decorated booths that depict fun elements from the breed's history' (Westminster KC, 2016: n.p). In the UK context, cats on exhibition may have decorations on their pen that link them to

the breed's supposed place of origin. At the Supreme Show, the stall surrounding the promotion of the Australian Mist breed was covered with Australian paraphernalia including flags, toy koalas and kangaroos. Additionally, the Turkish Van cats were sat upon Turkish flags (see figure 9) and a Maine Coon had American flags decorating her pen (see figure 10).



Figure 9: Turkish Van with Turkish flag (Photo credit: Author, 2018)



Figure 10: Maine Coon with American flags (Photo credit: Author, 2018)

Maine Coons are believed to originate from Maine in the USA. However, in addition to the importance of place to their breed narrative, size is arguably the most important factor to their status as 'gentle giants'. As with certain dog breeds, size is very important to Maine Coon breeders, with weight acting as a 'badge of honour' (Milne, 2018a: 90). Multiple guardians of Maine Coons told me unprovoked how much their cat weighs and would often emphasise that they were still growing. Erica told me about her cat, Thomas, "he is my largest Maine Coon weighing in at just over 11 kilos. He will be 9 years old this June and has the most wonderful and loving temperament. The perfect example as they are known as 'gentle giants'". Alyssa also mentioned the weight of her cats when telling me why she loved Maine Coons, "I mean Hercules, he was 25 pounds, which is the size of a female Staffordshire bull terrier. So, they've got that presence as well over other cats". Additionally, it is very common for people to mention the weight of their Maine Coons on Facebook groups when displaying pictures of their cats and to hold them stretched out in the picture to demonstrate their size.

Despite the narratives behind many breeds, for the vast majority of people when asked why they are involved with particular breeds, the response came down to their aesthetics and temperament. Common responses emerged such as, "[I] just love them, love their looks, love their temperament. And they're just really good companions" and:

They look like proper cats, they haven't got anything extreme about them. They haven't got long fur or anything, flat noses or short tails and all the other things that are quite extreme about some breeds ... But the temperament is to die for, they are absolute love bugs.

Farnworth et al. (2018) found that preference for particular cat breeds was predominantly influenced by culture and previous experiences. For instance, those residing in Asia showed a greater preference for brachycephalic and

dolichocephalic (longer face) features. Farnworth et al. (2018) postulate that this preference could be a result of breeds with these features originating from these areas, such as the Persian and Siamese. Furthermore, Derry (2018) posits that despite advances in genetic knowledge, cultural ideals on animal beauty have not changed to reflect this increased understanding. Overall, breeds have significant social meaning in addition to their perceived genetic 'value' (Feliuss et al., 2015) which validates this thesis as an exploration of the culture of the cat fancy.

The breed mythologies and origin stories that have emerged for each of the cat breeds help to perpetuate their existence. It can be stated that 'the elaborate categories of the cat fancy were, among other things, an exercise in projection and fantasy; most feline breeds were verbal rather than biological constructions' (Ritvo, 1987: 120) and to some extent this still extends to the contemporary cat fancy. Acting as distinguishing features from other cats and especially from non-pedigree cats, these narratives help to justify the perceived importance of maintaining breed lines and implementing the biopolitical decision-making, care and breeding practices discussed throughout this chapter. Further, these stories contribute to the cultural values placed upon the cats and fuel the increasing manipulation of feline bodies in the aim of creating ideal breed representatives as celebrated at shows.

Chapter Summary

Eugenics has been generally examined from an anthropocentric position. Yet looking specifically at the cat fancy has demonstrated that there are similarities between reproductive interventions conducted upon humans and other-than-

human animals. These include sovereign and trans-biopolitical modes of power, such as sterilisation, biosecurity procedures, vaccination programmes, euthanasia, and selective breeding. There is also an increasing utilisation of genetic and reproduction technologies that are enabling greater manipulation and control over feline bodies. As such, 'both human and animal bodies can be subject to violence in the name of the improvement of the species' (Danahay, 2012: 479). Examining the underlying rhetoric and interventions that are shaping cat bodies, this research highlights the gravity of some of the practices and discourses within cat breeding and how they are justified by participants. Certain individual cats only have value to the fancy in their reproductive capabilities, such as the wild cat species used in hybrid breeding and non-pedigree cats used to 'improve' or create new breeding lines. The normative management practices involved with keeping male cats for breeding also arguably prioritise reproductive capacity above well-being.

The governance structures within the fancy discipline and disseminate norms of care and biopolitical 'truths' concerning what a cat should be and there is also an element of self-governance within groups and by individuals. Many breeders are working for what they perceive as benefits to the breed as a whole by improving and perfecting their breeding lines. Eugenic notions, however, underpin the production of particular kinds of cats at the expense of others. At the same time, eugenic and biopower interventions attempt to bring order and control to feline processes of reproduction. I have illustrated the modes of control exercised over feline bodies, both at an individual and population level. The production of 'ideal' breed specimens represents an attempt at mastery and dominion, however, despite significant effort on the part of breeders there is a high degree of unpredictability in what kittens will be produced from attempts to mate cats

selectively. Eugenic ideals in practice are a lot messier than in the abstract. Attempts in the cat fancy to control feline reproductive and genetic agency, to mould the feline form, encounter resistance and uncertainty.

Chapter Six - Cat Fancy Sociality: The Serious Leisure of Exhibiting Cats

In this chapter¹⁶, I explore the process of becoming a cat fancier using the notion of 'serious leisure' (Stebbins, 1982; 2015). I identify the sociality and identity formation of involvement as key motivations for ongoing participation. With the famed popularity of 'internet cats' and the general role of the online sphere within everyday life, I also look at the position of social media within fancy sociality. I then extend the concept of serious leisure by investigating the consequences of engagement for both human and feline participants. Overall, I will argue that despite being a *multispecies* serious leisure activity, human-human sociality is prioritised in the cat fancy.

The Cat Fancy as Serious Leisure

Leisure refers to an 'uncoerced activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and, in either a satisfying or a fulfilling way (or both), use their abilities and resources to succeed at' (Stebbins, 2015: 2). There are three main types of leisure identified by Stebbins (2015) which can often overlap: 'casual leisure' referring to short-lived and instantaneously rewarding activities requiring minimal training, such as watching television, 'project-based leisure' including infrequent time-defined tasks such as working on a garden project, and 'serious leisure'.

Stebbins defines serious leisure as the:

Systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in a typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centred on acquiring and expressing a combination of special skills, knowledge, and experience (2015: 3).

¹⁶ This chapter on serious leisure forms the basis of a recently published paper (see Stone, 2019).

Instead of the commonly held view of leisure as the opposite to work, some forms of leisure require 'obligation, commitment and responsibility, often to a level equivalent to, or exceeding, that assigned to those "work-like" activities' (Green and Jones, 2005: 166). I contend that the cat fancy can be seen as a form of serious leisure.

As suggested by Stebbins in the quotation above, serious leisure participants are generally categorised into three types. Participants can be 'amateurs' who are involved in an activity in which professional counterparts also participate, such as sports or the arts, 'career volunteers' who provide uncoerced help beneficial to others and themselves, and, arguably the most appropriate category to describe many cat fanciers, 'hobbyists'. A hobby is described as 'a specialised pursuit beyond one's occupation, a pursuit one finds particularly interesting and enjoys doing because of its durable benefits' (Stebbins, 1982: 260). However, there can also be 'commercial' counterparts within breeding, for example those who breed cats for financial gain, often referred to as 'backyard breeders' (Stebbins, 2015) (though those deemed as breeding for profit are often ostracised from the main avocation of 'hobby breeders'). Furthermore, there can be 'voluntary' aspects with participants volunteering to assist in the organisation of shows. Stebbins refers to dog sport activities as a 'making and tinkering' hobby, in the same category as crafts, due to the desire from human participants to "make" their dogs into competitive animals' (2015: 18). Following this line of thought, the exhibiting of purposely bred cats could also be regarded as such a hobby, implying that the cats are seen in part as 'objects' to be shaped. All in all, it appears that the fancy is an example of 'mixed serious leisure' in that a person can partake in multiple serious leisure categories simultaneously (Stebbins,

2015), suggesting more complexity than the above system of categorisation readily allows.

Stebbins (2015: xii) refers to the study of serious leisure as a form of 'positive sociology' because unlike the predominant 'problem-centred' view of sociology, it is focused on the study of people's organisation of their lives in pursuit of fulfilment. This view draws on a longstanding perception of leisure, traceable to Greek and Roman thought, as 'a sought after and inherently positive state for those who were able to engage in it' (Gallant et al., 2013: 95). However, this notion overlooks the other actors who may be affected such as family and friends (Gallant et al., 2013), or those directly involved in the activity for whom it may not be rewarding, including the other-than-human participants.

Gallant et al. (2013) critique the concept of serious leisure on the grounds that it is almost wholly positive and neglects to report the costs associated with participation. For the humans involved, serious leisure pursuits are often seen as having substantial benefits, including personal rewards such as the development of skills and knowledge, self-gratification, the enhancement of self-image, and a number of social benefits incorporating interaction with others, a feeling of group accomplishment and group maintenance (Stebbins, 2015: 9). There are also costs involved, however, such as interpersonal conflict through power dynamics involved in the activity and its organisation, tension between family and friends outside of the activity, and dissatisfaction from bad performance (Lamont et al., 2014). There is also the possibility of participants taking risks to advance their leisure 'careers' that could result in injury or alienation (Gallant et al., 2013: 96).

In general, Stebbins (2015) argues that the rewards from serious leisure are usually perceived as far outweighing any costs. However, like Gallant et al. (2013)

I am wary of describing the activity in dichotomous terms, such as 'positive' and 'negative', as this negates the complexity of the experience and the fact that a benefit to one can be at the expense of another. Furthermore, research on serious leisure has often focused on the individual (Gallant et al., 2013), when it also has implications at a group or community level.

The activity of showing and breeding pedigree animals can be seen as a subculture in that it has its 'own specialised jargon, rituals of behaviour, and status hierarchies' (Hirschman, 1994: 630). These are transmitted socially as members of the group interact (Green, 2001). As such, serious leisure contributes to 'a sense of solidarity with the collective' in addition to the individual (Gallant et al., 2013: 102; Rojek, 2001). However, these group dimensions are also a potential source of friction. Moreover, although serious leisure provides a useful framework for exploring the level of commitment devoted to the activity, as will become apparent, the cat fancy can become more than a 'hobby' and instead becomes 'a way of life' for many, in part due to the quotidian care requirements that make it difficult to compartmentalise the activity (Dashper, 2017a: 3) and its integration into a sense of self. One of my participants, Alyssa, shared this opinion with me when she stated, "some people don't look at it as just a hobby, it is their way of life".

To account for some of the issues associated with the concept of serious leisure, Gallant et al. propose a revised definition:

The committed pursuit of a **core** leisure **experience** that is substantial, interesting, and fulfilling, and where engagement is characterised by unique identities and leads to a variety of outcomes for the person, social world, and communities within which the person is immersed (2013: 104, emphasis in original).

This definition is less prescriptive and allows for more nuance within people's experiences. Yet, the other-than-human dimension is still overlooked. My human

condition, of course, prevents me from truly knowing what it is to be a cat, and from fully understanding what matters to them (Lloro-Bidart, 2018; Warkentin, 2010). However, I believe that as researchers we have the ability and the responsibility to attempt to portray their experiences as well (see Birke, 2009; Gruen, 2015; Hurn, 2018; Milton, 2005). I will attempt to incorporate the feline experience and further highlight how cat showing practices and the power dynamics involved can result in human interests being prioritised, detrimentally impacting upon feline well-being.

The 'Process of Becoming' a Cat Fancier

Stebbins (2015) and Levine and Moreland (1995) list various stages in the development of a serious leisure career and associated identity. Although, the process is unlikely to be as rigid as their categories might suggest, they provide a useful way to explore some of the key themes and similarities between the experiences for human participants involved in the fancy. Syrjälä (2016) refers to the transition to a serious leisure participant as 'a process of becoming' rather than a series of definitive events. There will be other participants for whom immersion does not become a large commitment and they may only partake occasionally or cease association altogether. There is also a scale of involvement with people participating as 'dabbler neophytes' through to 'devotee workers' (Stebbins, 2014).

The first stage in the development of a serious leisure career is developing an initial interest in the activity, labelled as the 'beginning' (Stebbins, 2015) or 'presocialisation' (Levine and Moreland, 1995). Participants begin to form attitudes towards the activity and its associated cultural identity (Green and Jones, 2005). It can take multiple forms, including knowledge acquisition about

the activity from the media or social contacts (Green and Jones, 2005). People may initially acquire or purchase a cat without any intention of joining the fancy. In general, how people acquire cats as part of their household can vary. Some people may purposely look for a companion cat, whilst another may wait to find a cat needing a home (Downey and Ellis, 2008). While the reasons people choose to live with cats are diverse, companionship due to their appearance and personality is most often given as reasoning for acquisition of specific individuals (Downey and Ellis, 2008). A number of participants referred to the role of childhood companions influencing adult choice of pets, and this was also found by Downey and Ellis (2008). Furthermore, childhood experiences of kitten-rearing and being exposed to raising other young animals was highlighted as contributing to adult decisions to breed cats. When asked why she started breeding, Alexandria stated, "I'd always, as far as I can remember, had kittens around me ... I always sat next to my Grandma's chair, she had a sewing basket and there were so often kittens in this sewing basket. It was just one of those things that stayed with me". Hazel told me that she had originally planned to breed Ragdolls rather than Maine Coons: "I was going to go for Ragdolls because my Grandmother always loved Ragdolls, so it was going to be a tribute to my Grandmother."

In regard to initial engagement, many participants referred to being introduced through social contacts already involved, especially breeders from whom they purchased their pedigree kittens. Emma told me that she started showing after:

The ... breeder ... said, "well you really ought to show him, he's really good". And I said, my usual thing I'd been saying for years, "no no, it's an awful thing to do to cats, he'd hate it, I'd hate it" ... So, they said, "why don't you just take him to one and see if he likes it and if he really hates it, withdraw him?" So, when he was six months old, I took Lenny to a show.

Becky was also encouraged by the breeder:

I mentioned to the breeder that I'd looked into showing before and she basically went, "right, I'll enter you into this show, you just turn up with the cat, I'll do the rest" ... So [I] literally rocked up at my first show ... not having a clue what was going on, but having effectively a mentor that sort of walked me through it ... And then [I] kind of got the bug.

Kim indicated that she became involved serendipitously:

A complete accident, I never intended to. The friend I had ... our first Maine Coons from ... we were looking after a couple of her girls that she was planning on keeping for breeding and she ended up giving one of them to me for a birthday present, as you do. So, the plan had originally been that I was going to breed under her prefix but ... I had two litters from her under my friend's prefix and I decided with the girls that were actually mine to set up my own prefix and that was seven years ago. And so I did and I was hooked.

Human members of the American Kennel Club (AKC) also often become involved in dog showing after conversations with dog trainers at training courses, and there is a similar notion of the unplanned or involvement evolving (Baldwin and Norris, 1999: 7).

The second stage, 'development', refers to further immersion within the social setting as the activity becomes routine (Stebbins, 2015). Participants learn the subcultural and regulatory norms and rules within the social world and become embroiled into the 'community of practice' (Stebbins, 2015; Grasseni, 2005). There is a level of knowledge acquisition required to progress with a cat fancy career. Participants need to learn about the showing system, basic veterinary care and nutrition, feline reproduction, feline genetics and breed standards especially for breeders who are interested in introducing new colours and features to existing breeds. There is also a range of argot involved, particularly around the different terminology for different breeds and the varying prizes at exhibitions. Antonia told me, "I've only just got my head around 'Best of Variety' and I've been showing two years ... It's so confusing".

Part of this learning occurs through mentorship from those already established within the field. Mentoring was also found to be a vital component of the community involved with koi fish breeding and showing (Liu, 2012; Liu and Falk, 2014), as well as for dog sports (Gillespie et al., 2002). Those wanting to breed are expected to exhibit with a 'show neuter' (neutered pedigree cat) under the guidance of a mentor for a period of time before it is deemed acceptable by the wider community for them to breed. Motivations to mentor might include a desire to teach, but also extend to a perceived need to protect breeding lines and monitor competition. According to Audrey:

They can get shunned, the new people, if they don't get a good mentor right from the beginning who's willing to take you through it. I think they're quite happy to have more people exhibiting but as long as it's their cats and not somebody else's.

The importance of mentorship for accessing the group shows the value of social capital to the cat fancy, stemming 'not so much from *what* you know as *who* you know (and who knows you)' (Bourdieu, 2010; Thornton, 1995: 10).

Competitors may purchase equipment to enable participation and integration into the group (Syrjälä, 2016). This acquisition is not enough in itself to represent the commitment required for becoming 'serious', with some people purchasing the initial necessities and then not continuing with the activity. Instead it is the 'consumption, as well as on-going investment' that represents incorporation into the social world (Scammon, 1987: n.p). Individuals frequently make substantial changes to their everyday lives to accommodate their hobby. With dog sports, participants often make life decisions based on the needs of both the dogs and the sport, including selecting cars that will be suitable for transporting the dogs and equipment to events (Gillespie et al., 2002; Hultsman, 2012). Cat fanciers, especially breeders, make similar consumption decisions and changes to their homes to facilitate the activity. Sophia told me:

I have made a few changes to the house to accommodate my cats and my hobby. I removed nearly all the carpets and replaced them with laminate flooring ... I also put some flooring into a spare bedroom and created a kitten room with a six foot by six foot pen, a grooming table, and storage.

Becky explained the changes she would need to make to accommodate breeding her cats in the future:

I'll need a kitten room ... our house is crying out for an extension upwards to turn it into a four-bed. Now there's only me and my husband, so we don't really need four bedrooms. So ... our current spare room we'd make that into our office type room which would leave our current box room that I use as an office to be a laundry room day to day, but then if I were to have kittens, it's about eight feet by eight feet, it would be a perfect kitting room because it's really nice and secure but you could deck it out for the cats for the first few weeks of their life. But my house is pretty much already given over to the cats, so we've got floor to ceiling multi-level scratching posts, and all sorts going on.

This idea of the house being designed around the cats was also expressed by others, including Denise who described her substantial home alterations:

If you came to our house, it's sort of rather cat dominated ... The cats ... can go where they like. We have lots of scratching posts, climbing things for them all through the house and then in the garden because we have a very big garden, we've got ... a u-shaped run ... But it's also landscaped. My husband's done a really good job, it's got water features ... It's got things for them to climb up and walk up high. The middle section is ten foot high so they can get up really high. They've got patio areas, decking areas. And we've got artificial turf.

The physical changes made to homes and the products provided for the cats, such as multiple scratching posts and toys, show how cats have also become significant consumers (see Grier, 2006).

In addition to physical changes, it is not unheard of for people to change or quit their jobs to accommodate their hobby (Hultsman, 2012; 2015). Antonia told me:

I'm very lucky ... because I'm a stay at home Mum, I can be at home 24/7 for the kittens. A lot of breeders will book the week off work that their queen is due, so they'll lose out on annual leave ... to make sure that they're there for when the kittens are born ... You'll tend to find that breeders will work their holidays around when they know they've got to mate their queens ... So, you do tend to find very quickly that your life starts to revolve around the breeding.

Alyssa said, “in fact, a friend of mine, she actually gave her job up in a school because the headteacher wouldn’t let her have a week or two off to feed these kittens so she packed her job in”. These examples reveal the sacrifices that participants make for continuation of involvement and ongoing cat care requirements. The resource constraints from developing such a leisure career are not a possibility for all, and this demonstrates the inequitable nature of leisure that can often exclude the disadvantaged (Gallant et al., 2013: 100). As such, involvement within the fancy can be seen as a display of resources and capital.

After ‘development’, participants experience the next stage, ‘establishment’, once they have learnt the required knowledge and skills to fully operate within the social world. This stage is followed by ‘maintenance’ once they are established within the field. The motivations for continued involvement and exhibiting cats are multiple. It is also likely that the reasons for involvement may change over time (Baldwin and Norris, 1999). However, participants are heavily driven by social interactions. Profit is not admitted openly as a motivation behind breeding and showing cats. Breeders considered motivated by commercial incentives rather than the perceived self-sacrificial motivations of ‘good breeders’ are often deemed as ‘unethical’ or ‘backyard breeders’ (see chapter eight). As stated by Pamela, “money is a dirty topic in animal circles” and according to Kim, any profit made on the sale of kittens should be invested back into the care of the cats. Openly making a profit is seen as not putting the cats first. Zoe, who exhibits her Tonkinese cats and hopes to also start breeding once she has retired from her job, explained:

Breeding as a hobby means only one litter a year per cat really and is done for the love of the breed. You don’t make much money as all money is poured back into the kittens, health checks, food, toys ... Breeding as a business is a money-making exercise so the more litters, the more money.

These breeders often are not registered and let their kittens go early so as not to have to pay for vaccines, food and make more money.

Diana also mentioned that she felt breeding was a “hobby done for love and not business” and Becky stated:

There’s a real issue in the cat world with what we call ‘backyard breeders’ which is kind of the cat equivalent to puppy farms. And it’s a shame actually as it ends up with breeders getting a bad name when there really should be a distinction between the sorts of breeders who I associate with who if any of them break even they’re doing well, most of them are distinctively out of pocket.

Many of my participants explicitly stated that they did not breed in order to make money and they emphasised that their breeding involvement was part of their hobby. Likewise, within the dog world it is heavily frowned upon to admit to being motivated by profits (Gillespie et al., 2002). In this way, breeders are pursuing cultural/social capital rather than financial capital with ‘backyard’ breeders being seen as appealing to the mass market and producing ‘lower quality’ kittens (Bourdieu, 2010). The perceived higher-quality status of the pedigree cats was also demonstrated by another participant, Abbey, who was angry with an interested buyer who asked her to reduce the price by half for one of her kittens. The breeder responded by defending the price by reference to the level of care she provided and the quality of the cats she bred and suggested that this person buy a ‘moggy’ instead. Despite the significance of cultural capital to fanciers, shows do offer the opportunity for people to promote their breeding lines and display their cats to other breeders and the public. There is no doubt that the connections formed, negotiated, and maintained at shows lead to both the financial sale of kittens and the purchasing rights to the use of stud cats.

Finally, some people experience ‘decline’ from the activity (Stebbins, 2015). Decline can occur through ill health or the aging process when judging the cats

may become difficult or keeping multiple cats within the household becomes too hard to manage. Jessica told me:

I do wonder how long I will continue breeding for ... bearing in mind I'm 66 this year ... Will I start to subconsciously slow down or will I make a conscious decision to say ... I'm keeping no more cats or only one exceptional one ...? There's a limit to how long you can do it ... Especially if you're picking up two cats and you're walking up the garden with the best part of twenty kilos under your arms. They're quite chunky and it's all the cleaning ... One of my friend's does call me Mrs Bucket, she says she never sees me without a mop in my hand or the steamer going.

Jessica's reference to the level of physical work involved in caring for the cats is similar to (although perhaps less arduous than) the 'bodywork' and dirty work involved in the quotidian care of horses (Birke and Thompson, 2017; Coulter, 2016a).

Cat Fancy Identities

Research on serious leisure has often focused on the human individual (Gallant et al., 2013). However, leisure contributes to both personal and group identities. Serious leisure activities have their own social worlds where participants are part of a 'clearly identifiable group with its own norms, values, behaviours and even languages' (Green and Jones, 2005: 169; Taylor and Kay, 2015). Identity is seen as an active performance for the self and for others (Goffman, 1959) and through this performance to the other, 'identity is co-constructed as the meanings of activities and events are conveyed, negotiated and acknowledged' (Taylor and Kay, 2015: 263). As such, identity can be considered as 'multiple, changing and fluid' (Schally and Couch, 2013: 103) and it is continuously constructed and negotiated (Taylor and Kay, 2015).

Lamont et al. (2014) consider identity formation as compensating for any costs associated with an activity. Within the cat fancy, people are keen to speak about

their activities to other people and will 'present themselves in terms' of that activity (Stebbins, 1982: 257). When I asked interviewees to tell me generally about themselves, they would begin immediately to talk about their cats and their interest in the fancy. Within the dog fancy, AKC participants would refer to themselves as 'dog people' and others would also refer to them as such (Baldwin and Norris, 1999) and this has also been found for human-horse activities with people defining themselves as 'horsey people' (Dashper, 2017b). In the cat fancy, people similarly describe themselves as being 'cat people'.

Having companion animals has been described as an expression of self and a marker of identity for some guardians (Belk, 1988; 1996; Hirschman, 1994). Fox refers to a show animal's success as a marker of identity similar to 'proud parents of a child prodigy' (2009: 105). For instance, Lisa spoke to me about her cat, Misty:

She was overall 'Best in Show' at both those shows ... So [I am] really, really, really proud of her. She's so beautiful, because she's ... blue silver torti, she's ever so pretty. In the Norwegian you don't get points for colour or pattern, but I think if a cat looks really, really stunning then it helps.

Those involved in dog sports (Gillespie et al., 2002; Hultsman, 2012) and horse-related leisure (Dashper, 2017a) are often seen by non-participants as 'crazy' due to the level of commitment and passion involved. To outsiders, these can even be perceived as deviant activities (Gillespie et al., 2002) and participants can sometimes be seen as pathological (Dashper, 2017a). Participants in this research regularly describe themselves as 'crazy cat people' or feel that others perceive them as such. Antonia explained that, "my family are not cat people. They all think I'm absolutely crazy" and Charlotte told me, "I think everybody calls me the mad cat lady. They all laugh at me when I buy things and have all these cats." Barbara said, "everybody always knows me as the mad cat woman here, the neighbours think it's hilarious when they see me walking around the estate

with the cats on the lead.” Kim told me: “it’s lovely being in a show hall and you know, for a change not being the crazy person who has a dozen cats” and Jessica asked me, “so please tell me something, am I any different to any of the other breeders? Are we really all as crazy?”. In Geertz’s (2005) famous ethnographic text, Balinese cockfighters also referred to themselves as ‘cock crazy’ in reference to the amount of time, resources, and commitment given to their cocks and cockfighting.

‘Crazy cat people’ and especially ‘crazy cat lady’ are common tropes often associated with those who live with cats that does not seem to extend to other species or genders in the same way within wider society. Originally connected with witchcraft and then ‘old maids’ or ‘spinsters’, the ‘crazy cat lady’ is often seen as someone who has an ‘abnormal’ level of affiliation with cats (Jones, 2018a; Probyn-Rapsey, 2019). In part due to the cat’s appearance as aloof and independent (see chapter seven), there was concern that they were ‘the chosen allies of womankind’ who ‘sympathised with their desire for independence’ (Ritvo, 1987: 23). McKeithen refers to the trope as relating to someone who ‘loves cats too much, she loves them “more than people”, instead of a husband, and, quite literally, in place of heteronormative domesticity’ (2017: 124). However, it has to some extent been reclaimed as a positive marker of identity as demonstrated by the almost five million Instagram posts with the hashtag #crazycatlady. Jones (2018a: n.p) wrote in a recent Guardian article, that ‘millennial ailurophiles’ are discrediting the crazy cat lady stereotype by reframing their relationships with cats positively. Probyn-Rapsey, however, refers to a backlash to this more positive spin of the crazy cat lady with an ‘undercurrent of sexism and animalisation that situates women and animals as forming a dangerous alliance’ (2019: 177). Some of my participants strongly identified as ‘cat people’ and

particularly 'cat ladies', such as Hazel who introduced herself by saying: "I'm 37 years of age and absolute mad cat lady". Barbara told me: "I'm one of those mad cat ladies". Yet, despite this gendered cultural trope, there was a smaller proportion of men who also took on active roles within the cat fancy, especially within the higher ranks of the administration and judging positions.

As well as there being a gendered identity associated with the cat fancy, there is also identification around specific breeds. Syrjälä (2016) claims that 'breeds' can act as 'brands' which people group around building shared commonalities. Abbey told me that she felt she had two identities:

One as a Bengal and Savannah breeder and the other as a Russian Blue breeder. I have two separate Facebook accounts and two separate breeding friends: those that breed Bengals and Savannahs and my other account [for] those that breed Russian Blues.

Abbey claims that it is frowned upon within the cat fancy to have affiliations to different breeds, "in breeding there is snobbery and it's generally viewed that you are committed to one breed, the 'love of your life' breed, devoting everything to that breed". This commitment to one breed was demonstrated by Alyssa when I asked her why she had Maine Coon cats and she told me, "I'm just very loyal to the Maine Coons ... Just to quote somebody that I know, he said, 'Maine Coons are great and everything else is just shit'. I'd love that on a t-shirt." There are, however, numerous people who have more than one breed, and this is especially the case for those who do not breed but have cats as companions. Overall, there are a range of 'microcultures' that emerge within the larger culture, which participants within the cat fancy have to negotiate (Syrjälä, 2016).

Material Cultures

Individuals in serious leisure social worlds work hard to align with the wider group's cultural norms, values, and behaviours and they work on their self-presentation to showcase this assimilation (Green and Jones, 2005: 173). Within the fancy, group identification is often achieved through material culture, especially cat-themed clothing and products. Clothing can act as 'forms of extended personhood' and despite the personal choices people make as to what to wear there are constraints placed upon them by the judgements of others (Woodward, 2005: 34).

Gibson et al. (2002) found that being serious fans of the University of Florida American football team contributed significantly to identity and a sense of belonging that was made evident through choice of clothing, choice of colours when purchasing objects such as vehicles and also how people would describe themselves. It is common for people to wear cat-themed clothing to shows, as well as personalised outfits with their cattery names and logos printed on them. At one show, I saw a child wearing a jumper with 'apprentice breeder' written on the back. In addition, many cat fanciers also decorate their homes with cat-themed items, photographs of their cats, and they often have walls dedicated to their rosettes and certificates. Antonia told me that she has kept all of her rosettes: "I keep them as a memory, because they're achievements" and she plans to display them in the bedroom and living room because "I'm proud of my cats so want to show off their achievements, [and] because it's a shame to throw them away ... When prospective kitten owners come it means I can show off, and they're so pretty". The language used by Antonia implies that she sees the achievements as belonging to her cats as well as herself. Antonia's comment also suggests that there can be a 'proud parent' element to breeders'

relationships with their cats. In the below quote, Emma also denotes a shared achievement between human and cat. She explained:

We display ours on large cork boards on the wall, using mapping pins. Each cat has their own board, the successful ones have two. We like to display them because we're proud of our cats' successes. And we put in a lot of effort to win those rosettes, so it seems a shame to just put them in a box or a cupboard.

However, not all exhibitors valued rosettes in this way. Some people I met felt they had collected too many over the years and only kept those for the most significant achievements, such as 'Best in Show', choosing to store them in boxes. They would return other rosettes to show management for recycling or dispose of them. Ella told me:

Those that ours have won during the last twenty-five years are on boards upstairs in our spare room. The rest are in boxes in the loft ... Only we see them because they're in the back bedroom where I do my [show] reports. One board is Millie's and the other is PussCat's ... Both bring back happy memories of them ... It's just their certificates, Best of Breeds, Premier certificates and Grand rosettes.

All of Ella's newest cat, Oscar's awards were "proudly on display" in the lounge with the last rosette her cat, PussCat, won before he died: "the rest of his rosettes are upstairs but I just have to have that one there. It's good too that it is such a nice rosette to commemorate my precious rare treasure that he was. I miss him dreadfully." In addition to the display of awards, it is common practice for exhibitors to photograph their cats with their rosettes either at shows or once they return to their homes. These photographs are typically uploaded to Facebook.

Nadine told me about this practice:

On a Saturday night after we've been to a show, my Facebook is full of pictures of cats with rosettes, so you spend the evening congratulating everybody. First thing I do when I get home is take a picture of the cat with a rosette and once I've had my brew, I'll then stick my pictures on Facebook.

Overall it appears that there are variations in responses to the rosettes and awards and what they represent to people. Some, especially those who are

newer to cat showing, choose to display all of their awards within their homes, while others may select only the newest awards or those with most significance, and some people choose not to display them at all. For many, they represent hard work and achievement shared by themselves and their cats that they can show off to visitors, while for others they act as reminders of particular cats or happy memories. The rosettes act as 'biographical objects' for the intertwined lives of humans and cats (Hoskins, 1998).

Human Sociality at Cat Shows

The social aspects of being involved within the fancy were given substantial significance by the majority of participants. Charles and Davies (2008: 12) refer to shows as a 'means of establishing broader social networks' within a national network of others involved with breeding and showing animals. This network was also a theme within cat showing, but on a growing international scale with relationships developing across national boundaries following the importation and exportation of cats and the formation of international online cat fancy groups.

Bradshaw (2017: 284) argues that fanciers see their cats and dogs as a way to meet 'like-minded' people. Hultsman (2012) found that many dog agility participants referred to their social interactions and friendships as reasons for their continued engagement. Many of my participants also described socialising with people with a shared interest as a driver behind their involvement. Charlotte told me, "it's quite nice because there are ... lots of like-minded people there [laughs]. You can talk cats and nobody minds". Furthermore, Audrey stated:

What I do like about the cat fancy is you meet all these like-minded people, but you don't know their backgrounds. You don't know who they are, and I think it's a great leveller ... It's giving you opportunities to meet people from different backgrounds with different skills or different life experiences ... You meet the person, you like the person ... you're not judging them.

Horses are similarly seen as social conduits across typical social stratifications, such as age and status (Dashper, 2017a). An attempt at socio-economic flattening was a factor in the initial formation of the dog fancy in the nineteenth century where it emerged as an urban middle class activity that, despite still being exclusionary, was believed to offer ‘a vision of a stable, hierarchical system, where rank was secure and individual merit, rather than just inherited position, appreciated’ (Ritvo, 1987: 84). The fancy can be seen in some respects as acting as a social leveller (Jones, 2005). It could also be suggested that rather than like-minded, cat fanciers are ‘like-animaled’, sharing an orientation towards the same species.

As well as the shows, social connections appear to build around the movement of cats between people through the buying and selling and the hiring of cats as stud for breeding purposes. Gillespie et al. (2002) found that purchasing a dog often resulted in people being treated as family. This development of kinship also appears in the cat fancy, where participants refer to and keep in contact with those who have purchased their cats. Olivia said, “I keep in touch with every single kitten of mine” and Jessica told me:

Lots and lots of them are in contact. I mean Rachel had a kitten in the spring, she was here visiting today. I have somebody coming tomorrow who has three of mine, she lives in Wales but regularly pops up and we go for lunch. You do build up a nice friendship with a lot of them. A lot of others, you’ll get emails and pictures and you’ll get updates but not on all of them. A lot of them you’ll get it in the beginning and then obviously it dies off which is natural. And I don’t expect them to keep in touch forever but there are quite a lot who do.

The human-based social aspects of the cat fancy are a key motivator behind continual involvement in the activity and contribute to identity formation. In the next section, I will discuss how this social interaction continues away from the show context, online.

The Digitising of the Human-Cat Relationship: The Role of Social Media

Social networking is a major communication tool used outside of the show environment for interaction between cat fanciers. As described by Dashper (2017a: 154) 'online identities reflect and reinforce user's offline [cat fancy] identities'. As such, social networking is a critical aspect of an exploration into the social aspects of the cat fancy. I will explore three main uses of social media that emerged, including as a form of promotion, support and positive social interaction, and as a source of conflict. Facebook was the main website used by my participants. Facebook most likely needs no introduction, with over two billion users globally (Titcomb, 2017), however, it broadly works to enable its users to:

Present themselves in an online profile, accumulate 'friends' who can post comments on each other's pages, and view each other's profiles. Facebook members can also join virtual groups based on common interests ... and learn each other's hobbies, interests, musical tastes, and romantic relationship statuses through profiles (Ellison et al., 2007: 1143).

According to Tosun (2012: 1511) Facebook is used for three main purposes, to maintain long-distance connections, to organise in-person social interactions, and to build new relationships. However, it also allows the user to express their social identities through the display of their interests such as music and movie tastes (Dalsgaard, 2008) or their hobbies. 'Social networking sites are more than just a reproduction of the work of distinction that takes place in real social life' (Dalsgaard, 2008: 9) and Hagan et al. (2017: 673) suggest it 'adds a layer of self-expression for the user'. This expression is further made possible with the display of social connections, photos, and videos (Dalsgaard, 2008). Users on Facebook are thought to typically present themselves and their lives with a 'positivity bias' (Lee-Won et al., 2014; Reinecke and Trepte, 2014). People can protect their self-presentation by controlling what information is made available about the self or

by actively constructing and sharing positive information (Lee-Won et al., 2014). However, other studies have found that Facebook users present accurate representations of themselves rather than idealised versions (Back et al., 2010; Gosling et al., 2007). Additionally, it has been argued by some (Seidman, 2014; Tosun, 2012) that internet use provides the opportunity for people to present their 'true-self' that they may feel unable to share in face-to-face interactions. Overall, it is perhaps the case that positive authenticity is shared more commonly on Facebook than negative authenticity and is likely to receive the most reinforcement from the wider community (Reinecke and Trepte, 2014).

Identities are also constructed online for cats, and people may create individual profile pages for their cats. Through these profiles, guardians will sometimes speak or write as their cat (see Schally and Couch, 2013). Dashper refers to similar behaviour in the horse world as showing 'the propensity ... to attribute personalities to horses, as well as agency to speak and express likes and dislikes' (2017a: 144). The creation of these identities is based on what the human perceives their cats to be like. Some fanciers use a feline-based language, where certain words are replaced with a cat-related term, such as 'pawsome' for awesome, or using alternative spellings for words such as 'hooman' for human (Schally and Couch, 2013). The ways in which people construct profiles for their cats and pretend to speak on their behalf suggests that the cats manage to convey some sense of subjectivity to their guardians. Their guardians respond to this expression by generating a human voice for them and speaking/Facebooking on their behalf. However, the cats have no meaningful control over what is said about them or on their behalf over the internet, a sphere in which their agency is even further reduced than in 'face-to-face' interactions. I will return to the use of

social media for portraying the cat's place within the family and their perceived identity in chapter seven.

Promotion and Commerce

The use of the internet for selling companion animals and other related products is a growing trend (CFSG, 2015). For instance, the role of 'pet influencers' is a rising phenomenon. These are companion animals with dedicated social media accounts that accrue large fan followings and are used by companies to market products. Some estimates place accounts with over 100,000 followers as making between \$3,000 to \$15,000 per sponsored social media post (Solon, 2018). More specifically in the cat fancy, social media and the internet have increasingly been used as a tool for promoting breeders and advertising cats for sale (see CFSG, 2015). Facebook was found by Brown (2016) to be a technology aiding in the sale of horses and this has also been the case for cats. Many breeders have their own cattery websites and/or pages on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram. Olivia told me about how people find her to buy kittens:

A lot of them are word of mouth that often come through from private emails and then I direct them to the website just to complete the form. But I'd say probably 50% are word of mouth, and then the rest of them are randomly searching on the internet and finding my website and on Facebook.

Sophia uses the internet in various ways to advertise her kittens:

I have a website and a Facebook page, plus a Twitter account for my cattery. I advertise on Pets4Homes, Kitten List, Breeders Online, Turkish Van Cat Club, TICA website, Vangoran website [Turkish Van related website], on my own page, on Yell.com, on my webpage, and on various other Facebook pages relating to cat [and] kitten sales.

Beatrice who is new to breeding cats told me that posting about her litter on social media has resulted in enquiries without actively having to advertise her kittens:

The lady that has reserved Jazzy saw my picture on ... Facebook, and [it's] the same with the lady who's coming on Saturday for one of the

chocolate girls. So, I have not officially advertised my litter. And ... with Facebook, I'm already getting enquiries.

Many breeders informed me that they preferred to use social media as it meant that they could more easily examine potential buyers through their profile pages before meeting them for the first time.

The use of social media has enabled a global exchange of kittens to become more feasible, as Rachel stated, "when I have kittens I put them on Facebook and I've got a lot of breeders across the world that watch my lines and sometimes want a kitten." Marina was waiting for a kitten from Ukraine that she had seen advertised on Facebook: "I mean it's a wild, wild extravagance. But I'd been looking and looking. This cat kept coming up on Facebook, her owner trying to sell her for months ... and I kept looking at her and looking at her."

Despite being policy for some time, in April 2019, Facebook began to actively ban posts advertising pets for sale in line with its Commerce Policies (Facebook, 2019). One person advised group members that, "Facebook are removing all for sale ads from FB. We can no longer mention in the thread that kittens are for sale or available", whilst another advised breeders to be careful how they worded their posts and to direct people to their own websites. As this poster implies, breeders are finding ways to get around new rules restricting the advertising of cats.

Social media also provides the space for people to post about their achievements within both breeding and showing, which as well as increasing social status also indirectly acts as a promotional exercise for breeders. There is also an etiquette where exhibitors showing cats that have been bred by someone else highlight the breeder in any reporting of the cat's show success. If a cat wins at a show, it is commonplace for the exhibitor to write a post on social media reporting the

success while also tagging and naming the breeder of the cat. In this way, social media acts as an avenue for the expression of the breeder's skill through their role in the production of the 'ideal' cat. This again shows the distributed personhood (Gell, 1998) of the breeder through the cats, whereby the cat becomes synonymous with the human who created them even when separated.

Support and Social Connection

In addition to promotional activity, social media provides the opportunity for members of the cat fancy to keep in contact outside of in-situ meetings at shows. Social networking sites enable completely 'virtual' connections to emerge, but most commonly people connect online with those with whom they have offline 'latent ties' (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Suphan and Mierzejewska, 2016). The advent of new digital technologies has 'blurred if not broken the boundaries of space and time', making socialisation easier at a global level (Terras et al., 2015: 131). Judy who travels globally to show her cat under TICA said:

The positive side is I keep in touch with my friends ... for instance, I do a show in Paris ... and see all of my friends there but the rest of the year, of course, I don't. So, it's a great way to see how my American friends are, my friends from Brazil and Argentina and see how they're getting on, when you're not seeing them week in, week out.

The facilitation of socialisation by the internet has become part of everyday life for participants of the fancy, rather than a separate disembodied or virtual form of communication. As stated by Miller and Slater (2000: 7) 'these spaces are important as *part of* everyday life, not apart from it'.

Social media acts as a tool for people to connect during both good and bad times (Duggan et al., 2015) and human mothers have been found to use social media as a form of support (Djafarova and Trofimenko, 2017; Duggan et al., 2015). This support tool is also used by members of the fancy. People post celebrations

relating to their cats such as birthdays, positive health news, awards and wins at shows, yet they also post about the death of their companions, show losses, and ill health (see chapter seven). Candice experienced the loss of a 'singleton' kitten (a litter of only one kitten) a few days after birth and received a high level of support from others within the wider community. Numerous people sent messages of condolences and offered help. She told me that, "everybody's support has meant so much". Online sites provide the opportunity for people to deal with grief that is often disenfranchised within wider society by seeking comfort from those who understand the close bond between human and cat. Openly grieving companion animals is generally misunderstood and perceived as illegitimate within wider society (Packman et al., 2014; Rémillard et al., 2017). People will also often seek veterinary-based medical help from online groups. This help can sometimes be more harmful than helpful, however (see Dashper, 2017a). Groups and other forms of social media work to construct and disseminate norms of feline care. Social media also provides the opportunity for people to learn from others. Kylie told me that Facebook is useful for seeking help:

If you want any help you can say to someone, "oh help I've got this happening, does anyone know what that is?" ... I know there was one lady on a breeding page I'm on, [she] said there was something wrong, her cat was going into labour or something and there were people there middle of the night sending her messages saying, check on this, check on that, and you just feel someone is there with you even though they are not actually physically there.

Furthermore, Trudy uses Yahoo groups where she has "headed up novice breeder groups as support for breeders, new breeders as well as experienced breeders as you can never stop learning."

It should be noted that not all participants wanted to connect their personal social networking pages with their hobby. Victoria preferred to use the website,

PetForums, which operates as a passion-orientated networking website, for connecting with other cat fanciers. She claimed:

I think it's just nice to be able to go somewhere where you don't necessarily know the people ... and it's nice to be able to share photos and without too much other connection, if that makes sense? It's easier with strangers, I think. So I do use it a lot ... Of course, with Facebook unless it's a fake profile, you do know the people there, whereas with the PetForums you don't.

Victoria was, however, very much in the minority among cat fancy members to whom I spoke.

'Keyboard Warriors': Online Conflict

As well as the positive social interactions that can take place, Facebook is also a site for negative encounters. The existence of online conflict is in part due to social interactions online mirroring offline communication (Fox and Moreland, 2015) and with Facebook comprising such a large part of contemporary sociality it is not unexpected that any offline antagonism would continue online. However, these negative experiences have generally been overlooked within research (Fox and Moreland, 2015). Social media can be argued as 'extending the capabilities of hostile parties to monitor and disrupt relationships' (Kirksey et al., 2018: 11). People use Facebook as the place to air their grievances with others. Abbey told me that it was common for breeders to work together until:

Something goes wrong, [and] it can be disastrous ending up with slanderous comments all over Facebook ... Like for example two breeders adore each other, one lends a female breeding queen and asks for one female offspring back and first pick of litter. Then other breeder decides that's not happening as she spent X amount [of] money on getting the cat well after it had an illness, she accuses the other breeder, so that breeder refuses to give back a kitten and there's a Facebook war.

Known as 'Facebook wars' or people behaving as 'keyboard warriors', online debates and arguments are common practice across social media. Sophia also mentioned this conflict, "Facebook seems to be the tool people use to bitch and

upset people, plus spy on them so that they have information to use against them". Audrey admitted to 'spying' on others using Facebook:

I went onto Facebook because I was interested in what certain people were posting to keep an eye on them because I thought they were loose cannons ... And to inform, sort of like intelligence really, about certain people ... Some of the spats that have happened are shocking ... But people don't realise, they're keyboard warriors ... and they don't realise that they are actually cyberbullying people. And it's horrific, some of the stuff I've seen.

The kind of behaviour Audrey describes can be seen as a form of 'lurking' where a participant may be an 'active observer who learns about a site through initially watching and reading' rather than actively participating (Kozinets, 2010: 34). Lurking is now considered a 'normal' online behaviour with many people choosing not to actively participate (Tosun, 2012; Bender et al., 2011).

Lisa felt that Facebook groups were enabling the expression of maliciousness but that this wasn't confined to the fancy and instead is representative of wider society:

There's quite a lot of chat groups on Facebook, one of them is called 'Friendly Felines' and it's quite funny 'cos it's a bit of a misnomer really [laughs]. But I think there's a lot of bitching that goes on Facebook but I just try to keep out of it. I can't understand why people have to be nasty to people. I mean you don't have to like everybody but you can just be nice ... You get that on things like Facebook and Twitter don't you? I don't think the cat world is any different.

This opinion was also shared by Judy who experienced online bullying from another member of the cat fancy which resulted in a court case:

As with most things now, Facebook seems to be the chosen message to communicate with anybody, including your own family. But equally, it's very easy for people to hide behind it and that is the kind of worrying aspect. And you do get darn right bullying, as I said, what this one particular individual did to me ... but she hides behind the keyboard and that's what you get, people are very brave, they're not when you're face to face with them. But I think that's the same for society full stop now on social media.

As can be seen from the above, the 'dark side' of Facebook enables people to bully and harass other individuals and this is not unique to the cat fancy (Fox and Moreland, 2015: 169).

Despite the previous discussion on the use of Facebook for help and learning, negative interactions can arise for individuals requesting support. Beatrice was seeking advice on the sex of her first litter by posting pictures of their genitalia:

With it being my first litter, I was more or less satisfied that the girls were girls, but it was Timmy, I couldn't really make my mind up whether he was male or not ... And I did put it on Facebook ... asking for help to find the gender of Jimmy. There was one person who put, "if you're a breeder why would you even put this question?" ... Luckily a lot of other people also jumped on the bandwagon, also said "look this is a place where people are learning, you coming out with comments like that is going to close everything down. We need to encourage people into cats and here you are, you've got a novice breeder whose got a question and you're coming out with that".

Social media continues, enhances, and intensifies offline communication. It has become a large part of cat fancy sociality acting as a place to sell cats, share success and failure, promote the self and increase status, communicate grief, seek advice and help, build group and individual identities, as well as argue and fight. It also acts as a means of debating and moulding cat fancy norms of care and shaping cats as particular kinds of animals.

Consequences of Cat Fancy Participation

Describing involvement in the fancy as serious leisure acknowledges the investment made by participants particularly in terms of time, money, and personal relationships (Lamont et al., 2014). The financial costs incurred from showing were reiterated by multiple participants. These costs include travel to shows often hundreds of miles across the country and the price of hotel rooms in cat-friendly establishments. Entry show fees typically average around £30-35 per

cat. For some, the financial investment is considered as prohibitive for regular showing. Olivia told me, “I have only showed them four times so far and would have done more had it not been for the costs involved ... it’s often more for one show taking four cats than it is for a two-week holiday to Florida!”. I will return to discuss the implications of cost in chapter eight as it is often associated with the decline of the activity.

Cat exhibiting provides ‘career’ opportunities for progression within the ranks and typically as people spend longer within the fancy they take on more roles. An escalation of involvement can therefore sometimes occur regardless of available resources (Stebbins, 2015). Conflict between participants and external social relations such as with family and friends can result (Stebbins, 2015). Individual leisure has been associated with a negative impact upon marital relationships (Hodge et al., 2015). The impact of leisure on personal relationships has been explored in relation to competitive dog sports (Gillespie et al., 2002) which found that conflict could arise when attempting to balance family commitments with the hobby. Hultsman, who also looked at couple involvement in dog agility, found that even where one member of the couple has attended shows to support and help build their relationship, the ‘most meaningful interaction’ is nonetheless commonly between the main competitor and their dog (2012: 23). However, as already mentioned in chapter three, the time spent with their cats was hardly mentioned by the participants in this study. Unlike the dog world, few of my participants appeared to be motivated by building relationships with their cats. The relations that cat fanciers are seeking to create with their cats is not one of intersubjective fulfilment, rather the cats facilitate access to other types of resources and experiences for the fancier. In this research, the main source of positive interactions were with other members of the cat fancy rather than

accompanying partners or human and other-than-human family members. Only Sabrina told me about the shared activity between herself and her daughter, “my daughter loves it, she absolutely loves it ... When we go to cat shows, she’s in charge, she’s the one that can talk to people and look after her cat. And she gets one-to-one Mummy time”. For Antonia her hobby is her main priority regardless of her partner’s wishes, although he has increased his support over time. He will now drive her to some shows and has taken an interest in learning about breeding:

My partner is long suffering, [that’s] probably the way I would describe it. He knows it’s fruitless to attempt to dissuade me. He’s made all sorts of threats, he’ll leave me, he’ll change his bank account details, and I’m like ok, ok. It doesn’t work. So, he knows it keeps me happy, so he just kind of puts up with it, god love him.

These quotes show how the cat fancy can help to build and affirm relationships, although it can also put them under pressure. It also emphasises the focus on human-human interactions with the cats acting as social conduits.

Cattiness: Competition and Conflict

One of the major costs associated with engagement is conflict with other members. The level of conflict involved within show activities can be high and there are often fears of bias within judging circles (Baldwin and Norris, 1999; Gillespie et al., 2002). Alexandria believed that there was nepotism within the judging process, she told me:

It’s all supposed to be anonymous, it’s all in white, you’re not supposed to know whose cat is whose. Well it’s a load of nonsense. And if you’ve got a judge who breeds Burmese and she’s got a friend whose got her cat [there], you tell me that she doesn’t know that those cats are hers on that bench?

In contrast, Becky felt any bias was a result of individual subconscious preferences rather than deliberate bias:

I don't think they would necessarily be doing this intentionally. But as an example, I appreciate a nice Persian but I don't particularly like them ... It's just a personal choice. So, if you gave me a 'Supreme' Persian and a 'Supreme' Burmese, I would naturally go towards the Burmese from a subconscious perspective, however impartial I was trying to be.

In addition to concerns with bias, there can also be malicious behaviour towards others. Pamela alluded to this negative social aspect when she described how the café at shows “was invaluable for finding out which blood lines were having genetic problems, although one had to be careful with gossip as a reliable source of information”. Abbey described how she had witnessed fights at shows and had heard of cats being poisoned. This story was further corroborated by Pamela who conveyed stories of the harm that she has seen or heard being done to cats by other competitors, “poisoning is the most common but I remember a cat's ear tip being cut off, dye squirted on the coat, chunks of fur snipped off which finishes an Exotic Longhair's show season for the year. Kittens have been stolen from shows. It's rare but it happens.” Internet forums abound with stories of poisonings and sabotage at animal shows. In 2015, an Irish Setter dog died from poisoning shortly after competing at Crufts (Seal, 2016, Turner, 2015). However, following a full investigation, the poisoning is believed to have occurred in Belgium after the show and motives are impossible to ascertain (Crufts, 2015; Ratcliffe, 2015). It is very difficult to find confirmed evidence that poisonings have occurred at shows and I have not spoken to anyone who can validate these stories as anything other than hearsay. Less extreme than physically harming the cat, I have been informed that sabotage in the form of cutting whiskers and fur has also been witnessed: Erica told me that “thankfully I haven't had fur cut from my cats like a few others I know have had, so sad when it gets that competitive.” Furthermore, there are concerns that stewards may interfere with the cat during judging to prevent a win. Alyssa explained, “certain stewards can pinch a cat

when it's being judged, so it starts wriggling and they can influence the judges. This is rumour, I don't know if it's true but I can imagine with some people". Despite the unsubstantiated nature of these claims, as stated by Irvine (2013: 99), 'the facts matter less than the meaning the personal narrative conveys'. The rumours that circulate indicate the conflict associated with the showing world and also demonstrate how the cats can become embroiled in that (human) conflict.

Yet even with these negative implications, many people still continue to be active members. This persistent engagement was demonstrated by Antonia who explained to me that she had nearly quit her interest in the fancy due to experiences of exclusion and bullying. She chose to persevere instead, a choice she was now glad she made as she finally felt accepted having made new connections. This idea of perseverance is common within serious leisure, where people often have to endure setbacks such as injuries and losses (Stebbins, 1982; 2015). Instead 'positive feelings about the activity come, to some extent, from sticking with it through thick and thin, through conquering adversity' (Stebbins, 1982: 256). Maintenance of involvement and overcoming difficulties are common themes within serious leisure, where a high level of commitment can be sustained for substantial periods of time, often decades. Green and Jones (2005) refer to three main reasons for this continued commitment. Firstly, there is the 'profit hypothesis' where the benefits of involvement are seen as outweighing any costs (Stebbins, 1992; Green and Jones, 2005). Secondly, there can be a sense of social obligation to other individuals or the social group in general. Alyssa told me that she restarted showing after several years because of a sense of obligation to the breeder:

We went to have a look at these kittens and he said, "this one here, look at him, look at that head, he's the best male kitten I've bred in a long time"

... So, I said to my husband we'd just take him to a couple of local shows because I feel awful that we've taken a really good kitten.

Finally, there is the effect of social identification with the group. Jones (2000) argues that there are instances where people continue to engage in serious leisure even when the costs appear to outweigh the benefits because of the strength and value of this social identification.

Some participants want to 'win' at all costs and doing well at shows can become addictive. Scammon writes that positive 'extrinsic feedback' and winning ribbons from horse-based competitions can result in continual commitment, 'that first blue ribbon intensifies my perception of accomplishment and thus my satisfaction and demands even more effort to succeed' (1987: n.p). As already mentioned, success within the show ring can bring some indirect financial reward, through the promotion of breeding lines. However, more significantly, it brings status and recognition, which appears to be especially critical for breeders. This connection between status and success is perpetuated through the registry naming system, as discussed in chapter five, that results in breeders maintaining a relation to winning cats even after the cat has been sold (see Hurn, 2008). Baldwin and Norris (1999) noted that winning competitions and the associated impact upon the validation of identity was considered one of the benefits of active membership with the AKC. It was also found by Fox (2009) that despite most participants referring to enjoyment rather than winning as their motivator, most were disappointed not to win. This competitiveness was blamed for creating much of the conflict within the fancy by participants. Denise told me:

Some people are very, very competitive. And they want their cats to win at all costs. And if you're up against a good cat, the only way to prevent that cat from being shown is to go for the owner/exhibitor and try make life uncomfortable for them that they just don't show.

Sabrina noted that it is also driven by people's connection to their cats:

It's competitive. I think as it is in any competition there will be people who get very cross if they lose. Then you have the emotional side that is attached to that because that's their baby ... You're saying that their baby is not good enough and people can get really cross about that.

Sabrina's comment suggests that cats can represent an extension of the self and it also refers to the kinship bond that people can develop with their cats. Rachel shared her experience of dealing with this level of competitiveness:

They do get competitive. My first experience, I'd met a local lady who was also breeding Forest Cats and I became friends with her ... And we went to a show together with my first breeding cat, and I got 'Best in Show' and I didn't realise how wonderful it was, it just happened. And she said, well done and all that ... And then the next show I went to I also got 'Best in Show', and she was a bit cooler with me. [I] didn't really understand why because ... we were friends. And then on the third show, she walked past me and she's never spoken to me again for thirteen years because I took my cat again. And there was no reason besides the fact that my cat had done well and that's quite typical in the cat world. If your cat does well then everyone wants to stab you in the back.

The focus on an 'ideal specimen' for winning at shows is countered by a common meme that regardless of how your cat does on the day, you always take the best cat home. Beatrice told me, "at the end of the day, I take the best cat home every time" and Jessica stated, "you go out there, you pay your money and you just think I don't really care if I win or not because I've got the best cat in the whole show to go home with me", and Louise said, "the cat you take home from the show is the best cat whether it has won or lost because it's yours". However, I would suggest that many of these statements are quoted as a group mantra, rather than being representative of actual emotions. Sienna told me: "everyone says, oh you take the best cat home. That's sort of like a cliché really, you always take the best cat home. But it's the ribbons that you want, it's the ribbons and the prestige that everybody's after [laughs]" and this was also supported by Emma, "there's a saying among show people, well it really doesn't matter, we take the

best cat home. But somehow the further along they get, the more competitive people seem to get”.

What about the Cats?

Previous studies that have looked at other human-animal activities as a form of serious leisure have failed to acknowledge the dyad involved (Carr, 2014; e.g. Baldwin and Norris, 1999; Gillespie et al., 2002; Hultsman, 2012), often prioritising the human-side of the relation and focusing extensively on any consequences of the activity for humans. Building further on the discussion of feline agency and resistance in chapter four and the rumours surrounding sabotage and cruelty, there are clearly substantial costs involved for the cats and little discernible direct benefit. I did meet some cats who appeared to respond positively to being in the show environment. At one of the Supreme shows I visited, Whiskers, a large Maine Coon, sat on the foldaway grooming shelf on the outside of his pen, while large groups of up to ten people at a time stood around him. Whiskers accepted interactions from those with permission to touch him from his guardian who was sat next to him and Whiskers reciprocated by bunting and rubbing his face against their hands. I would suggest, though, that based on my observations cats such as Whiskers were in the minority.

Travel to shows is a significant part of the cat fancy and as noted in chapter three, it can have consequences for the cats confined. Some people do recognise some of the costs of long distance travel to the cats, despite still showing them. Lisa said, “I don’t think it’s fair on the cats if you travel too far” and Alyssa expressed further concerns:

We know some people ... they’ll take four cats out every two weeks and they’ll go up to Scotland, they’ll go down to near London and they’ll get up at 2 o’clock, 4 o’clock in the morning, travel there and travel back again so

that poor cat has been confined in a pen while they're travelling, he's confined in a pen while he's at the show, and to me I don't think that's fair as the cats don't ask to go and do it.

Kylie described a recent show experience, "I had one next to me the other day that was panting away, he had an upset stomach and they said, 'oh he doesn't like travelling in the car', I said, 'why did you bring it?' 'Oh, we need one more to get an imperial [certificate], well why are you doing it? It's not fair on the cat.'" The prioritisation of winning at the expense of some of the cats was recognised by Becky:

I think there's people who should look more to the welfare of the cats than their own need for a rosette. And I see that as a steward you see, as I'm seeing the cats when people are out of the hall ... some are just plain unhappy and shouldn't be there.

Some participants informed me that as soon as their cats stop demonstrating behaviours that indicate enjoyment that they retire them from showing. Denise told me:

We have several cats that are very good types, have done very well at shows, got titles, and then have been taken to another show for the next level and they're not happy so we stop showing them because they obviously don't want to be shown anymore. They've done what they wanted to do ... I want the cat to be happy. It's not all about getting titles and winning prizes for us.

The motivation for retiring cats from showing is not only driven by welfare and individual-level concerns though. It can also be motivated by chance of success, such as stated by Victoria:

I have had cats who haven't particularly enjoyed it, but you just retire them because there's no point taking an unhappy cat out because part of the judging is the temperament, so you're looking for a happy, handleable animal, not something that wishes it wasn't there.

When I asked people about their cats who were showing signs of stress, I would often receive responses such as, "it's very hot in this hall", or "he's usually so good, he must have had enough today". Oftentimes, certain circumstances such

as poor handling by a judge would also be blamed. There seemed to be a general reluctance by exhibitors to accept that showing in general might not suit their cat, or to accept that they themselves were directly responsible for causing their cat discomfort. I would argue that some participants justify their actions or choose to ignore signs of discontent due to requiring their cats for their continual engagement within the cat fancy.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the social worlds inhabited by cat fanciers, both offline and online. I have taken the concept of serious leisure, typically associated with activities that require significant amounts of time, resources, and commitment, and interrogated how it applies to this particular context. I have extended serious leisure to overcome some of its criticisms including its overly positive approach that neglects the associated costs and inattention to others affected by the activity including other human 'outsiders' and other-than-human animals (see Gallant et al., 2013).

The role of learning and enskilment is critical to integration and the 'process of becoming' (Syrjälä, 2016) a cat fancier. It is deemed important for people to fully commit themselves to the relevant tasks if they are to be accepted within the wider group. 'Participants continually interact within the social world ... showcasing not just their skill, but their knowledge of appropriate values and behaviours' (Green and Jones, 2005: 172). Those that do not align with these values and practices are routinely excluded from the cat fancy, such as those who breed for profit.

Cats are central to the formation of individual and group identity in the cat fancy. Indeed, the institution allows for the creation, display and celebration of 'cat person' identity, a term which sums up the manner in which humans and show cats serve to co-produce one another. The social aspects of showing, however, are largely anthropocentric and focused on human-human interactions, with the cats acting principally as conduits for this interaction, and as markers of identity and status symbols. In fact, I have argued in both this and previous chapters that the fancy may be a form of serious leisure for human participants, but for the feline participants it may just be serious, if not more so. As I will discuss in the next chapter, these relations at the shows are in contrast to many of the interactions within the household, whereby the 'daily, on-going relationship blurs the boundaries between the leisure pursuit and the day to day relationship' (Baldwin and Norris, 1999: 1).

Chapter Seven - Love is Complicated: Cat Care Compromises and the Relational Entanglements with Harm

Despite arguing throughout much of this thesis that many elements of showing and breeding are anthropocentric and at times detrimental for cats, human-feline relations are complex and also entangled with love and intimate daily care. This paradox is similar to other areas of human-animal leisure. Syrjälä describes such ambiguity within human-dog activities: ‘the dog appeared as a status symbol or equipment for the avocation: and on the other hand, the dog is provided with the best possible care and elicits intense feelings of attachment’ (2016: 13). Yet, even these forms of care can have unintended harmful consequences. A loving relationship can involve unequal power relations and human dominance over other species. Bekoff and Pierce state that ‘although it is a good start, even love is not enough to ensure well-being for animals’ (2017: 121) and Tuan notes that ‘dominance may be combined with affection, and what it produces is the pet’ (1984: 2). The relations that emerge between human and companion animal are more complex than being based solely on human dominance, however, and include ‘reciprocal exchanges’ and emotional expressions of human and other-than-human agency (Fox, 2006: 529). Extending Tuan’s (1984) argument of human-pet interactions being based on dominance and affection, Nast incorporates love referring instead to ‘dominance-affection-love (DAL) relations’ (2006: 304).

In this chapter, I will highlight some of the intimate interspecific and intraspecific relations that occur within the fancy. This chapter will further probe the multiplicity of ways that the intersections of harm and care transpire by exploring pedigree cat care norms and practices within the household. It will examine three key themes that emerged during the fieldwork that demonstrate the entangled nature

of care, including voluntary kinship and shared rituals, the dynamics and interactions within multi-cat households, and the debate surrounding confining cats to the indoors. The overall aim of this chapter is to begin to question if current care practices are actually allowing cats to flourish.

More-Than-Human Care

Care is a contested and difficult term to define (Fraser et al., 2018). Tronto defines care in broad terms as:

Everything we do to continue, maintain, and repair our world so that we may live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web (1993: 103).

Birke et al. write that '[l]ooking after animals usually entails caring *about* them, in the sense of affectional bonds; it also requires caring *for* - in the sense of ensuring that physical and behavioural needs are met' (2010: 338). Practices of care are critical to the development of human-cat relations within the fancy, whether this be through daily intimate care, caring for the preservation of a certain breed (see chapter five), or cats providing care for their humans through emotional support.

According to Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) and van Dooren (2014: 291), care as an entity has three main characteristics: it is affective in that it requires an embodied emotional experience, it is based on an ethical obligation to look after the other, and it necessitates a practical element requiring the carer to do something in the process of caring. Holmberg (2011) similarly notes both the affective and practical elements within care for other-than-humans. However, care has what Martin et al. (2015: 627) term a 'darker side' through its exclusion of others that are not the target of caring practices and due to its asymmetrical power relations. This 'darker side' of caring relations has emerged for instance

within breeding decisions for the perpetuation of certain characteristics or genetic lines (see chapters four and five). Even within well-intentioned caring practices towards individuals, harm can ensue inadvertently, as demonstrated by the growing levels of companion animal obesity in the ‘West’ (Fox and Gee, 2016; White et al., 2016) or within some animal hoarding cases (Arluke, 2006; Arluke et al., 2017; Probyn-Rapsey, 2019). It is such unintentionally harmful care practices that I will focus upon. As stated by Puig de la Bellacasa (2012: 198) ‘caring or being cared for is not necessarily rewarding and comforting’ and as will become apparent, this can be the case for cat guardians and especially for the cats themselves. Firstly, I will delve into cat-human affective relationships to ascertain how caring relations emerge and manifest themselves.

Human-Cat Intersubjectivity

As outlined from the beginning of this thesis, I assume a position that other-than-human animals are sentient, minded (Sanders, 1993) individuals. This recognition is increasingly supported through research (see Procter, 2012) and personal anecdotal narratives, in addition to being obvious to anyone who shares their life intimately with another species (de Waal, 2019). Birke and Thompson (2017: 181-184) note that ‘If repeated anecdotes tell similar stories then they are telling us something that should not just be rejected uncritically’. There were many instances of my participants recognising sophisticated and intentional behaviours from their cats. Hazel told me the following story:

We keep a box of freeze-dried chicken on the side of the bed because ... our oldest cat ... she has got very severe dermatitis, so she needs to be on steroids ... So after she gets her pill she gets a piece of chicken as a treat. Now, Bonnie has worked out the box of chicken is kept in the nightstand ... We actually have to block the drawers to stop her opening them because, of course, being a Maine Coon she’s also very large and very powerful ... And she will knock everything off my bedside table just to make a point along the lines, “I want that chicken in the drawer”. But the

thing is she's doing it while purring her head off, looking at me and giving me blinky eyes and rubbing her tail all over me. And I'm like, "you stupid tart", but you can't get angry with her because she's being so cute and inventive about it, you can't help but laugh.

Pamela told me individual stories about each of her cats in turn, including: "my first stud hated my husband, showing that he was brighter than I was! And no matter where the man hid his shoes, he would find them and shit in them. Every day!" She also said that her cat, Missy, "loved parties and while the other cats retired upstairs when the guests arrived she would gleefully distribute long white hairs on everyone who stood or sat long enough".

Sanders (1999: xv) describes dogs as 'thoughtful and intentional individuals with whom we have ongoing interactions that parallel our social exchanges with fellow humans' and I believe the same can be said of cats. A number of scholars have utilised symbolic interactionism to explore these relations (see Alger and Alger, 1997; 2003; Irvine, 2004; Sanders, 2003). Based on Mead's (1962) theory that individuals act based on the construction of shared meanings through social interactions and the ability to understand and take on the role of the other, the capacity to act through symbolic interactionism has been increasingly discussed in relation to other-than-humans. The extension of this theory has occurred despite Mead's (1962: 182) argument that symbolic interactionism is nonapplicable to other animals due to their lack of spoken language and inability to recognise the influence of their behaviours on others (Alger and Alger, 1997). Mead's focus on spoken language is now largely considered erroneous, as there is recognition of the relevance and utility of non-verbal communication to intersubjective relationships. One of the common ways that intersubjectivity is argued as being apparent is through play, whereby 'within its mutually understood boundaries the players honestly or deviously signal their intentions, adjust and

shape their own and the other's actions, and reinforce the communicative connection at the heart of effective collective action' (Hamington, 2017; Sanders, 2003: 415). These play interactions are also a demonstration of agency, as deciding to cooperate in play and follow certain rules requires a choice (McFarland and Hediger, 2009). Other species also share intersubjective relations with others and recognition of personality is often apparent through day-to-day interaction (Sanders, 2003). As an illustration, humans and horses communicate based on a kinaesthetic body language in an embodied form of symbolic interaction (Brandt, 2004). Alger and Alger (1997; 2003) used accounts by cat guardians and their own observations at a shelter, to demonstrate that cats can behave as minded actors, taking the role of the other, defining a particular situation, and making decisions on how to act. Being familiar with and aware of a cat's behavioural repertoire and interactional style can provide a glimpse of the individual's subjectivity.

The Commodification of Cats

Despite instances of cats and humans behaving in ways that demonstrate a capacity for intersubjectivity, there are also examples where aesthetic considerations are prioritised when purchasing cats. Research by Plitman et al. (2019) on the acquisition of pedigree cats found appearance to be the primary motivation for many, with the perceived likelihood of the cat making a good companion and health also factoring to a lesser extent. Through their (re)production for sale, cats are regularly commodified as 'lively commodities' who remain alive for 'the duration of their commodity life' (Collard and Dempsey, 2013; Collard, 2014: 155). As discussed by Collard and Dempsey in reference to the pet trade of exotic species which also extends to the sale of cats, 'the political

constitution of animals as existing *outside* of “the human” is a precondition of their formation into commodities, and their subsequent generation of value’ (2013: 2692).

Within online groups, it is common to see posts demonstrating commodification. One post stated, “any ... breeders that have any Abyssinian tawny kittens in stock? I’ve tried a few but nothing. Hope someone can help?”. Another person requested, “want to buy Tonkinese cat/kitten. Can anyone help?”. Furthermore, as well as the importance of a specific breed, interested buyers will often enquire if breeders have kittens with specific colours, coat patterns, and sexes when searching online. One poster asked, “Can anyone recommend a breeder who breeds big heavy kittens preferably with older style wider set ears and less ear tufts?”. Another person was asking for advice online as the kitten they had “reserved” turned out to be “ugly and small” and they wanted a refund from the breeder. Appearance is also a factor in adoption of cats from shelters and is therefore not only applicable to the cat fancy (e.g. Downey and Ellis, 2008; Podberscek and Blackshaw, 1988). However, some studies have found that factors such as personality and sociability are larger influences in shelter environments (e.g. Gourkow and Fraser, 2006; Sinn, 2016). This focus on aesthetic characteristics in the acquisition of pedigree cats does not mean that human and cat will not go on to build an intersubjective bond, but other priorities can take precedence over the desire to select a companion based on their individual personality. Kopytoff (1986: 64) noted that it was possible for ‘the same thing to be treated as a commodity at one time and not at another. And ... the same thing may, at the same time, be seen as a commodity by one person and as something else by another’. The cat fancy provides an example of the ‘dynamic nature of commoditisation’ (Wilkie, 2017: 287).

Perceptions of Cats and Breed Personalities

There is a long history of cats being perceived as independent and aloof (Atkinson, 2018; Potts, 2013; Ritvo, 1987) and memes abound on their supposed indifference towards humans. We are often depicted as their human ‘slaves’ and on social media there are regularly posts reflecting this. One person posted a picture of her cat lying on her back and wrote, “Dolly ... awaiting a human slave to meet her demands”, and another asked members of the group to introduce the cats they “are slaves to”. Shreve and Udell (2015) conducted a review on research into cat cognition and found that popular media articles tend to frame new research on cat behaviour and sociality in a negative light by spinning the findings. For example, they refer to research by Saito and Shinozuka (2013) that found cats were able to recognise individual human voices. The media response was largely to refer to cats as ‘selfish’ for hearing our voices and not responding to them in the same way a dog might be expected to (Shreve and Udell, 2015). The origins of the idea of cats being selfish is in part likely due to a level of misunderstanding and lack of knowledge regarding cat personalities, behaviour, and communication (Menchetti et al., 2018). These stereotypes can become ‘self-fulfilling prophecies’ with humans perceiving what they expect to (Dashper et al., 2018: 675). Such rhetoric is being increasingly challenged in light of growing knowledge of the complexity of feline sociality with conspecifics and other animals, including humans (e.g. Alger and Alger, 2003; Edwards et al., 2007; Wedl et al., 2011) and increasing research on the complexity and diversity of feline personality (e.g. Bennett et al., 2017; Litchfield et al., 2017; Turner, 2017).

The discourse around cats’ supposed ambivalence to humans is often contradicted by stories from ‘cat people’. Lisa told me her cats were “people orientated ... and they have such a lovely personality”. Another participant,

Candice, feels that her cats are strongly bonded with her to the extent that she “can’t leave them home alone” and when she went on holiday the cats were not happy being left with a cat-sitter. Outside of the fancy, within popular discourse, it is common for cats to be perceived as only interacting with humans to receive something, usually food or attention on their terms (Potts, 2013). Becky also shared this perception, “so a lot of people, well non-cat owners I should say, have this kind of impression of cats as being very aloof, well I’ll come if you feed me but other than that don’t touch me.” However, research has found although cats will choose to interact with those who typically feed them, they are just as likely to interact in similar ways with others within the household (Bradshaw et al., 2012). Additionally, it has been suggested that cats can suffer from separation anxiety when their guardians are absent (Schwartz, 2002), a condition more typically associated with dogs. This finding is reinforced by research from Edwards et al. (2007) while Heidenberger (1997) found that the indoor cats within her study would seek comfort from their guardians when scared. These advances in our understanding of felines confirm what many guardians have long known and demonstrate that cats are not anti- or asocial and that sociality is key to the bond between human and feline members of the fancy.

There is also an increasing recognition of individuality within feline personalities (e.g. Alger and Alger, 1997; 1999; 2003; Bradshaw, 2018; Farnworth, 2015; Feaver et al., 1986; Turner, 2017). Some of my participants also referred to their cats as unique individuals. Abbey told me that, “cats, they are all so different in their individual personality, like humans” and Charlotte said, “well, they’re all different personalities”. Many participants told me about each of their cats, taking time to explain their individual quirks. Furthermore, many people named the kittens who lived with them, even for short periods until they were bought, and

this process of naming can be argued as attributing personhood and individuality to others (Sanders, 2003; Taylor, 2007). Charles (2014) also refers to the significance of naming in the individuation of other species and in bond-building. Breed characteristics can contribute to the constructed identity of an individual, but the guardian will come to see the individual as more than a representative of the breed based on their ongoing interactions and the other-than-human animal's demonstration of individual personality and preferences (Sanders, 2003: 410).

Despite awareness of individuality, there appears to be a wider perception within the fancy that due to their breeding, pedigree cats are more predictable, both in terms of health outcomes and their personalities, as well as often being considered more actively social with humans than non-pedigree cats. Lisa told me: "I've always had moggies all my life ... the thing with moggies is ... they're a bit hit or miss in terms of personality." This was an opinion shared by Antonia who explained, "we wanted another cat but ... we didn't want to risk having a rescue who we had no idea of personality, no idea of heritage or anything like that. So, we wanted a safe bet with a pedigree that has a known personality." Furthermore, Sabrina stated:

This sounds awful, the relationship you have with a moggy is very different to the relationship that you'd have with a pedigree cat. I think that they need you more. I do have a moggy that stays in but ... she comes up and sees us ... when she needs feeding really. My pedigree cats, they need that pretty much constant attention ... time, and energy. They really want to be part of your life, way more than most mogs do.

This quotation indicates that some place value on cats that are more reliant on humans, and that have moved further away from a semi-domesticated condition (Bradshaw, 2013). The existence of such cats is likely the result of selection for more docile characteristics in breeding, similar to the selection for docile traits in farmed animals to reduce the likelihood of resistance (Gillespie, 2016).

There is clearly discomfort for some individuals related to the admission that they have better relations with their pedigree cats than they do with their 'moggies'. Sabrina admits that this idea "sounds awful". Becky also shared her thoughts on pedigree and non-pedigree cats and implied that she experienced guilt associated with keeping pedigree cats that was mitigated by also providing a home to non-pedigree cats:

I think the thing with going for a pedigree is you can assess fairly closely what you're going to get ... Breeds and certainly the established breeds have quite a strong profile ... So, I think if you've got specific needs then you can kind of pick a breed that will fit in with yourself. But at the same time, the other half of me is like the shelters are full of rescues, there are horrendous people out there who do horrible things and I could never have just pedigrees without also having a couple of rescues.

The perception of breed predictability is widespread within the fancy and requires further research as to date there have been minimal studies conducted on actual cat breed differences. For dogs research has found variation between breeds and behaviour (e.g. Svartberg, 2006). Unlike pedigree cats who have primarily been selected on aesthetics, dogs have been selectively bred for particular behavioural traits which could explain some of these breed variations (Atkinson, 2018). However, it has also been found that significant variations exist within breeds (Svartberg, 2006) and Mehrkam and Wynne concluded that behavioural differences between breeds are 'influenced by both genetics, and by the environment and experience' (2014: 25). In cats, in addition to breed-based tropes, there are common perceptions around personality traits associated with coat colours, as evident from labels given to tortoiseshell cats including 'tortitude' and 'naughty torti' and beliefs that ginger cats are friendlier (Delgado et al., 2012; Stelow et al., 2016). Stelow et al. (2016) found a very small correlation between coat colour and aggressive behaviour in cats. Generally, though, the results are mixed and require further investigation before conclusions are drawn (Delgado et

al., 2012; Stelow et al., 2016). D.C. Turner (2000) conducted research that suggested that Persians and Siamese were more predictable behaviourally and more dependent than non-breed cats and Hart et al. (2014) found differences between breeds for certain characteristics such as activity level, affection and aggression. In contrast, research by Bennett et al. (2017) and Menchetti et al. (2018) concluded that differences between cat breeds has to date not found significant breed differences between pedigree and non-pedigree cats. McDonald et al. (2017) suggest that it is possible that due to selective breeding, pedigree cats may be less likely to demonstrate certain behaviours such as wandering or risk-taking.

As stated, research results are mixed and further consideration is required before conclusions are drawn. Of most relevance to the present study, however, participants often did refer to breeds using personality stereotypes. Becky referred to Burmese as, “clingy, fussy, slightly neurotic, but not quite as bad as Siamese ... I mean my male ... he will be asleep upstairs, and I will literally call him to come for his medication and he will come down to me. And that’s very much a trait of the breed.” Denise described Norwegian Forest Cats:

They are such a be with you cat and they’re very dog-like. You can train them to walk on a harness and lead, they play fetch, they come running to the door to greet you. They do the same for strangers and any visitors we have. They’re just a really affectionate, be with you cat.

However, views often conflicted depending on which breed was preferred. Antonia, a non-Burmese breeder, told me that Burmese are “particularly hissy”, whereas Ella, a Burmese breeder, referred to them as, “exceptionally affectionate cats, very outgoing, real, real people cats”. Wilhelmy et al. conducted research looking at cat breed differences and found a correlation between genetics and behavioural traits but concluded the underlining complexity of these means that

'physical appearance is not a reliable indicator of personality' (2016: 85). Overall, there will be individual differences and within-breed variation that make breed an unreliable method for determining personality of the individual cat.

In addition to negating individuality, such breed identities can also create issues when a cat's behaviour and personality do not align with constructed breed profiles, resulting in a misunderstanding of individual needs or at the most extreme, the possible surrendering of the cat to a shelter or returning them to the breeder.

According to Ella, it was common for Bengals to be rehomed through the breed club's rescue service because breed personality was sometimes underestimated or overlooked:

They have problems, because ... they're what it says on the tin. They're not as half wild as they used to be by any stretch of the imagination, but they are quite vocal and they are demanding and ... you can tell [guardians] until you're blue in the face that they're very, very intelligent, they get bored easily. But a lot of people once they set their heart on something, they will go for it notwithstanding.

Nicole shared her thoughts on her experiences of working in a cat shelter and dealing with pedigree cats:

I believe some breeders are in denial about this or claim that the supposed pedigree cats in shelters are misidentified moggies. It's a blind spot in both cat and dog breeding. Pedigrees end up unwanted or homeless in just the same way as moggies and mongrels.

Of course, a number of pedigree cats in shelters will be there due to similar reasons as non-pedigree cats, such as changes in personal circumstances, rather than being breed-specific. This admission of pedigree cats being rehomed due to a misunderstanding of personality though, marks a return to the commodity value of cats, where there can be a flexible and fluid relation; at one time the cat can be viewed as an individual being, while another discarded or returned as a

disposable 'object' that does not meet expectations. Relations are contingent and the fate of the cat is bound up with her capacity to fulfil particular human desires.

Voluntary Kinship

Other-than-human animals are increasingly valued as family members (Blouin, 2012; Cain, 1985; Charles, 2014; Charles and Davies, 2008; Irvine and Cilia, 2017; Walsh, 2009). What these relations actually mean within the family unit can vary greatly (Irvine and Cilia, 2017) and the concept of family itself is increasingly considered as fluid, diverse, and complex (Blichfeldt and Sakáčová, 2018; Owens and Grauerholz, 2018).

Many of the cat guardians I met have developed strong attachments with their cats and also 'rely on them for the emotional support that characterises kinship' (Irvine and Cilia, 2017: 4). Companion animals in general often provide high levels of emotional support for humans (Fraser et al., 2018; Fraser and Taylor, 2019; Walsh, 2009). As such, the relationships that form between human and cats within the fancy demonstrate a spectrum of relations and ambiguities that underpin all human-companion animal interactions. Pongrácz and Szapu (2018: 64) conclude that guardians 'usually consider their cats as family members with a high capacity for emotional and empathetic understanding towards human emotions and communicative signals and considerable levels of mental capacity'. The emotional support associated with living with cats is clear from several of my participants. Kylie who uses a wheelchair for mobility told me that, "some days I wouldn't get out of bed unless I had my animals ... so they make me get up, they make me do things, which is nice. They give me something to look forward to." Furthermore, Rachel explained that:

Jewel was my first born, and she's just the most amazing cat you can ever ask for ... The last few years I've been through a divorce ... and losing my Dad, and she's always sat there, right on the arm of my chair. And Norwegians aren't lap cats as such, but she likes to go forehead to forehead and just purr gently, and she's been such a comfort through all the really bad times.

The provision of voluntary care to the humans they live with can be seen as a form of care work on behalf of the cats (Coulter, 2016a; 2016b). At least three of my participants formalised this role by enrolling their cats in animal assisted intervention programmes whereby they take the cats to visit people in care homes and other similar establishments. Alyssa told me about Kipper:

I used to go and visit this man who was totally blind and Kipper ... I used to take him and he used to lead this man down the corridor like a dog. And he just seemed to know. And every so often he'd stop and he'd look behind as if to say, "yes everything's okay", and carry on ... And then he used to sit on his knee when we visited and he was the only person that he would ever sit on, he wouldn't sit on my knee.

Without delving into the ethics¹⁷ of such programmes which is beyond the scope of this research, these vignettes indicate that people experience affective relationships with cats.

A number of participants described how the cats in their lives fulfil a child-like role. Kim told me about how she values the relationship between kitten and mother due to her bond with the cats:

There's something so enjoyable about it and there's nothing quite like [it]. I tend to sleep in with my girls when they have their first few [litters] for the first couple of nights, and there's nothing like the sound of your baby trilling away and purring at her babies ... I don't have human children so they're the closest thing I've got.

Denise also explained her level of attention and bond with her cats as a result of not having human children, "they're our priority because we don't have any children, they're our family". A number of studies have suggested those without

¹⁷ See Hatch (2007), Serpell et al. (2010), and Zamir (2006) for example discussions on the ethics and welfare implications of AAls.

human children or who live alone experience greater attachment to companion animals (Albert and Bulcroft, 1988; Blouin, 2012; Turner 2005). Most participants referred to their cats as being family rather than friends and this may be because people are producing the cats themselves through deliberate breeding. However, the conceptualisation of cats as solely 'surrogate children or human replacements minimises the human-animal relationship' when in fact there are many diverse relations occurring within 'interspecies families' (Owens and Grauerholz, 2018: 4). Furthermore, regarding cats as human-like can result in a denial of the cat's own feline characteristics and a failure to meet their cat needs (see Hurley, 2018 for a similar argument for dogs).

Despite the recognition that their cats fulfil a nurturing need in the place of human children, how this actually relates to the cat's experiences does not correspond with how human children would normatively be treated. For one thing, it would be highly frowned upon for male human children to live permanently in outdoor enclosures as occurs with many male cats. Additionally, often cats that are no longer deemed useful for breeding purposes are sold or adopted to new households at a fee. Although seemingly a welfare improvement on the previously commonplace drowning of unwanted kittens (Grier, 2006), these practices are similar to how other species used for productive purposes can be discarded after use. Herber (2010) describes the sale of his horse from the family farm when the animal was no longer of productive use, although instead of sold to a new home, the horse was sold for meat. Coulter (2018; Wilkie, 2010) also refers to a similar circulation of horses as 'sentient commodities' and to the sale of horses who are unsuitable for competing. Sanders describes the liminal status of companion animals as simultaneously 'objects to be possessed and used and individual beings to be understood and loved' as leading to a 'cultural

ambivalence' that enables their mistreatment (2003: 417). I would suggest that this ambivalence is often apparent in the practices of members of the cat fancy.

Ella referred to the rehoming of retired breeding cats as "spaying and awaying". However, despite the language choice, it is not necessarily an indication of a 'throw-away' mentality. Some breeders make the decision to rehome a cat for what they argue is in the cat's 'best interests'. Alexandria told me, "it is impossible to keep them all forever and would be wrong as cats do not like living in large groups, they prefer one or two friends". Victoria stated:

I've found that retired queens don't like the other cat's kittens and I find they get very stressed as well. So for me, it's much kinder to find them a pet home where they'll be on their own or they might go with another friend ... I once tried to keep a retired breeding boy, an ex-stud but he got very stressed, he started pulling his fur so I had to find him a home as well and he went somewhere on his own and never looked back.

Most kittens bred by breeders are sold to new homes as pets or for breeding purposes. Breeders will often put potential new owners through extensive checks before they are willing to sell a kitten to them. These measures are similar to the techniques used by shelter workers to assess adopters to make sure they can provide suitable 'good' homes (Taylor, 2007). Olivia told me:

I can get to know the people ... so I get a better idea of where the kittens are going. But I also make sure that the people who don't keep in regular contact, they go to the bottom of my waiting list because I like to know that I'm going to get updates on the kittens ... Someone might be ... last on my waiting list but they might still get a kitten above someone else who has been there for a year based on their frequency of contact ... I ask a lot of questions ... I will ask things like, are they both working if it's a couple, as they're not the kind of cat who wants to be home [alone] all day ... And then I do Facetime or Skype kind of calls so they meet the kitten, I get to meet them, ask a lot of questions of each other. And then those who live near enough, usually about two or three hours maximum away, they tend to visit once or twice, to meet the kittens as well.

Denise also used similar questioning to ensure she selected a 'good' home for her kittens:

I'm asking them questions about have they had cats before, where they live, how they propose to look after the cat, is it indoor/outdoor. Although

some breeders stipulate they have to be indoor only, we don't, but we'd like them to be in a reasonably safe outdoor environment, so I use google to see where they live as well. And ... they have to visit us before we have the kittens if they're really interested. And then we can ask them a lot more questions and also we find it interesting watching how our cats interact with them ... There was one family who came and all our cats would not go near them. And then I observed how the children behaved and we actually said to them that we wouldn't let them have any kittens from us because they did not know how to behave around animals, and the parents didn't either. Thankfully that's only happened once [laughs] ... Also, as breeders we work together so if we don't have any kittens and we know another breeder does we'll pass the enquiries on. Also, we'll flag up be wary about this family, we're not sure they're really suitable.

The time and care put into the process of securing new homes for kittens, along with the desire to keep in contact with new owners, indicates the close bond and responsibility that some breeders feel towards the animal's they produce. The idea of 'spaying and awaying' and selling kittens makes it sound as a heedless means of disposal of the cats not deemed 'good' enough for breeding or showing, but in fact breeders are often putting a great deal of time and effort into choosing new homes and ensuring conditions that are appropriate for the cats.

The ambivalence within kinship status represents the fluidity that surrounds the notion of personhood often ascribed to animals by humans, whereby their personhood and status within the family can be 'revoked' (Irvine and Cilia, 2017: 3) through what Shir-Vertesh (2012) labels their 'flexible personhood'. Nast similarly refers to the fluctuating position of 'pets' within the family and notes their status as 'ideal love objects' with 'advantages that human children do not share' due to the ability for them to be shaped into whatever the human wants at a particular time (2006: 302). Bradshaw (2017) notes that there are major differences between the way we treat our human children and our other-than-human animal family, such as the adoption of human children being much more difficult than for animals, and the prevailing attitude within veterinary medicine that euthanasia is the kindest way to deal with very unwell animals, yet the same

approach is not taken towards terminally ill human children reflecting different valuation. 'Some pets may become "little humans" in their dotting owner's eyes, but the species boundary is still very real to society as a whole' (Bradshaw, 2017: 128). Overall, it is clear that our relationships with companion animals do not fit neatly on a continuum and are subject to change according to context and circumstance (Blouin, 2012; 2013).

Shared Rituals

Cats are sometimes integrated into family customs including birthday celebrations, funerals, and public holidays. Rachel told me how she sends cards to the owners of cats she has bred at "Christmas or when it's the cat's birthday, you send a card out and you get a picture back and an update on how the cat is doing. And that keeps me [going], watching the cats I've bred over the years". Furthermore, participants reported using social media as a way to share these occasions with the wider cat community and I have regularly seen posts highlighting an individual's birthday, often with a photo of the cat and numerous replies by other members of the group wishing the cat in question a happy birthday. It is not uncommon for people to write on social media in their cat's voice, in the process speaking for the animal, such as Olivia who wrote about her cats':

It was our third birthday yesterday and our human is spoiling us today instead as she had too many appointments yesterday. We were happy to wait as that meant we will be getting extra play time today with our hooman and our new toys. For breakfast we had the cat equivalent of McDonalds breakfast as a treat and our special cat yogurt and freeze-dried turkey and then we played lots of games with our hooman.

There are countless examples of similar posts on social media, nearly always accompanied by a photograph, and often comical depicting the cats demanding

something, such as “I know it’s 1.30am hooman, but can we please play fetch?” or “Dear Santa, do you only bring to human kittens because I’ve been a very good boy?”. As Dashper describes, this process of speaking as the animal can be seen as a way for the guardian to ‘give voice to what they think the animal would say in a given situation (or what they might like the animal to say)’ (2017a: 27). Speaking for the cats can be seen as a way of establishing their identity and making them into ‘minded coactors in social situations’ (Irvine, 2013: 15).

It is also common practice to announce the death of their cats on social media and to seek and receive support from others, and those responding will occasionally incorporate their own cats into these posts, for instance the cat may ‘send purrs’ (see DeMello, 2013). People also tell stories of the companions that they have lost and share photos in reminiscence, especially around the anniversary of the cat’s death. These ‘acts of mourning’ through story-telling can be seen as a way of extending past relations between guardian and companion into the present (Govindrajan, 2018: 87). This mourning challenges the idea that these cats are purely seen as ‘material resources, non-social objects and replaceable members of a species or of the very vague category of “animals”’ (Redmalm, 2015: 20).

Participation within rituals is not only the case for cats and also extends to other companion species. Sanders (2003) conceptualises this incorporation into rituals as humans working to sustain their relationships with other-than-humans through shared activity. Companion animals are increasingly given presents for birthdays and other gift-based holidays, as well as taking part in parties, even including bar mitzvahs (Dresser, 2000; Edelman, 2005; Hirschman, 1994; Walsh, 2009). The involvement of other-than-humans within human rituals could be seen as a process of humanisation or anthropomorphism. However, Dresser (2000) argues

that inclusion in human rituals does not represent human imperialism but instead shows a desire to integrate animals into human social life as valued equals.

Within the cat fancy, cats are often positioned as family members, recognised as engaging in intersubjective relationships, integrated into ritual celebrations and given voice. However, as mentioned previously, there are also discourses and practices that deprioritise personhood, such as the commercial sale of cats and selection based on ‘breed’ or ‘colour’ rather than individual personality. Multifarious relations and conceptualisations of cats, then, exist within the cat fancy. In the following sections, I will look at two normative cat fancy care practices, indoor confinement and multispecies households as well as the emotional entanglements of breeding cats, to explore the conflicting approaches to the same goal of caring for cats. I examine how often-well-intentioned practices are entangled with possible harms.

Feline Intraspecific Sociality and Multi-Cat Households

Many of the cat fanciers that I met lived with multiple cats, ranging up to approximately twenty cats. However, I was advised by Abbey that it was an “unwritten rule among breeders, [to] rarely disclose exactly how many cats they have ... [for] security reasons ... [and for] fear [of] being judged by others”. As such, if this is correct, some of the figures I was provided with may be underestimated. This fear of judgement by others corresponds with the ‘crazy cat lady’ trope discussed in chapter six, where she often becomes associated with animal hoarding and ‘a scapegoat who can be repudiated publicly’ (Probyn-Rapsey, 2019: 184). Regardless of precise figures, the vast majority of

participants had more than two cats, whereas Hall et al.'s (2016: 14) study found that only around 8% of the general UK cat owning public had more than two cats.

Despite often being considered as a solitary species, there is increasing evidence to suggest that under certain conditions, some cats can live relatively contentedly within multi-cat scenarios, especially amongst related females (Alger and Alger, 2003; Bradshaw and Hall, 1999; Rochlitz, 2005). Rather than multiple cats living together always being a forced situation by humans, free-living cats have been found to congregate in colonies by choice (Crowell-Davis et al., 2004). Colonies have been observed where available resources are sufficient to provide for a number of individuals without need for conflict (Crowell-Davis et al., 2004), often where humans are supplying an abundance of food. However, availability of resources does not automatically result in harmonious interspecific relations and cats living in colonies experience diverse and complex relations with one another, demonstrating affiliative behaviours towards some individuals and negative interactions with others (Crowell-Davis et al., 2004). Overall, the female cats within colonies tend to display greater positive social interactions with one another, whilst the male cats can demonstrate conflict over reproductive females and disperse from the colony in search of other females (Bradshaw, 2018; Crowell-Davis et al., 2004).

Alger and Alger (1999; 2003) found that the rescue shelter in their study acted as an artificial cat colony for the sixty resident cats. Due to the shelter having open living conditions without cages, the cats were able to make their own choices on where to be and who to be with. They generally found that cats expressed affection and social cohesion towards one another and there were few instances of open aggression (Alger and Alger, 1999; 2003). Interestingly, these types of positive relations were not only based alongside kinship lines; there was also

bonding between non-related felines (Alger and Alger, 1999; 2003). I have myself witnessed these behaviours of non-related cats choosing to form bonds with specific individuals. At a cat shelter where I worked, two non-related female cats who arrived around the same time, and who were both considered pro-social and provided with access to the wider adoption room, would rest and sleep together within one of their enclosures. Over time as this became a regular pattern, they were provided with two connected enclosures and were rehomed together. However, unlike the shelter, some of the cats in this research were not neutered adding an additional element within cat-to-cat social relations.

An important point of contrast between naturally occurring cat colonies and multi-cat households is that the decisions on who resides together are made and enforced by humans (Ramos et al., 2013). It is unknown what impact such forced interactions have upon the well-being of cats and cats may react to unwanted interactions within the household by moving to other territories as demonstrated by anecdotal stories from cat guardians (Bradshaw et al., 2012). Of course, relocation is not a feasible option for many of the cats within this research who live in restricted indoor conditions and are unable to move away from antagonists (Palmer and Sandøe, 2014). As such, negative interactions sometimes occur within households. Jessica told me about one of her cats who she bred:

I have actually kept one girl and I kept her until she was 16 weeks of age ... but she didn't like living within a multi-cat household. It didn't matter how much I liked her, she didn't like living with lots of cats so she went to a pet family ... I couldn't be like a lot of breeders and say, "that's what I've waited for the last three years, I'm keeping it" ... My cats have got to fit in together and with me.

When I asked Lisa how her cats interacted, she responded:

Certainly, Suzie does not like Bella. Because Bella is my foundation queen, she's hierarchically the matron of the house and her and Suzie just did not get on ... I've got this theory that once girl cats have a fight, you're never going to get them together again ... So we do keep them apart ...

And then the boys ... I'm starting to have problems with Jasper. Jasper is starting to be a bit randy and attacking.

As the above quotes indicate, conflict can arise between multiple cats living within the same household. Gail, a cat behaviourist, explained her experiences of working with cats from multi-cat homes:

I don't think a multi-cat household is a good thing per se. I think for some cats they work, but I think the circumstances and the environment has to be very specific and the individuals have to be specific temperaments. Ideally they need to be related. So basically all the planets have to align for a multi-cat household to really be in the interest of the cat. And the problem with breeders household's ... these have been sort of complex, relational issues and disputes between the intact breeders and the neutered ones that they have in the house and just the overwhelming constant change in the dynamics of the household, kittens coming and going, cats being confined, cats being released, it's an absolute hotbed.

These negative interactions raise questions over the intricacies of care within multi-cat households and the extra complexity added by keeping cats for breeding purposes introduces additional tensions. These pressures are escalated by the feline umwelt and typical social behaviours, where due to the cat's ancestral solitary nature, cats do not typically use appeasement behaviours in conflict, and instead they will generally withdraw from an antagonistic situation or utilise defensive behaviours (Atkinson, 2018). Physical fighting between cats within the same household will often become less intense over time and many cats will learn to tolerate living together by minimising their interactions (Atkinson, 2018). However, these relationships are particularly vulnerable to changes in circumstance, such as ill health, moving to a new house, and new feline residents and it is common for guardians to misinterpret aggression as play and vice versa (Atkinson, 2018). Additionally, as mentioned by Gail in the above quote, the rate of change in breeder's households can result in continual adjustment to new circumstances, such as new cats and changes to the physical environment, which can cause stress for cats (Amat et al., 2016). The introduction of new cats

has been associated with inter-cat aggression (Levine et al., 2005). It is also important to note that some cats within multi-cat households may not show demonstrable behavioural problems, such as conflict or overt stress signals, yet may still be experiencing stress-related impacts (Ramos et al., 2013).

There are examples of multi-cat relations working in relative harmony and this also seemed to be the case in the households I visited. Yet in these situations, it is often necessary for adjustments to be made to the spatial management of the household, especially in response to new additions to the feline family. On meeting a Savannah breeder, all three of her cats were roaming around the house without any overt signs of conflict and they all came into the living room with us while we chatted. Each cat took turns to come over and sniff me and the male cat sprawled out on the coffee table in front of me for the duration of our chat, while the two females sat and observed from various high spots within the room. They were quite content in one another's close proximity. However, Candice's other male cat who was used for stud purposes was temporarily living elsewhere as she had recently moved to a new house and she told me that when he returned, he would have to live permanently in the outdoor enclosures due to spraying, and that the two males would have to be kept separate due to aggression. This type of management was also used by Becky who told me that by controlling outside access the cats had negotiated a level of harmony after a period of adjustment:

They do [get along] in the way we're set up. When we first got the rescue mogs it did cause a bit of an issue because we were trying to have everyone inside overnight, and obviously we let the guys [non-pedigree cats] out during the day ... So ... everyone was getting a bit stressed so now the way we're all set up, everyone's happy.

Charlotte was also experiencing tensions between some of the cats, which she had learnt to manage through working with the cats' preferences and providing

adequate space, allowing outdoor access and adhering to particular sleeping routines to limit the opportunity for interaction:

Sonny is a bit of a bully, sort of top cat, and he bullies Bailey a bit ... At night time Sonny stays out on the landing, Bailey comes to bed with me ... The new kitten's kind of thrown a spanner in the works. Well, Bailey has sort of given him a battering, and my feral cat will smack everything that walks past her, except for her own son who she adores ... The Maine Coon has been frightened of the kitten. A large Maine Coon being frightened of a 15-week-old kitten! But this morning they had a fight over a piece of paper [laughs] ... It's just Bailey and Sonny who we just have to watch carefully that Sonny doesn't bully him too much. But Bailey likes being outside, he's outside most of the day.

The impact of multi-cat households upon individuals can include increased stress levels as a result of cats having to share their core territory with those outside of their social group (Bradshaw, 2016). Atkinson (2018) and Bradshaw (2016) both argue that secure territory is highly valued by cats, more so than the human-cat bond. As has been discussed previously, chronic stress can cause health issues for cats, such as by suppressing the immune system and increasing the risk of Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC), feline infectious peritonitis, irritable bowel disorder, and other illnesses (Atkinson, 2018). FIC has been associated with interspecies conflict and International Cat Care (2018a) recommends that steps are taken to reduce this risk by providing adequate resources to support multiple cats. The impact of stress within breeding households can be particularly harmful as stress hormones have been found to create epigenetic changes in developing fetuses that can lead to cats being more reactive to stress throughout life (Atkinson, 2018).

Steps can be taken to reduce the implications of stress such as ensuring individuals have ample space (Kessler and Turner, 1999; Loberg and Lundmark, 2016), and providing abundant resources in suitable locations, such as multiple litter trays, scratching posts, sleeping spots, and high climbing frames (Halls,

2018; Rochlitz, 2005) and many of these recommendations have been taken by the cat fanciers I have spoken to and visited. However, PDSA (2018: 26) found that a large proportion of cats in multi-cat households are having to share resources, for example 66% of guardians with two or more cats were providing a maximum of one litter tray. The discussion around the potential implications of multi-cat households is generally missing within the fancy and represents a lack of engagement with the intricacies of feline social relations.

The management of multiple cats and the decisions surrounding rehoming particular individuals or keeping them within the larger social group demonstrates the entanglements of harm and care. A breeder may feel it is wrong to rehome a cat that has been part of their family. Ella, for instance, told me about not rehoming cats she has bred, “they are my pets first and foremost ... I’m hoping to keep them until they’re dying days basically ... I do absolutely adore them, the thought of rehoming them is repugnant to me ... whilst a lot of people do that, I’m not like that”. Yet at the same time, keeping cats within this kind of situation may be more harmful to them, whilst rehoming certain individuals can risk splitting up cohesive social groups. The needs of the cats as actors within a wider group and the requirement to create harmonious social groups is rarely prioritised in the fancy. The degree of management necessary to create agreeable living situations reflects the agency of the cats to shape multispecies households and their ability to engage in intersubjective relations with others, despite most often being confined in captive conditions and restricted by human constraints (see Schroer, 2018 for a similar argument with captive birds of prey).

Caring for Queens

Typically, harm is associated with pedigree breeding at a population level through breeding decisions that prioritise the care of the breed over individuals by either selecting for harmful morphology or mate-matching that results in inbreeding and decreasing genetic diversity (Rossi, 2017, see chapter five). However, harm can also be caused on an individual basis. Both at the individual and population level, then, 'violent care' can occur (van Dooren, 2014), whereby harm is caused in the process of caring.

On an individual level, complications can and do transpire during the pregnancy and labour process, and this is especially prevalent in particular pedigree breeds (Holst et al., 2017; ICC, 2017a). For instance, pedigree cats are 22.6% more likely to experience dystocia (obstructed labour) than the non-pedigree population (Turner, 2010: 141). As a common care practice, it is generally considered important for human guardians to monitor the labour process to make sure that the queen discharges the membranes and placenta, and that the kittens begin to breathe. If there are any unusual complications, the human is able to intervene and seek veterinary support.

In addition to the loss of life, queens can also experience physical stress during pregnancy and lactation often requiring extra care and attention, especially in regard to gaining high quality nutrition (Atkinson, 2018). Several of my participants mentioned the loss of breeding queens and kittens as a regrettable and difficult part of breeding cats. Pamela who used to breed Persians told me that:

Most of the time the queen sails through the pregnancy, spits out the kittens and the first time you see the vet is for first vaccinations. But when it goes wrong, it goes horribly wrong very quickly. A good working

knowledge of animal husbandry is an essential in my opinion for anyone thinking of breeding.

Furthermore, Trudy shared with me about a number of situations that she had experienced:

I had a Singapura who lost a whole litter, they just didn't revive at the vets unfortunately ... My very first Birman ... she had a prolapsed uterus. She went into labour, we weren't getting anywhere, called the vets who came out. As he rang the doorbell, she jumped on the sofa, kittens fell on the floor ... The next morning, I got up to find her womb had prolapsed. I think people always say, "well aren't you sad when they go off to their new homes", and I always think, no I'm sad when I lose one along the way. I think the day I stop being upset when I lose a kitten is the day I should stop breeding.

When I visited Candice, I met one of her queens who was much smaller than the other cats within the household. Candice told me that she had experienced a bad labour recently where a three-week-old foetus had caused an obstruction in the cervix. After having an emergency caesarean, only one kitten survived. Jessica had a similar experience which she shared with me:

We'd scanned her and we knew that there were six, possibly seven [kittens], and she gave birth to the first one about 7 o'clock and it was like, the size of a jelly baby ... The second one was marginally bigger and it went on like that, they had all obviously died internally at various stages of gestation. So the vet and I decided it was best for her to be with me rather than stress her further until all the birthing had finished. The following morning I took her to the vet and we x-rayed her ... to make sure there was nothing retained and we actually found a full term kitten. So we gave her a jab of something called oxytocin which helps ... I cried all the way home because I was just shocked ... Four hours later she gave birth and this was on the Saturday, and on the Monday morning I was back at the vet again to have this single most beautifully stunning kitten put to sleep. It had a cleft palette. So ... when people think breeding is all about oh, playing with fluffy kittens all day and making lots and lots of money because they all think that, they think it's all fun, they don't know the hard work, they don't understand the heartbreak.

Kim described the experience of losing both her queen and kittens during her first breeding experience:

My first litter I lost both the queen and all the kittens. She went into heart failure when she was in labour, it was just the worst possible start. I was driving to the vets with this cat that was slowly losing consciousness, it was just awful. And I think that's probably the worst experience you can

have, to lose your beloved cat and all her babies ... I still get, not panic attacks, but I get really nervous when my girls are in labour and really obsessive about making sure that their temperatures are okay and they're breathing properly.

It is clearly evident that many breeders experience substantial emotional distress through pregnancy complications and the associated impact upon their cats. The care and affective relations involved were demonstrated by Mary who told me about her mourning process for dead kittens, "Nessa wrapped the dead kittens in sheep fleece and I buried them in our garden, it was very dignified". Others similarly bury those who die in their garden or have the body cremated. One person stated, "I have more dead kittens buried in my garden than I care to remember". This level of care was not the case for all though, and in response to a forum post about what people do with deceased kittens, one breeder wrote that because of the number of dead kittens she has had she wraps them in a flannel and then puts them into a container and into the rubbish bin. She recognises that this method for discarding the bodies will be disturbing for others, but believes there will be other breeders who do the same.

For some the risks associated with breeding are considered too great resulting in fanciers choosing only to exhibit. Clara, for instance, said, "you just sometimes hear of a queen dying giving birth to a litter. And I just thought, I could never live with myself if that had happened to her ... I'd always know that she'd still be here if I hadn't decided to breed from her". This aversion to the risk of losing cats was supported by Barbara, who told me that she did not want to breed because:

I don't think I could cope if I lost any. I know she [breeder] really struggles when she loses some of the kittens sometimes, if they're just not strong enough or there's an underlying illness and she loses them. It breaks her heart and I'm not sure I could cope with that.

The experiences of grief associated with breeding can be seen as an example of one of Butler's (2004; 2009) conceptualisations of grief, irreplaceability, whereby

the animal is deemed irreplaceable by the mourner. However, the fact that these cats are still bred from and sold to new homes suggests that breeders do grieve some losses, but generally not to an extent that compels them to give up the activity of breeding. My breeder participants choose to accept exposing their cats to considerable reproductive risk.

The emotional cost of breeding did not only extend to the mortal loss of individuals but also other elements of the process. Mia told me, “breeding can be cruel and heart-breaking, losing beloved cats you have raised from birth and kittens, hearing that you misjudged a new owner who subsequently gave their Burmilla to a rescue centre or let them outside to be run over”. As shown by these quotes, breeders can experience emotional distress when pregnancies do not go smoothly or through other related decisions, such as choosing new homes. Additionally, some kittens may be born with health conditions that cause ongoing discomfort, require management and treatment, or that impact upon their survival chances. Yvonne shared the affective responsibilities and difficulties of making care-based decisions:

Just last year a cat had a bad time kitting so we decided to spay her and she died under the anaesthetic, and ... we were heartbroken and we felt we'd been selfish by making her be spayed. We made the decision thinking ... she'd done her bit, she didn't have a good time last time so we'll spay ... we don't have to worry about her calling and she can have more fun. But unfortunately, we lost her and it was absolutely devastating.

The difficulties in making decisions demonstrate the entanglements that exist between care and harm within cat breeding practices: care ‘can do good’ yet simultaneously ‘oppress’ (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017: 1). Many breeders care deeply for their cats, yet their breeding decisions put these cats at risk, whether this be to prevent or continue with breeding.

However, it is also critical to mention that these stories above fail to engage with the feline experience of pregnancy complications by primarily focusing on the emotional experience for the human. Kittens who lose their mother through childbirth become solely reliant on humans for food, security, and stimulation to excrete bodily waste, and they lose the skills and sociality gained from observing their mother's behaviour. The strength of the mother-kitten bond was demonstrated by Olivia, who described an experience of returning from the vet with her kittens and the Mother's reaction to their return:

Oh, I wish I'd videoed it, it was awesome ... And I didn't know which of it was to do with wanting food maybe or just missing their mummies. Because most people will tell you that when they've had ... a kitten at the vets, when they come back the Mum often rejects them because they smell differently ... But ... as soon as I put that carrier down and I mean they were just eager to get out. And the Mummies, all three were just sitting there ... and they just ran to the three of them and they were all licking each other and sniffing and it was just amazing. And within minutes they all had some food and went and laid down on the sofa all together. And then two of the Mums who still have milk would share the duties and nurse the babies.

We do not know how mother cats cope emotionally with the loss of a litter. However, it is increasingly apparent that felines, like other species, experience grief (King, 2013; Irvine, 2004). There are occasionally online posts that refer to a mourning process for some cats following the death of kittens, with people seeking advice on what they can do to relieve the Mother's grief, with reports of cats refusing to eat, 'moping', and 'crying'. By referring to the cat's experiences of grief, the guardian is also indirectly expressing their own.

Captive Cats: Practices of Housing Cats Indoors

Since the 1940s, living entirely within the household has been a possibility for cats through the invention of commercially available litter and foods (Buller, 2016; Palmer and Sandøe, 2014). Indoor living has been further aided by widespread

and affordable neutering practices which reduce certain behaviours related to sexuality, such as 'calling', roaming, and spraying (Buller, 2016; Grier, 2006; Palmer and Sandøe, 2014). The vast majority of cats encountered during this research were kept predominately indoors and this is the prevailing care norm within the fancy. The practice of allowing cats outdoor access and whether this is acceptable is a recurrent debate within the fancy and more general feline welfare discourses. There are often discussions on online forums and Facebook groups, as well as cat fancy magazines dedicating page space to the topic (e.g. Your Cat, July 2018).

Within this research, the majority of both pedigree and non-pedigree cats were kept indoors or provided restricted outdoor access utilising cat-proof fencing, 'catios', and pens. These typically keep the cats within enclosed areas, either the entire garden or particular sections. This large proportion of indoor cats is in contrast with the overwhelming majority of domestic cats within the UK where 75% have access to the outside environment (Palmer and Sandøe, 2014: 142; Rochlitz, 2005). According to statistics from Agria Insurance, approximately 10% of the cats insured with them are 'house cats' (Your Cat, 2018: 21). However, in Australia and the United States, the figure of cats with free-roaming access is much lower (Hall et al., 2016; Rochlitz, 2005). In these contexts, a number of animal welfare organisations and governmental agencies actively promote and advocate for routine confinement of domestic cats to indoor environments (Hall et al., 2016). In some areas of Australia, it is a legal requirement for cats to be kept indoors or curfewed at certain times of day (Jongman, 2007). This focus on indoor living is part of a larger culture of 'responsible pet care' in these contexts. From the animal welfare perspective this is often advised to be in the cat's best interests due to the risk of road traffic accidents, disease transmission, or injuries

from territorial conflict (e.g. HSUS, 2019), while other parties, such as conservation or government agencies, may advocate on behalf of protecting endangered species from predation by free-ranging cats or reducing nuisance behaviours (e.g. ABC, 2018; Conservation Council, 2018). Unsurprisingly, a number of studies have found that attitudes towards regulation of cats were more readily supported by non-owners than owners (Grayson et al., 2002; Hall et al., 2016; McDonald et al., 2015). As well as containment methods, an increasing number of technologies are becoming available offering the possibility for greater control over felines with guardians being able to GPS track their cats (Mancini et al., 2012).

The debate surrounding the issue of containment varies from country to country (Sandøe et al., 2018) and it is also unique to cats. Cats are the only companion animal that are given the ability to free-roam within their local communities within the 'West'. The cat flap can be considered a 'breach in the domestic boundary' providing 'freedom' without the restrictions typically placed upon other companion animals (Griffiths et al., 2000: 61). Dogs are now legally required to be microchipped in the UK, and they are regularly expected to be kept on a leash in public spaces with access to public areas restricted by local regulations as part of an increasing move to 'regulate animal bodies and place responsibility upon the caregivers for their control, care, and behaviour' (Fox and Gee, 2016: 111). Other popular companion species such as rabbits, guinea pigs, or domestic fowl are often confined to hutches and runs within the domestic setting of the house or garden. Serpell (2014: 98) claims, 'cats lead a sort of double life – half domestic, half wild; part culture, part nature'. The indoor confinement of cats can be seen as a further attempt, alongside other practices such as neutering,

selective breeding, and training, to move cats more firmly under human control and away from 'nature'.

In some cases within this study, the pedigree cats were kept indoors and the non-pedigree cats were given outdoor access within the same households. Charlotte kept both her 'feral' and pedigree cats indoors, whilst her non-pedigree cats could free-roam:

Bailey and Sonny have outdoor access whenever they want it, we have to open the back door. But the feral we don't let out because she is so nervous of people, that we don't know if she will ever come back in ... I don't want her to become a rat catcher again. Gatito is allowed out but won't go ... He went out once and ever since then he's only gone as far as the backdoor step and come back in ... So then the two pedigree ones are not allowed out.

As was discussed for the realities of living in multi-cat households, different measures often have to be taken for all members of the family to live cohesively. However, it is interesting to note the difference in care practices towards pedigree compared with non-pedigree cats and there is a perception within the fancy that pedigree cats are at greater risk than non-pedigree cats to outside dangers. These differences in practices could again show the varying values placed upon breed and non-breed cats. The reasons provided for the decision to keep cats indoors were often related to safety issues. Amongst others, there is deemed to be an increased risk of injury and disease transmission, and Alyssa shared similar motivations for keeping her cats confined:

We have a cat run outside because I don't believe we should let cats outside ... especially pedigrees because if you look at the pedigree, they've got parents, grandparents, great grandparents, they have never been allowed to roam because they're breeding cats, because they've not got that road sense ... I don't know if you watch Supervet ... I always get so upset when a cat comes in and he's been run over and you're thinking that could have been avoided. Or he's been attacked by a dog ... I've had two of my cats run over years ago when we lived in a quiet cul-de-sac, and after the second one got run over that's when we built a cat run ... I know they're safe from humans and other stuff, cars.

Marina noted her concerns for wildlife and the conflict this created, in addition to sharing similar safety motivations:

There's no way I could let them out. But also it means that no one can turn around to me and say your cats are leaving a terrible mess in my garden or Chris Packham can't say that my cats are killing millions of birds ... You hear all the time people's cats go missing, they get run over, I just couldn't bear it.

However, in addition to safety concerns, there was also the perceived risk of pedigree cats being stolen due to their 'economic' value and status. Nadine told me, "we're quite semi-rural where we are, I've got really no concerns about road traffic, it's more a case of them either being stolen or being harmed by someone and that's my biggest worry."

A number of breeders also tried to ensure that any kittens sold by them were also kept indoors in their new homes. Mia explained that "it is usual for Burmillas to live to late teens if kept as indoor only pets which is what I insist on with new owners. Burmillas just want to be with people and don't miss outside if they have enough attention and active play each day to stimulate their brain and work their muscles." Zoe told me that the breeder who she got her cats from insisted on cat confinement in the sale contract, "she also asks all new owners to sign a contract saying they will keep as indoor only or cat secure garden as she wants them to live long and happy lives". Cora also ensured that her contracts insisted on cats being kept indoors:

In my contract I do say that if my cats are found to be roaming, I will go and collect [them] ... If anyone wants an outdoor cat, they don't get a Mist ... And the reason for that is because they are just so friendly. We have actually lost two already where people have gone against the contract, and gone ... it's cruel to keep them in, so let them out and didn't see them again ... I mean they're expensive cats ... when you pay 500 quid for something ... you want to make sure it's going to be safe. They've got no idea of street safety or anything like that. They walk up to any dog ... But they don't seem to have any fear of anything. And I had one who used to sit on the Hoover while I was hoovering.

These contracts would not be legally enforceable. They act as an attempt at safeguarding, ensuring that the cats, considered as financially, emotionally, and genetically valuable, are kept safe. Yet, breeders arguably also include these clauses to alleviate their conscience. By claiming that it was in the contract, if something befalls one of the cats that they have sold they may feel it is not their fault or responsibility.

Additionally, some people used social media as an avenue for warning other breeders about potential buyers who had enquired about or admitted to wanting to let cats outside. One breeder advised others online to be wary of an individual who had lost a cat to a car accident yet was enquiring about purchasing another. These all correspond with the discourse from animal welfare and other organisations discussed previously based on feline safety and keeping cats away from potential dangers. Trauma, most often as a result of road traffic accidents, was the most common reason for mortality in UK veterinary clinics, especially for cats under three years of age (McDonald et al., 2017; O'Neill et al., 2015). Other trauma-causing incidents include dog attacks and falls (McDonald et al., 2017). There is also suggestion that guardians of cats who are kept indoors at least some of the time have a better understanding of their cats' behaviours compared to those with cats living outdoors, likely as a result of greater interaction and opportunity to learn their behaviours (Pongrácz and Szapu, 2018). However, there is very little discussion within this subgroup of the cat owning population around the potential issues associated with indoor confinement, including other welfare concerns. There are risks associated with indoor-living such as exposure to household chemicals and harmful plants, falls from balconies, and burns from kitchen appliances (Rochlitz, 2005). Bekoff and Pierce (2017) make the point that indoor confinement can protect against outdoor dangers but that it also

compromises their freedom which can harm them in other ways. Indoor living can be associated with health and behavioural issues resulting from inactivity (Sandøe et al., 2017) and cats are still at risk from developing diseases and illnesses regardless of lifestyle (My Cat, 2018). Obesity is one of the leading issues for cats kept indoors. Additionally, some indoor-confined cats have been found to have the condition sarcopenic obesity, termed 'skinny fat', which as the name suggests can lead to issues associated with obesity, such as diabetes mellitus, while being more difficult for guardians to notice and prevent (Bjørnqvad et al., 2011; Sandøe et al., 2014). The health and well-being risks of restricting or providing outdoor access show the compromised nature of care when making decisions on the safety of feline lives.

For cats prevented from free-roaming, breeders often utilise outdoor enclosures to limit particular behaviours from occurring within the household. It is important to note that many of the behavioural issues regularly reported by guardians are often naturally occurring behaviours such as spraying or scratching, and I would argue that rather than being a behavioural *problem* these are merely behaviours that are *unwanted* by humans (Jongman, 2007). These outdoor enclosures are often large cages, with sleeping compartments and run areas. However, it is critical that certain conditions are met for this type of housing, especially if home to more than one cat. It can be difficult to meet the requirement for cats to have the possibility of one to three metres distance from other cats vertically and horizontally when multiple cats are housed within the same enclosure (Herron and Buffington, 2010), a requirement necessary to avoid conflict or a reduction in activity as an attempt by the cat to limit interaction (Rochlitz, 2000). Furthermore, as with cats kept within the household, they require resources per each individual, such as litter trays, feeding bowls, and beds (Rochlitz, 2000; 2005). A number of

my participants attempted to provide for a cat's natural behaviours, despite domestic confinement, by providing enrichment to enable these behaviours in specified locations, such as by providing multiple scratching posts and climbing trees throughout the household. Halls (2008), a feline behaviourist and author of several cat books, states that she sees a small percentage of the overall number of registered pedigrees for behavioural consultations, but that it is disproportionately larger than non-pedigree cats. Bradshaw (2018) confirms that guardians of pedigree cats are more likely to seek behavioural advice. Halls (2008) asserts that the increased proportion of pedigree cats is partly a reaction to the high number of these cats kept in indoor confinement, as well as an expectation of certain behaviours, and potentially higher resource availability.

International Cat Care (2018d) advise that some outdoor access is preferable to a strictly indoors-only lifestyle, even if cats are confined to the garden, so that the cat is able to experience a degree of freedom and additional stimulation. Jongman (2007) suggests that indoor living is a possibility for cats as long as additional opportunities to perform natural behaviours are provided, in addition to basic necessities. Some of my participants with indoor cats had trained their cats to walk on a leash and it was common practice to see cats on leashes in show halls at TICA shows. As Martha was telling me about keeping her cats indoors, she mentioned how she walks one of her cats on a leash, “[they’re] happy to be kept indoors, although they still need to have toys and scratching posts to amuse them ... They are also amenable to using a lead and learning a few basic tricks ... I’ve a neuter boy I take out in the fields on his lead most days.” Leash walking can provide additional enrichment for cats by giving them opportunity to exercise and experience different stimuli (Rodan et al., 2016). It also likely reduces owner guilt at keeping cats indoors. Additionally, some people use ‘cat prams’ or ‘cat

backpacks' as a means to transport cats to various locations such as vet clinics and cat shows. Some also use them as a mode of outdoor stimulation for indoor-confined felines. However, not all cats can be desensitised to leash walking. According to the RSPCA (Yorke, 2017), the loss of control regarding interaction with novel environments can be challenging for cats due to their connection with territory, as well as making it difficult for them to escape or hide from frightening situations. Furthermore, leash walking cats can be seen as a control over feline experience, with leashes and harnesses acting as 'tools of coercion' (Ingold, 2000: 307). With dogs, Horowitz (2014) suggests collars and leashes act as a symbol of ownership, as well as restricting the opportunity for dogs to explore.

Overall, cats are denied an important freedom to enact natural behaviours through indoor confinement and Pierce (2016) argues some cats would trade safety to be outdoors, raising questions as to whether normative fancy care practices are enabling cats to flourish. Furthermore, the tensions that can develop within multi-cat households can be heightened by indoor living, where conflict can arise around the sharing of resources. Rodan et al. suggest that the discourse around safety to increase the cat's life expectancy is often 'not in the cat's best interests' (2016: 752). Overall, indoor confinement can be argued as being 'good for some cats in some places at some times. But confinement is no universal prescription for good cat welfare' (Palmer and Sandøe, 2014: 152). Palmer and Sandøe (2014) identify multiple views on what constitutes welfare and select the three most common ideas. These include the 'hedonistic' view that welfare is based on an animal's emotions and feelings; the 'perfectionist perspective' that prioritises the ability to perform natural behaviours; and finally the 'preference account' based on the individual achieving what they prefer. Palmer and Sandøe (2014) argue that none of these approaches to 'good' animal welfare result in the

conclusion that pet cats should be permanently confined indoors as cats have different subjective experiences, may prefer outdoor access, and may experience a restriction on natural behaviours indoors. The same assumption can be applied to intact cats and even more resolutely when considering natural behaviours surrounding the desire to breed, including behaviours such as roaming and spraying.

In the act of caring, fanciers work towards what they feel is in the best interests of the cats. As products of and intimates of their guardians, these cats are more likely to be subjected to forms of treatment that can compromise their freedom and general well-being as it is perceived by other groups, such as animal activists, veterinarians and feline behaviourists. Overall, this routine care practice provides an example of how 'being "cared for" can be stifling, if not infantilising and oppressive' (Taylor, 2014: 109).

Care Ethics

The care discourses and practices described above provide an opening to consider more ethical engagement with cats. It is clear that many cat fanciers care deeply for their cats valuing them as members of their other-than-human family, despite the sometimes harmful impact of their care decisions. Care ethics provides the opportunity to situate our moral duties to other animals as being based on our relationships with them, rather than being determined through more abstract philosophical reasoning (Engster, 2006: 521). Care decisions are complex. There are various conflicting approaches to cat care from inside and outside the cat fancy. Yet as discussed by Birke and Thompson (2017) in relation to horses, the cats will also have their own ideas on what is right or wrong for them. However, I hope I have shown in this chapter that to move towards a more

congenial and less exploitative relationship, there is a need for guardians to attempt to engage with the cats individually 'on their own terms, not just human terms' (Donovan, 2006; Fraser et al., 2018: 235). By working towards an 'inter-species etiquette' (Taylor and Carter., 2013: 9; Warkentin, 2011) or an 'engaged empathy', as a 'tacitly informed approximation of what the other is experiencing', we can consider how we can interact with other beings in more 'ethical ways' (Gruen, 2009; Warkentin, 2011: 103).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the ambiguous nature of cat care practices occurring within the domestic sphere. It has indicated the relational complexity of care norms and how care practices can have unintended harmful effects. I have looked at intimate intersubjective interspecies relationships, including the ways in which cats are perceived as family members and are involved in family rituals. At the same time, relations are fluid and other priorities can take precedent which result in cats fulfilling roles other than family member or companion. In the cat fancy we see that care is often based on the protection and preservation of symbolically, genetically, reproductively, and commercially valuable commodities or assets, and serves to restrict freedom and agency. Importantly, many cat fanciers do not appear to recognise any contradiction or inconsistency in moving cats between different statuses or domains of value, or in allowing them to occupy positions in multiple domains of value simultaneously. Rather, particular aspects of the cat and particular ways of relating to them, are brought to the fore at different moments in different contexts.

I have suggested that practices of care and attention, whilst protective and nurturing, can also be oppressive and harmful. The cat fancy and the norms of

care it disseminates are not primarily motivated by the desire to maximise feline flourishing. Further, despite a need and desire to provide care for their cats, fanciers are often limited in their engagement with the feline Umwelt. They are conscious of it, as seen by the enrichments that they provide to their cats and through the use of tools such as leashes to provide cats with the opportunity to be outside. At the same time, though, they fail to reflect on the complexities of separation, or the intricacies of desire, risk, and harm that accompany reproduction and keeping cats 'safe'. Working towards an 'interspecies etiquette' based on 'engaged empathy' offers one way in which to increase and develop sensitivity and responsiveness to the complexity of feline lives.

Chapter Eight - A Dying Breed: The Perceived Decline of the Cat Fancy

Throughout my fieldwork, participants shared fears about the demise of the cat fancy and in this chapter I will use their narratives to consider the prospects for the cat fancy as a collective into the future. Firstly, I will introduce the social, economic, and organisational factors blamed by participants for the perceived decline. I will then explore how this conversation intersects with wider anxieties linked to growing cat well-being and welfare considerations, as well as the rise in surveillance and legislation by governmental power structures. The aim of this chapter is not necessarily to draw a conclusion as to whether the cat fancy is facing extinction or otherwise, but instead to reflect on the discourses invoked by my participants and their concern for what could be lost. I will argue there is more at stake for cat fanciers than a reduction in participation numbers at shows; they also share a grave concern for the loss of the pedigree cat. The increased scrutiny of the cat fancy and the pedigree cat also threatens cat fanciers' identities as 'cat people'.

Social, Economic and Organisational Factors

The decline of the cat fancy was often evidenced by a reduction in participation numbers at shows which was seen as having a negative impact upon the level of competition. Becky told me that, "previously [in] some of the certificate classes you could have had fifteen cats and I've had quite a lot of my certificate classes and we've been the only one, which isn't quite as much fun ... So that's a big issue for the local shows." This lack of participation is not only affecting the smaller local shows, though. I have also observed a decline in the number of entries at the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy's (GCCF) end of year show,

the Supreme, over the period of time I have been visiting between 2015 and 2018. Ella shared her thoughts on the 2018 Supreme with me as she was also aware of a reduction in participation, “It was quiet enough last year and when I heard that so many weren't going this year, I knew it would be dire.”

The decline was not only connected with showing involvement, but also with the breeding of cats as discussed by Marina, “they say the breeds are declining. People simply aren't breeding the numbers of cats. It's a very expensive business and ... it's very committing”. The reduction in the number of cats being bred within the cat fancy institutions conflicts with the prediction by Bradshaw (2013) that the demand for pedigree cats will increase. According to Michael, a member of the GCCF board, registration numbers and participation at cat shows run under the GCCF have stagnated and attempts are being made to improve membership figures. The GCCF (2018a: n.p) publicly releases registration figures on their website for each year since 1997 and these suggest that despite fluctuations from year to year, there has been an overall decline in numbers from 1997, where 32,696 cats were registered, to 2017 where 20,693 cats were registered. However, it is also important to note that since 1997, other registration and show bodies have emerged within the UK market, such as The International Cat Association (TICA) and Fédération Internationale Féline (FIFe), and with registration only accepted by one organisation at a time this will likely have implications upon total number of registrations under the GCCF.

Some of the alleged issues leading to the perceived decline in those partaking in cat fancy activities were associated with the organisational and governance structures of the fancy, first introduced in chapter five. Lisa referred to the level of power held by show management, in addition to modern-day time constraints:

I think there's several problems with the system in that ... the show manager rules everything and if the show manager wants to keep you there till half past five, they'll keep you there until half past five. And I think they need to make it a bit more flexible. People have got busy lives, they can't necessarily spend a whole day out.

The show rules state that show management is able to 'disqualify any exhibit so removed without their consent' (GCCF, 2019d: 50). Kim also thought membership changes were influenced by show governance and internal conflict:

Organisations go through lots of waxing and waning. FIFe ... went through a big political upheaval about seven or eight years ago. TICA's going through one at the moment. GCCF went through one about a year or so ago ... I think when the particular registry has the infighting bit going on, people leave or then go back or try somewhere else ... You've probably found out that there is an awful lot of infighting and bitchiness to do with cat showing and cat breeding.

Kim went on to tell me how she and several other people had performed a 'coup' to oust previous management:

The people that were in charge were not necessarily running the organisation the way some of us thought it should be ... Basically because we wanted to increase membership and encourage new people to come and we didn't feel people were being made to feel welcome.

Becky also felt there was a need to attract new people to increase participation. She thought that the organisation could do more to promote their activities, "do they do enough to promote the fact that you can bring a 'Household Pet', you can bring a moggy, you can bring all these different things to cat shows? I think there is a lot of PR and marketing that they could do".

Michael told me that the GCCF is particularly keen to recruit a younger audience that is entirely new to the fancy, as the majority of younger people currently join through exposure from their parents' involvement. From observation and based on participants within this research, the majority of cat fanciers at exhibitions are aged over thirty. The GCCF introduced the Young Exhibitors Scheme in 2010, also known as 'Yes!', which acts as a mentoring programme for eight to sixteen-year olds as way of introduction to the cat fancy. The success of this scheme was

disputed by Audrey, in addition to the general outlook and marketing capabilities of the fancy:

I think they've [GCCF] tried in as much as the 'young exhibitors scheme' ... children coming along and I think that's great. But it hasn't taken off massively ... I don't think we look outwards, say possibly as much as dog shows do. I think we're very, very ... introverted. We tend to sort of just look at the people who are currently exhibiting and just serve that community as opposed to trying to attract new people and trying new things. There are some show managers ... who are quite visionary, but sometimes whatever they propose it will get held down by those who can't or won't change because some of the older guard treat the cat fancy, and I just say some, and this is just an observation which is shared by several, they think that the cat fancy is their own personal chiefdom ... The cat fancy is for them and their breed, they're not bothered about looking across the whole of the cat fancy to see how it is going to ... adapt and survive in the future.

The youngest of my participants, Antonia, who was in her mid-20s, also felt that there was a 'closed' attitude held by certain members of the cat fancy that was contributing to its demise:

It's incredibly short sighted, and that level of closed attitude is a huge factor of the decline of the cat fancy, in my opinion. There are many unsaid rules that new exhibitors are expected to follow, and when they don't follow them, they're ostracised, talked about, many people are unkind because the new person is viewed as shoving their way in. Many people still view the cat fancy as it was ten or twenty years ago and refuse to wake up to the fact that if entry continues to decline the way it is, and if people continue to moan without actually helping anything change, then the cat fancy will cease to exist.

In contrast, some members of the cat fancy argue that they are trying to stop the supposed decline of the fancy. Some breeders encourage those who purchase kittens from them to exhibit, as well as offering to pay the first entry fee and to assist on the day. There are people who take on mentoring roles to help new members assimilate to normative practices (as well as prevent those who do not align from integrating fully). Alexandria told me extensively about the care and attention she provides to new breeders and exhibitors in helping them learn about fancy processes and encouraging them to get further involved. However, she

noted she was unusual in this approach with most other fanciers not embracing new exhibitors:

If people don't do what I do then the future of the pedigree cat breeding world won't continue. But it is time consuming and not everybody has got the communicative skills that I possibly have. The essence of owning cats, quite often people are introverts.

There is also anxiety surrounding a reduction in the number of available judges for shows. Audrey who helps with show organisation told me that she felt there was an issue with current judges getting older and not being replaced, she said:

Let's look at your age base for your judges, a lot of them are seriously old. We don't get newer people coming along because the judge training scheme at the moment is quite a lengthy scheme. And ... you think to yourself, do you really want to commit to that? ... There have been a lot of judges who have gone for one reason or another ... You're not getting as many people coming through. But [for] the people who you do get coming through ... for example, they only allow what they call a 'pupil judge' on the Maine Coons, they are not what I call 'useful' to show managers so that means they don't get the gig so to speak. And because they can't judge across different breeds, you're getting the same old judges at every single show because naturally the show managers are on a budget. They can only afford the expense of so many shows, so they look for judges who can really judge across the piece, and you'll get somebody new coming up and they're not as useful. And if that person, say is based in Cornwall, very, very limited opportunities for them to judge if the show managers have that mindset.

According to John there is concern for the future of judging, "a lot of the older judges are dying off and it takes a long time for new ones to train up. There are many breeds and some people take six years to qualify to judge just one." As such, there is currently much debate within the ranks of the GCCF as to how best to revise training procedures for new judges to streamline the process and increase the number of people becoming judges. These changes were an ongoing process and topic of conversation throughout my fieldwork during 2017 and 2018. Alexandria told me:

You're going to see some fairly substantial changes ... They [GCCF] are looking at how they train judges because they are losing judges rather than

gaining them and it's because of age. The hobby was greater years ago than it is now. And there's more people dying than becoming new judges.

Denise also spoke about the older demographic of judges, "At the moment, the average age of the judges is 69 ... I'm 59 and I'm the second youngest, I think".

She told me about her own issues with becoming a judge:

Archaic rules ... When you're training to be a judge for the first time, it means you're quite expensive because ... for that show manager, you can only judge one breed and only judge kittens ... it takes a long time to qualify, because you have to do the eight judging engagements and at those judging engagements you have to find judges to have tutorials with on their Open Classes of your breed ... And then after that you've got to do what are called 'assessments' which is much more detailed ... And then you have to do your write ups and send them in to the BAC. And they have to review them giving guidance and feedback on how you're doing. And the BACs only meet twice a year. So, once you complete everything and send all your requirements, you've met all the requirements, if you happen to send it in just after they've had a BAC meeting, you've got to wait another six months before they can review your work and put you forward as a judge. So, again this is something the Governing Council is looking at changing because they're not getting enough new judges in. There is a whole review going on now about how to encourage new people into judging. And how to make it, not easier but [a] quicker process. Because as a new judge, I'm going to be on two other lists as they call them, and I can probably do them in two years rather than four years but that's still a long time. And I'm heading towards 60 and by the time I'm of any use to a show manager I'll be too old to judge.

These updates to procedures highlight how the decline in cat fancy activities is also a concern at organisational level prompting changes to longstanding customs.

Furthermore, alterations have been made to the show structure by grouping similar 'breeds' of cats together within their 'sections' to mitigate for declining entries. Ella explained this change to me:

[The] number of entries are dwindling, and you haven't got the competition ... Burmese had their own section because they were extremely popular, in fact, I was one of the ones who worked hard to collate the figures in the first instance to get their own section ... so I know what the numbers were years ago ... But these days, I'm absolutely horrified ... when I see how few there are being shown. You haven't got the numbers anymore to justify them having their own section but there are quite a number of other breeds that are offshoots, shall we say, of Burmese, so it makes sense ... to put all of these in a group. But needless to say, you've got the breeders of the

various, well Burmese in particular, who are opposed to having Burmese put in with the other breeds. To my mind it's logical, because they should be of Burmese type ... Siamese used to have a massive great entry, they're now going to have to have a group with the Orientals which are Siamese type and are basically offshoots of Siamese.

Trudy also noted the reduction in numbers competing at shows, but she blamed this on the high total number of shows per year. The GCCF had 130 different shows listed on their website for the 2018-2019 season with 85 of these at different venues on different days. The remainder were shared shows at the same venue. Trudy told me:

I think the [entry] numbers at GCCF shows especially, just speak for themselves really. They are getting less, and I think in some ways, it's because there are too many shows. GCCF has multiple shows most weekends, like this weekend there is a breed show in Scotland, there is another all-breed show in Scotland and there's a Balinese, Oriental, Siamese show somewhere else. Now, some weekends you could have three or four all breed shows. Well, with the GCCF they have a 13-day rule where you can't show 13 days before or after a show, and that means that household is out totally. So, there are only so many cats to go around.

Lisa made reference to a common critique of the cat fancy, namely its high financial costs:

It's not cheap either, a cat show entry is ... thirty pounds, plus you've got a catalogue to buy and your petrol to get you there and everything. So, ... it can be an expensive day out. And the Supreme I think it's fifty pounds per cat and ten pounds for the catalogue.

This view was shared by Becky who explained that she believed some of the decline was due to expense, "It's between twenty-five and thirty-five pounds per cat depending on what show it is, and then obviously with travel and everything else". In addition to the costs of showing there are ongoing daily care costs associated with living with cats, which increase alongside breeding practices. Common costs include pet insurance, veterinary bills and general health care such as flea and worm treatments and annual vaccination costs, food, toys and litter, enclosures, caging and other structures, in addition to registration and other

administration fees. The global financial crisis from 2007 is also held responsible for a decrease in the number of competitors taking part and for people entering fewer cats into the competition. Clara told me that:

It has definitely decreased in numbers. It is from when we first used to show with non-pedigrees ... there used to be maybe 100 or more non-pedigrees there. Now, not often even that number across the pedigrees and pedigree pets ... A lot of people don't think it [The Supreme] still has the same prestige that it did but then others have always loved the Supreme and still think it's got the atmosphere, but it has shrunk ... People have limited amounts of income ... they've got to make decisions and not everyone can still afford to show a lot or go to the Supreme ... The cat numbers used to be maybe 1500-2000 and now they are like 800. At some cat shows, one of the biggest cat shows on its own, used to be 8 or 900 and now they'll be down to 400. So entries over the last ten years have dropped. I think ever since the crash, 2007 recession, it's just people haven't as much disposable income and where they have they are making different decisions about how they're spending it. It isn't really a cheap hobby ... I think even some people who haven't stopped showing have cut back on the numbers they show.

Many of the above comments note the change from how things used to be, in terms of there being fewer cats shown and less competition contemporarily, romanticising bygone cat fancy days. Ella told me:

There were huge entries! And for example, with Opal ... that I was showing at the time you could expect to have in the region of 23 to 24 in the one class and they were all very, very similar in type and they really were top quality. You didn't get a look in unless you had something really outstanding.

This nostalgia for the past, especially through suggestions for how the cat fancy could return to these levels, was shared by many participants who had been members of the cat fancy for several decades. For Ella this nostalgia also corresponded with perceived cultural changes, where she felt that exhibitors had greater respect for authority figures in the past:

Now if you get 300 [entries] you're lucky. So ... it seems to be an awful lot easier to win and people expect to win no matter and I'm afraid cats under me only win if they conform closely enough to the standard of points to merit it. And when people's cats don't win, they are not happy bunnies at

all and ... there seems to be no respect for judges anymore and they don't think twice about really giving judges quite a hard time.

The cat fancy was often described as worse contemporarily than the past, especially with the increasing use of social media. Others, especially younger members of the cat fancy, such as Antonia above, critiqued established members of the cat fancy for their conservatism and lack of willingness to change.

Overall, it is evident that there are multiple ideas and proposed solutions circulating between cat fanciers that attempt to account for the reduction in the number of entries at shows and registration numbers. In the next section, I will look at how this fear for the decline of the cat fancy intersects with wider anxieties surrounding challenges from external welfare and veterinary perspectives that impact upon the identity formation of cat fanciers as 'good' breeders.

The Rise of Well-being

Other-than-human animals and their position in relation to human animals have been the focus of philosophical inquiry since antiquity (Gruen, 2018) but concern for animal suffering became particularly prominent in the UK during the nineteenth century with the emergence of anti-cruelty sentiment from a 'coming together of different ideologies and practices emanating from political activists, philosophers, religious thinkers and artists' (Kean, 1998: 13; Palmer and Sandøe, 2018). Ideas questioning treatment of other-than-human animals originated from philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham, religion particularly Methodism under its founder, John Wesley, and by artists and poets including John Keats and Percy Shelley, alongside wider social changes such as increasing urbanisation and rising pet-keeping (Kean, 1998). Following increasing legislative changes

throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth century¹⁸, the concern with animal cruelty developed further in the 1960s with the emergence of the idea of ‘animal welfare’ and the Brambell Committee report.

The Brambell Committee introduced the Five Freedoms in 1965 in the UK, serving ‘as a moral lighthouse for European social thought’ (Rollin and Rollin, 2001: 4). The idea of Freedoms has since been adopted internationally by major animal interest groups, such as the RSPCA and ASPCA. They also informed the 2006 Welfare Act in the UK. Cat guardians are expected to meet the five freedoms by providing for the cat’s need for (1) a suitable environment, (2) need for a suitable diet, (3) need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, (4) need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns, and (5) need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease (DEFRA, 2017: 1).

Cronney argues that humans have an obligation of care to the other-than-human animals they utilise, however, ‘[a]chieving consensus on such standards ... presents a considerable challenge’ (2019: 237). The Brambell report focus was primarily on the ‘*absence* of suffering’ rather than being concerned with achieving positive welfare, such as pleasure or happiness (Palmer and Sandøe, 2018: 427, emphasis in original). Furthermore, the Five Freedoms ‘generally focus on preventing or relieving suffering, and making sure animals are being well-fed and cared for, without questioning the underlying conditions of captivity or constraint that shape the very nature of their lives’ (Bekoff and Pierce, 2017: 6). Welfarism as a moral framework is based on a hierarchical position which still justifies the use of animals for human benefit, provided it is done ‘humanely’ (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2013). I would argue, following Bekoff and Pierce (2017), that thinking

¹⁸ See Kean (1998) for a chronological overview of the development of animal welfare legislation since 1800.

about 'welfare' does not result in us asking the right questions. We need to be questioning the activity itself, not the conditions within it where making small changes can result in the justification for its continuance.

In more recent years there has been a significant growth in the interest surrounding animal causes, such as the social movement of veganism. There has also been a rise in digital activism in general (e.g. Stokes and Atkins-Sayre, 2018), which extends to and includes animal-related issues (Hancox, 2018). Rollin and Rollin (2001) argue that concern over the welfare of other-than-human animals is growing, but that it is often aimed at 'wild' or farmed animals rather than companion species. Croney (2019), in contrast to Rollin and Rollin, suggests that concern for the welfare of dogs has increased alongside rising pet ownership and the incorporation of dogs as family members.

Some of my participants were very much aware of ethics-based discussion and activism and feared their possible impact upon the fancy. A number of breeders referred to a perception held by 'outsiders' that they were 'unethical' for having or breeding pedigree cats. Mia told me over one of our Facebook chats that:

Cat breeders often get a bad press from cat rescue organisations and some vets who think there are enough cats in the world already or that breeders are often irresponsible, backyard in their practices or strive to make pedigree breeds more extreme and probably unhealthy in their opinion ... It would just be nice to have some recognition for the good work we do involving lots of financial, time and emotion[al] [investment], and knowledge of our breed, investment by good breeders.

This opinion was also shared by Alexandria, who explained that she felt:

We're frowned upon. We've been dealing with an awful lot of issues with regards to people saying we shouldn't be breeding cats, there are too many cats about. But the too many cats that are about are the backyard cats that are wandering around and producing the moggy cats that aren't necessarily cared for to the level that pedigree cats are.

Jessica further reflected on breeders being seen as irresponsible:

People like Cats Protection, the RSPCA, they're very derogatory about breeders. In their eyes, you should adopt, you shouldn't buy a pedigree. It's people like me who create these problems. Although I'm first to point out, my kittens leave me already neutered. My kittens are neutered at 12 weeks of age so I'm not adding to the problem if on the off chance that one of my kittens gets out and gets caught by the local tom cat. So, I try and avoid that at all costs and as a breeder if you have one of my cats ... if you can no longer keep that kitten, even though its two years down the line, we take it back. We're the ones that are responsible. So, I don't know how they can say we're neglectful and I would say that 99% of breeders will all do the same thing. So, no I think there's a big misconception that pet rescue is all wonderful and breeders are all bad. I think a lot of them really need to sit back and look at what they're doing. I think it's Cat Protection, they won't let you have a kitten or a cat if you're going to keep it as a housecat. To them, a cat should be free-roaming ... they let their youngsters leave them, they're not neutered, so if they're encouraging free-roaming, and with the best will in the world, not everybody is that aware of how young a kitten becomes sexually active, so these kittens end up having kittens. Consequently, they put one out but four months down the line ... they're going to take in six from that one kitten.

'Adopt don't shop' and similar slogans such as 'the best breed is rescue' are often used by welfare and rescue groups to support their ethos and market their ethical standpoint. Bauer and Croney (2018: 1; Croney, 2019) refer to a 'moral imperative' shared by some participants within their study in the USA to adopt rather than purchase animals. Research by Bir et al. found that 47% of people surveyed adopted rather than purchased companion animals because they thought 'it was the right thing to do' (2016: 14). The researchers argued that this finding was not surprising 'given that many groups appeal to public ethics in an effort to promote dog adoption from shelters' (2016: 14). Sinski found that people adopting companion animals in the USA were becoming increasingly aware of the issues associated with overpopulation in shelters and high euthanasia rates for those deemed unadoptable, with people seeing adoption as a morally responsible act with pet shops and breeders 'sometimes even conceptualised as "villains" selling bodies for profit' (2016: 78). Becky spoke about the idea of 'adopt, don't shop' in relation to pedigree cat breeding practices:

I've got a lot of people on my Facebook who are very 'don't shop, adopt'. Always go for rescue rather than a pedigree, and that's not necessarily a bad thing, there are so many cats out there who need help. But I don't think it's as black and white as that. And I would hate to see some of the fabulous breeds that we've got disappear.

Under questioning of the ethical nature of pedigree cat practices, cat fanciers safeguard themselves and deflect attention by highlighting the 'poor' practices conducted by others, whether that be welfare organisations who rehome kittens at a younger age or 'backyard breeders' who perform outside of cat fancy governance guidelines. The above participants all claim to have 'good' practices, and even argue that these may be 'better' than the main welfare organisations. Their remarks focus in particular on neutering practices and the way that those outside the fancy contribute to 'overpopulation' of non-pedigree cats. Yet as mentioned in chapter five on breeding practices within the fancy, the breeding of non-pedigree cats is considered 'ethical' when required to improve the 'breed' as a population, demonstrating the inconsistencies within ideals of 'good' care. Such complexities challenge the validity of a clear 'cruel/humane' dichotomy within human-animal interactions (Birke and Thompson, 2017: 18).

The distinction between 'good' and 'bad' breeders extends to all areas of general cat care considerations, even nutrition. For example, when discussing raw feeding practices, one of my participants stated that "quality breeders feed a raw food diet or at least a high-quality grain free food", while another claimed that kitten purchasers should "find a breeder that actually puts in the work to feed better". 'Good' breeders also often see themselves as better qualified than veterinarians to deal with particular health care issues due to their practical experience. There are regularly comments shared between cat fanciers and on online posts indicating that vets do not have the same level of knowledge as they

do. One person wrote, “vets know naff all about general cat maintenance” and another compared vets with General Practitioners for humans because they have to treat multiple species, whilst breeders are akin to specialised medical consultants having learnt from specific cat-related experience. Jean, a veterinarian, had experienced this attitude first-hand, “they say, oh vets don’t know what they’re talking about, they have much less experience of the breed than we do ... You can’t reason with them”. Related to this, Plitman et al. (2019) found that pedigree cat guardians were more likely to seek advice on health from breeders than veterinarians and they argue that this may result in new guardians not being presented with all of the relevant information on potential breed-related issues.

There are similarities between discourse supporting pedigree breeding practices and that relating to other contentious areas within animal ethics. Becky’s claim above that breeds will die out without the cat fancy is similar to the argument that zoos are necessary as ‘vessels for the rescue of a nonhuman animal kingdom’ (Acampora, 2005: 70). It also has close similarities with the rhetoric espoused by those advocating for continued carnism to prevent the perceived extinction of rare farmed breeds (or even entire species in anti-vegan rhetoric) (e.g. Jones, 2018b, see RBST, n.d). Cat fanciers perceive themselves to play a critical role in the conservation of valued breeds. One person posted online in response to perceived criticism from ‘rescue advocates’ that cat breeds, “only exist because of breeders”. James told me that without cat shows there would be no cat breeds, the logic being that cat shows and the evaluation of cats to the ‘standard of points’ is necessary to maintain breed lines and ensure that cats aesthetically represent their breed. The importance on maintaining breed lines and breed purity is reminiscent of race panic or the ‘fear of racial “mixing”’, a similar rhetoric to that

found by Probyn-Rapsey (2015: 57) in the species discourse surrounding dingo-dog hybridisation. Race panic is based on an illusion of the races as being 'pure', which is the same for species and especially the case for breeds. There is a perception, then, that more is at stake in the decline of the cat fancy than just reduced participation in shows. The death of the cat fancy would also entail the loss of the 'pedigree cat'.

Some people expressed their belief in the importance of showing as an opportunity for learning and improvement as a critical element to becoming a 'good' or reputable breeder, a possibility which would also be eroded or lost altogether through the decline of the cat fancy and which illustrates once again the close relationship between the showing and breeding of pedigree cats.

The Threat from Legislation and Governance

Related to the above concerns around ethical scrutiny, throughout the period of this fieldwork many of my participants expressed unease about governmental legislation changes and their potential impact upon cat breeding as a hobby. This anxiety culminated in the formation of a Facebook group dedicated to the discussion of proposed legislation changes and the launch of an associated petition to parliament. This response was initiated by the emergence of the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, introduced formally on 1st October 2018. This legislation calls for the compulsory registration of those acting as a commercial business by making a profit from breeding, as well as certain guidelines for meeting the environmental, dietary, and behavioural needs of the respective other-than-human animals. However, the guidelines list certain activities as 'out of scope', such as 'where an

individual can demonstrate the activity is undertaken as a hobby or for education or scientific advancement, and that they are only selling surplus stock, without making a profit' (DEFRA, 2018: 8). Leaving aside the commodifying language, such as 'surplus stock', as this legislation currently stands this means that if cat breeders are able to demonstrate that they are not making a profit from the sale of cats and that they indeed breed cats as a hobby, then they are exempt from the new legislation and do not need to be registered. The GCCF recommends that hobby breeders keep detailed financial records to prove 'they are not making an [sic] profit and do not require a pet vending license' (Crow, 2018: n.p). At the time the research for this thesis took place, individual councils were responsible for determining the conditions of being classed as a 'business' and enforcing breeder licensing. As a result, there was variation between local councils and much confusion within the fancy. For example, one local council determined that a breeder belonging to a cat club and exhibiting her cats did not require a license, while another did not need to be licensed as they were able to demonstrate making no profit. However, a different breeder was expected to apply for a license, regardless of club membership or profit, as they were found to have advertised online and had sold more than three litters in a year. Despite most cat fanciers believing they will be exempt from such regulations due to their 'hobby' status, there is still a heightened tension and concern surrounding increasing scrutiny of activities related to the breeding of companion species.

The new animal welfare legislation has also specifically introduced rules governing the breeding of pedigree dogs. It states that, 'no dog may be kept for breeding if it can reasonably be expected, on the basis of its genotype, phenotype or state of health that breeding from it could have a detrimental effect on its health or welfare or the health or welfare of its offspring' (Animal Welfare Regulations,

2018: 31). However, cats have not been explicitly included in this legislation, despite suffering from many similar breed-related health issues as discussed in chapter two. Milne (2018b: 630) notes that this is a 'massive oversight' due to the level of changes and health issues now being seen in cats. To date, other than the above amendments to the Animal Welfare Act based on breeding as a business, the UK still has no specific regulations monitoring those breeding and selling cats, unlike other parts of Europe where 20 of 28 countries have some form of 'authorisation, permit, registration, notification or license system in place' (CFSG, 2015: 40). This lack of attention to cats is possibly due to cat breeding being a smaller commercial enterprise than dog breeding (CFGS, 2015). However, parts of Europe are setting an interesting precedent for dealing with the negative health impacts of pedigree breeding practices that introduce and exaggerate harmful morphologies. In some countries, such as Germany and Switzerland, the deliberate breeding of cats and dogs that are perceived as suffering from severe defects is illegal under what is known as 'anti-qualzucht' or anti-torture breeding (Fawcett et al., 2019; Flint and Woolliams, 2008; Wedderburn, 2016). In Switzerland in 2016, for instance, two Persian breeders were prosecuted under the 'qualzucht' legislation (Milne, 2018a).

It is not only governmental bodies that attempt to influence and govern breeding practices. International Cat Care (2018c), an international non-governmental organisation working to improve feline welfare, have introduced an 'International Declaration of Responsibilities to Cats' which includes a section dedicated to breeders. The declaration calls for breeders to have a 'basic knowledge on how to breed cats and raise kittens responsibly', to not create hybrids by breeding domestic and other cat species, to avoid breeding from cats with inheritable non-conformation and conformation issues, to work alongside veterinarians, to meet

the five welfare needs, and to find responsible homes for offspring once kittens have received all necessary welfare interventions such as microchips, neutering and vaccinations (2018c: 11). At an organisational level, it demands that all actors 'understand the problems associated with conformation or inherited defects detrimental to cat health and welfare and hybrid breeding, and take all steps necessary to prevent these problems occurring and to ensure optimum welfare for individual cats and breeds' (ICC, 2018c: 11). In April 2018, the National Italian Cat Breeders Association became the first European cat club organisation to sign and support the declaration (ICC, 2018b). Although not legally enforceable in the same way as legislation, guidelines such as these in combination with legislation can help to set a moral tone around what is and what is not acceptable practice (CFSG, 2015).

Halls (2008) suggests that the most effective way to change breeding practices is to educate the public who are buying kittens. Packer (2018) also notes the importance of working with the demand side of pedigree purchasing by educating the public around the issues associated with extreme morphologies. In the UK there is a current campaign – Campaign for the Responsible Use of Flat-Faced Animals in Advertising and the Media (CRUFFA) – that is aimed at encouraging the public towards selecting dogs with less extreme phenotypes, primarily by pushing the media, particularly advertising, to use dogs with less extreme phenotypic characteristics. As well as this, certain commercial organisations are also taking a stance on breeding, such as the well-known pet selling website, Pets4Homes. Their terms and conditions (2019: n.p) state that as a seller: 'you will not offer any pet for sale, for the purpose of breeding, for example advertising a stud dog for sale or a dog for sale that is in season.' One of my participants had found that any advertisements that mention the possible use of the cat for

breeding purposes were being closed down by the Pets4Homes website and she warned that such actions were risky: “we need breeders to pursue our bloodlines, to improve our breeds, without this each breed would die”. Her comment demonstrates the high level of the perceived existential threat to the fancy.

Breed associations and registration bodies are slowly beginning to address some of the issues resulting from selective breeding practices and are implementing strategies that attempt to deal with them, such as accreditation schemes, health screening for common disorders and DNA testing for individuals carrying known diseases (see Sampson, 2011 on the Kennel Club). Bond (2007) argues that it is critical that these organisations make changes, as it is likely guardians and breeders trust that the standards and policies promoted by them are humane (Bond, 2007) with most looking to them as sources of moral authority. Additionally, veterinarians also have the opportunity to effect change. However, the veterinary profession is arguably inadvertently exacerbating the long-term issues of conformation and non-conformation related disorders because advancements in treatments for individual animals reduce incentives to cure problems at the population level (Asher et al., 2009). Farrow et al. (2014), however, found that veterinarians in New Zealand were highly concerned about inheritable disorders related to pedigree dogs and supported the implementation of genetic testing for known disease carriers by registration bodies. Scrutiny from external authority figures such as veterinarians is acting to increase concerns for the fancy, as well as putting pressure on fancy organisations to implement changes to current practices.

The GCCF (2017d: n.p) states that it ‘considers the health and welfare of cats to be of the highest priority’. As part of this, the GCCF is reluctant to accept new

hybrid breeds, or certain breeds that have known issues such as the Scottish Fold. However, they still accept older examples of breeds affected by similar issues, such as the Bengal and the Manx. The Bengal is the earliest hybrid breed and the Manx's breed feature of having a short tail that stems from a spinal defect is associated with conditions such as 'spina bifida, constipation, incontinence and other neurological disorders' (CFSG, 2015: 18; Milne, 2018a). As with the Scottish Fold's mutated ears discussed in chapter two, the tail is a key element of the cat's social behavioural repertoire and so deliberately breeding cats with missing tails could be argued to be morally reprehensible, again highlighting the compromised and ambiguous nature of cat care within the fancy. Writing on pedigree dog breeding practices, Croney (2019: 246) suggests 'it is ironic that the human-dog bond is so highly valued in western developed nations that people will (knowingly and unknowingly) tolerate various types and degrees of harm to dogs in order to perpetuate their existence'. However, people who benefit from these harmful characteristics, such as through experiencing a caregiving impulse and resulting bond to dogs and cats with neotenic features, are likely to experience 'psychological resistance to addressing some of the most pressing welfare problems' (Serpell, 2019: 64). Similarly, those committed to the preservation of a particular breed, and to the care of individual cats of that breed, are likely to find it hard to accept and address the welfare issues associated with its creation and continuation.

Michael shared concerns that exhibitors and breeders would switch registration bodies rather than change their breeding practices too drastically. This assertion chimes with views expressed by some within the veterinary community where there is concern that speaking out about certain morphological extremes, such as brachycephaly, may risk alienating human clients rather than influencing

change (Anonymous, 2016; Fawcett et al., 2019). Furthermore, with increasing legislation there is the risk of breeding being pushed underground and outside of any introduced regulations (CFSG, 2015). Jean, a veterinarian and welfare advocate, told me:

I don't know about GCCF but the Kennel Club has always said, "oh well if we impose that they'll go elsewhere and they'll go underground", but I think if you're going to put yourself forward as a big champion of welfare, then insist that all your breeders are good, you know.

Here again we see the idea of 'good' breeders coming to the fore. The term is not used in this case, though, to imply a static repertoire of behaviours and practices. Instead it is implied that 'good' breeders will be responsive to changes in ideas as to what constitutes 'good' or best practice, conforming to institutional expectations.

Some participants were supportive of certain aspects of legislation change, as long as it did not impact upon their own practices. Some even saw it as helping to shore up their own identities as 'good breeders' as distinct from 'backyard breeders'. Hazel told me:

I think it's a really good idea. At the end of the day there are too many backyard breeders, I have a few people on my waiting list currently, one example, a lady who got a Siamese from an allegedly reputable breeder, I saw pictures of the kitten when he was still alive, he was clearly under 10 weeks old, hadn't had his vaccinations, the breeder refused to give a medical history, sadly a week after purchasing the kitten, the kitten died in the owner's hands. I think it is incredibly important as a breeder that the reputable breeders amongst us are protected from the bad reputation that breeders get due to backyard breeders ... just as the rescue side is regulated, I do believe that the breeding side needs to be regulated as well. Because it's in the best interest of the animals.

Clara was not concerned about any legislation changes because she felt rules in place on cat care practices from the registration bodies would be more stringent:

A lot of people feel that all it will do is penalise the proper responsible breeders and it still won't do anything to stop the puppy and kitten farmers churning them out. I mean if they abide by the advice of the registering body there are rules and regulations and recommendations in place anyway. I mean again, the legislation still says you can let kittens go at

eight weeks. I mean an eight-week-old kitten can't be vaccinated, no responsible vet will do it until nine weeks, so it's not stopping that. So all GCCF breeders, none of them let kittens go until thirteen weeks which is a week after the second vaccination ... So the decent breeders are already doing more to safeguard the health of the kitten than the legislation anyway.

Comments such as these remind us of the contextual and subjective nature of care. They also reaffirm the tendency for cat breeders to define themselves as 'good' breeders in opposition to 'bad' breeders. They regard themselves as the guardians of high health and welfare standards that stand in opposition to 'backyard breeders' whom they consider neglectful of the cat's best interests. Many of my participants place their welfare credentials in, for instance, their close attention to cat nutrition, providing vaccinations and not selling kittens too young, and not adding to an 'overpopulation' of cats in shelters; but they tend not to engage directly with the health issues associated with certain breed morphologies or the implications of care practices, such as indoor confinement, on the cats themselves.

Although by no means detached from society, its welfare concerns and legislative reach, there seems to be a sense in which participants in this research regard the cat fancy as misunderstood by wider society. They feel that the value of their cats and their breeding work is not properly understood or appreciated and that this is contributing to the decline in support for the activity and its eventual demise.

Chapter Summary

The cat fancy has been shown to be influenced by changing social and economic conditions. It is also shaped by various levels of governance and politics at parliamentary (both national and international) and institutional (both welfare and animal fancy-related) levels, along with individual level influences from, for

instance, breeders, cat guardians, and welfare advocates. The governance structures of the cat fancy introduce multifarious and often conflicting ideas on the direction that the cat fancy should take. There is a clear lack of consensus around the implementation of changes that could help create a more congenial human-cat relationship and a more just multispecies future.

The shared concern between many cat fanciers for the decline of the cat fancy has emerged as a theme throughout this period of fieldwork. This fear has been heightened by an accumulation of factors, such as amplified attention regarding animal welfare in general and rising focus on the issues associated with pedigree breeding especially related to dogs within mainstream media (e.g. Pedigree Dogs Exposed, 2009; Saving the British Bulldog, 2018) and the veterinary community (e.g. Milne, 2018a; Vets Against Brachycephalism, 2019). The cat fancy institutions are aware of a decline in participation and have sought to reverse this trend through the encouragement of younger competitors and revising rules and processes. Members of the GCCF also work closely with governmental and welfare bodies to steer legislation changes to limit their potential impact. There is also, however, a degree of nostalgia and conservatism within the fancy which introduces resistance to implementing changes.

There is more at stake for cat fanciers than a reduction in the level of competition at shows: some cat fanciers fear for the loss of the pedigree cat, especially through the perceived role of greater scrutiny from welfare and veterinary organisations and individuals. My cat fancy participants were generally aware of the ethical implications of pedigree breeding, yet see themselves as playing an important role in keeping alive the heritage of pedigree breeds and producing 'good' companions for the pet market, providing what they perceive as a necessary service. They also contrast themselves with 'backyard breeders'

pointing out what they see as their own 'good' practices and the perceived failures of others. They often feel that any attacks on their care practices and the welfare of cats is misdirected and should be aimed at 'backyard breeders' instead. The decline of the cat fancy and attempts at stopping its activities are seen as an assault on tradition, breeds, and also on the identity of cat fanciers as 'cat people'. Threats to the cat fancy present the possibility of a co-unbecoming for the cats and cat fanciers and an unravelling of what it means and takes to be a 'cat fancier' or a 'cat person'.

Conclusion – Co-Becoming Cat-People

This thesis has focused on exploring the cat fancy in the UK, revealing the network of human-cat relations that underpin it. The project has examined the cat fancy's breeding and exhibiting practices, discourses, and sociality, in short, it's prevailing 'culture', and the different conceptualisations of cats that structure it and allow it to be reproduced. I have taken the largely unproblematised category of the pedigree cat and worked on exploring and emphasising its nuances and complexity. In this concluding section, I will draw out the key arguments that have arisen throughout the thesis, highlight the unique contribution made to the field, and outline pertinent areas for future research into this particular microcosm within human-feline interactions.

Drawing on Birke's questioning of research on other-than-human animals in which she asks, 'whether who they are, really informs our work?' (2009: 2), I hope that, despite my inevitable human positioning, I have highlighted the subjectivities of the cats involved within the fancy by portraying their experiences through a level of empathy (Gruen, 2015; Hurn, 2018; Milton, 2005) and informed by knowledge of feline behaviour and body language (Hurn, 2018). Based on this 'careful attunement' to my feline participants (Gillespie, 2018: 6), overall I have argued that individual cats have preferences, desires and needs that often take a backseat relative to the human pursuit of gaining status through winning shows, breeding 'successful' show cats and engaging in human-based socialisation with 'like-minded' 'cat people'.

Learning to be a Cat Fancier

As a serious leisure pursuit, the fancy can become more than a 'hobby' and develop into a 'way of life' (Dashper, 2017a). Integration within the fancy is based on assimilating norms of behaviour and care that are shared within the group. Acceptance is contingent on knowing how to act. Usually this knowledge is acquired through a process of mentorship, as well as through the establishment of relationships with other cat fancy members through social interactions at shows and online. The cat fancy becomes a space within which participants gradually build and consolidate identities as 'cat people' and 'ethical breeders'. The mentoring process acts as a form of social capital building (Bourdieu, 2010) and those who try to access the fancy without the 'right' social connections are often shunned. The process of socialisation extends to the cats themselves who are expected to learn or habituate to being in the show environment with exhibitors exposing them as kittens to various elements of the showing process, such as noise, travel, and confinement, in the hopes that they will get used to being exhibited and being handled by unfamiliar people. The judges must also learn how to act in the fancy. They are expected to undergo a process of enskilment (Grasseni, 2005; Ingold, 2000), undertaking an arduous training programme to qualify to evaluate the cats mostly by reference to their physical alignment with the human devised 'standard of points'. This process of enskilment creates an institutionalised, skilled vision of what the ideal cat and representative of a breed should look and feel like. Judges are produced as (mostly) trusted authority figures who influence breeding decisions and practices in the home.

The skilled vision or viewpoint of judges as authority figures perpetuate the selection of exaggerated morphologies which can have detrimental health and well-being implications for cats, such as the extreme morphologies of the brachycephalic (e.g. Persian) or dolichocephalic (e.g. Siamese) breeds. Through breed discourses and their associated standards, cat bodies have been shaped and harmful aesthetics have become normalised and valued as vital to notions of the 'ideal cat'. This normalisation is exacerbated through the supporting concepts of 'pedigree' and 'lineage', the perceived importance of which helps to drive the controlled regulation of feline bodies, behaviours, and sociality.

'For the Good of the Breed' and the Objectification of Cats

A growing number of scholars are exploring the connections between eugenics, biopolitics, and human interventions used within animal breeding (e.g. Alexander, 2014; Blue and Rock, 2011; Chrulew, 2011; Rosenberg, 2016; Skoglund and Redmalm, 2016; Srinivasan, 2013). Through time spent interacting with cat breeders, it is clear that many reproductive interventions, including gene testing, selective neutering, and selective breeding, are also utilised in the creation, perpetuation, and 'improvement' of cat breeds. This focus on the improvement of the breed was seen with the wildcat species kept captive for use in the creation of hybrid breeds such as the Bengal and Savannah, as well as the use of non-pedigree cats in some permissible breeding lines for perpetuating breeds. This use of a non-pedigree cat contravenes cat fancy care norms that generally prioritise and advocate the neutering of non-pedigree cats. As an exercise in biopower, breeding decisions often prioritise 'the breed' and certainly the prevailing rhetoric is that fanciers should base their decisions on what is for the 'good of the breed'. These approaches regularly prioritise reproductive capacity

and potential above considerations of individual well-being and the feline umwelt in general.

The cat fancy attempts mastery of form and the shaping of feline bodies to fit certain socially constructed ideals of the 'perfect specimen'. Through this research, I sought to question if contemporary pedigree cat breeding can be seen as reminiscent of nineteenth and twentieth century eugenic notions. I propose that the reproductive interventions discussed throughout this thesis would be labelled as forms of eugenics if conducted upon human bodies. In fact, three of the four forms of eugenic praxis identified by Bashford and Levine (2010) are clearly evident and are regarded as reasonable and largely unquestioned practices within the cat fancy: these include preventing life, generating more life, and creating fitter life. Ending life is frowned upon except in certain circumstances that are seen by fanciers as being in the 'best interest' of the cat. These circumstances might include untreatable health conditions or the spaying of cats carrying litters where the queen's health is at risk. Because it is based on an evaluative logic that is particularly driven by aesthetic conformation, at times at the expense of feline flourishing, I argue that cat fancy eugenicism is ethically questionable.

I have maintained that the valuation of cats based on their conformation to human-devised breed standards results in a tendency for them not to be seen or engaged with as minded individuals with value regardless of their perceived 'beauty'. This objectification of pedigree cats as aesthetically pleasing entities and representatives of their breed also extends to the sale of cats, where new guardians often seek cats initially based not through consideration of their individuality and subjectivity, but grounded on their aesthetic value and their

power to confer status. Many cats and humans, however, will nonetheless go on to form close bonds and develop sometimes deep intersubjective relations; many cats become integrated as family members and participate in family rituals for example. The primary motivations underpinning the acquisition of pedigree cats, however, typically stem from more anthropocentric and largely aesthetic considerations. Cat fanciers, then, can apparently objectify their cats but at the same time also hold a close attachment to them without apparent self-contradiction.

Agency and Resistance

This thesis has argued that cats are ‘purposeful and capable agents’ (Pearson, 2013: 134) and that they express this agency in a multiplicity of actions and relations. Feline agency is recognised, and often restricted, by both judges and guardians, at shows and in the home environment. In the home, cats are regularly inhibited through indoor confinement in an attempt to protect them due to their genetic, financial, and social value. This confinement prevents or limits the expression of species-specific behaviours, such as hunting, roaming and spraying. However, it keeps them safe from outside dangers, such as injury from car accidents, attacks from dogs and fighting with other cats. I explored how this care norm, alongside the management of multi-cat households and through pregnancy-related care, reveals the intricate entanglement of harm and care in decision-making related to show cat lives.

This research has shown how individual cats can sometimes demonstrate resistance to their circumstances. Some cats, for instance, may attempt to express their dissatisfaction with elements of the show experience. Human power

usually responds, either by ignoring, misinterpreting, or reacting to suppress this resistance. Through extensive observations and conversations, it has become clear that showing practices prioritise human leisure needs, often at the expense of feline agency. Indeed, such agency may even act as an inconvenience to the objective of winning competitions. However, some cat fanciers are aware of their cat's welfare and grapple with ethical questions regarding their involvement in the cat fancy with some choosing to stop showing particular cats or criticising others for exhibiting certain individuals.

Cat shows act as a site for the celebration of human mastery and dominion over other species, with shows providing the opportunity for fanciers to display and celebrate what they have produced. Showing continues the ongoing process of cats being brought under ever-deepening human control that first emerged through semi-domestication and domestication processes. The increasing use of biotechnology, such as drugs to prevent estrus and pregnancy, and the selective breeding of cats for the creation and perpetuation of breeds places tight restriction on cats' reproductive agency and serves to generate more 'docile' individuals. There are again what might be interpreted as resistances to the practices from the cats themselves who might choose not to breed, or who might interfere indirectly or non-deliberately in the outcomes of litters who do not meet expected 'standards'. I have shown that human controls on reproductive agency are not always effective, and other factors such as genetic agency and feline resistance influence outcomes. These factors mean attempts at eugenicism are messier in reality than in the abstract.

Ethical Relatings

The research on which this thesis is based, and my practical knowledge of caring for cats, has led me to the conclusion that ultimately the cat fancy should seek to deconstruct itself in favour of modes of human-cat companionship that take place within the cat's territory and on their own terms. Given that cat showing is an entrenched culture in which its human actors have so much invested, such an event seems unlikely to occur, at least in the short term. My research suggests, however, that there are a number of functional changes that could be implemented at shows and in the home environment to improve conditions and create a more caring and less rigidly anthropocentric activity. These include offering stress reducing enrichments and providing abundant resources, such as hiding spaces and scratching posts, demanding improved handling training for judges and stewards, and altering exhibition hall layouts to provide more space and distance between the cats. Currently, there is a lack of attention to providing an environment that accommodates a cat's needs. Minimal enrichments are provided, and certainly nothing is allowed that may interfere with the judging process or risk dispelling the myth of anonymity in judging decisions which can lead to a reluctance to provide covered beds or hiding spaces for the cats in the cages. There is limited choice available to the cats as to whether or not they wish to interact and cat fanciers largely do not seek consent before handling. The cat's well-being is consequently jeopardised.

During the course of this multispecies ethnography I have observed obvious signs of acute stress and fear in many of the cats present, including lip licking, flattened ears to the side and back of the head, dilated pupils, tail-swishing, hissing, out of character and excessive vocalisations and aggression (Moody et

al., 2018). There have also been numerous cats who express their discontent more subtly, such as by hiding or sham sleeping (pretending to sleep). Exhibitors and judges could be better informed of these signs and encourage guardians to avoid bringing cats that present them to shows. The judges could themselves decline to engage with such cats on the show bench. With this in mind, there is a need to develop a greater 'inter-species etiquette' (Taylor and Carter., 2013: 9; Warkentin, 2011) or an 'engaged empathy' towards the cats, a 'tacitly informed approximation of what the other is experiencing' that helps us to interact with other beings in 'ethical ways' (Gruen, 2009; Warkentin, 2011: 103). This thesis suggests that there is an opportunity for cat fanciers to work more actively towards the betterment of feline lives. It goes further, however, indicating that perhaps the entire practice of taking cats from their own territories to unfamiliar environments with unknown people and other cats, could and should be challenged in itself, especially if we take an ethics of care approach that engages with the cats on their own terms. The status quo can be further challenged when its underlying evaluative aesthetic logic is considered, which currently results in the perpetuation and celebration of harmful exaggerated morphologies, reduced genetic diversity, and increased non-conformational disorders in some breeds. As I have argued, the cat fancy is an example of serious leisure for human participants, yet for the cats it can be just as, if not more, serious.

Overall, the human-cat relationship in the cat fancy is unbalanced with humans having the ultimate power regarding decision-making on cat care, breeding and other activities. Pedigree cats as a 'population' face even greater scrutiny and control than non-pedigree cats, in part due to their perceived social and economic value, as well as perceptions surrounding their 'cat-like' traits or lack thereof,

impacting upon their perceived suitability for survival without direct human control.

Becoming 'Cat People'

The cat fancy as a collective of institutions and individuals, produces and disseminates norms regarding what makes a 'good' or 'bad' breeder. 'Good' breeders are those who conform with particular behaviours and attitudes, such as not breeding for profit, and cat care norms, including registering and neutering (if not to be used for breeding purposes) kittens before selling them to new homes. In contrast, 'bad' breeders are those who do not follow the same shared values, breeding for profit or being lackadaisical in their approach to practices such as vaccination and neutering.

Contemporary cat fancy institutions broadcast and perpetuate norms of care regarding what makes a 'good' or 'bad' breeder and what constitutes a 'good' cat. The Breed Advisory Committees (BACs) play a key role in this regulation, acting as a form of surveillance over cat fanciers and their cats and as an authority in monitoring and disciplining behaviours. They also disseminate policy and discourse to the wider cat fancy community. I have argued that as well as having implications for cats' well-being in terms of the breeding and health decisions it advocates, the BACs also contribute to the identity formation of cat fanciers and the exclusion of those who are not seen as the right fit or who do not otherwise abide by their rules and recommendations.

'Good' breeders may not openly seek financial capital, yet they do seek social capital from their peers through recognition of their knowledge and skill in producing 'good' examples of the respective breeds while aligning with norms of

care shared by others within the fancy. However, there is a fluidity and multiplicity in the ways that individual fanciers conceptualise their cats. They may see or act towards them as kin, companions, extensions of the self, status and aesthetic 'objects', and bodies for reproduction. The success or failure of cats at shows is often valued as a shared cat-human achievement and symbols of their success, such as rosettes and certificates, represent the intertwined lives of humans and their cats, and act as indicators of the 'work' undertaken by both in the breeding and showing aspects of competition. As humans and cats share their lives in the cat fancy, then, a co-shaping of human and feline lives takes place. Cat shows act as a particularly intense site of becoming-with (Haraway, 2008b).

Through the fancy, both online and offline, there are attempts at developing a shared understanding of what it means and takes to be a 'cat fancier' or a 'cat person'. The shared norms of care disseminated within the group, such as indoor confinement and knowledge surrounding feline maternal health and pregnancy, position cat fanciers as 'experts' on cat care, who at times perceive themselves as better qualified than other individuals, including veterinarians, to make welfare and health decisions, as well as advise others. The cat's agency is compromised in the process of humans making themselves into particular kinds of 'cat people'. They use the cats themselves and the mechanisms of the cat fancy to develop this identity. The cat fancier in the pursuit of being seen as an 'ethical breeder' undertakes associated activities as a way of life, making sacrifices financially and socially in the pursuit of creating 'good' pet and show cats. For 'cat people' in the fancy, cats constitute a significant part of their identity, as represented by the abundance of cat-related material culture and 'biographical objects' (Hoskins, 1998), and the corresponding cat fancy activities (such as attending shows,

breeding pedigree cats, partaking in social interactions online and taking on mentorship roles), all of which contribute to the cat fancy becoming a way of life.

Threats to the cat fancy present the possibility of an unbecoming. Members of the cat fancy are facing an existential crisis on multiple fronts and with this they fear the loss of their identity as 'cat people' and 'ethical breeders', as well as the extinction of the cat breeds which they regard as so central to their serious leisure pursuits. Feline flourishing, however, is not a primary consideration in discourse on the death of the cat fancy. A critical ethics of care approach demands that we pay more attention to the feline dimensions of the human-cat bond. We need to re-evaluate how cats are acted upon in the fancy, shifting towards a prioritisation of feline thriving. This move to engage with the cat's well-being requires that the cat fancy reconstruct itself in such a way that it becomes cognisant of its own fixation on aesthetics and reproduction, and dependency on historically particular and arguably outmoded constructs such as 'pedigree', 'breed' and 'lineage'.

Unique Contribution to the Field

In this section I summarise my key contributions to the wider field of anthrozoology and the social sciences more generally, returning to my findings from the guiding research questions I outlined in the introduction.

The main aim of this research using a range of qualitative ethnographic methods was to uncover the breeding and exhibiting practices, discourses, and sociality of the cat fancy, highlighting multispecies relatedness and the co-shaping of human and feline lives within it. Until now there has been very little ethnographic investigation of contemporary companion animal exhibition practices (Hirschman, 1993) and, specifically, of the cat fancy. This research has

addressed this significant gap by paying much needed attention to an important feline other-than-human leisure pursuit, and by considering the implications of this activity for the other-than-human participants (Danby et al., 2019; Young and Carr, 2018). Unlike other studies looking at other-than-human leisure, I have focused on answering the question, 'what's in it for the cats?' (see Birke, 2009) and I have shown ways of acknowledging my human position whilst engaging with the cats as individual, minded beings through an empathetic research practice (Gillespie, 2018; Gruen, 2015; Hurn, 2018; Milton, 2008). I have extended Stebbin's (1982; 2015) theory of serious leisure to a novel leisure activity and also to overcome the concept's anthropocentrism. I have addressed Gallant's (2013) criticism of serious leisure as primarily focusing on the positive aspects of leisure by highlighting the nuances and complexity of involvement in the cat fancy, including the costs of engagement for those humans and felines both directly and indirectly involved in the activity. Furthermore, I have demonstrated how the activity can become more than a hobby and become 'a way of life' (Dashper, 2017a). In the process of illustrating the pervasiveness of the cat fancy in cat fanciers' lives, I have also contributed to the growing field of online ethnography (see Boellstorff, 2008; Horst and Miller, 2012; Miller and Slater, 2000) by successfully utilising ongoing engagement with my human participants outside of cat show events on Facebook groups and online forums as a form of data collection and building and maintaining rapport.

What are the institutional and individual level motivations that underpin pedigree cat breeding and showing and that enable it to continue?

This research found that there were various factors influencing human involvement in breeding and exhibiting pedigree cats, contributing to a body of work on other-than-human leisure activities (e.g. Baldwin and Norris, 1999; Dąbrowska, 2018; Dashper, 2014; 2016; 2017a; 2017b; Fox, 2009; Gillespie et al., 2002; Hultsman, 2012; Hurn, 2008). Despite individual differences between cat fanciers, the prevailing motivations included socialisation with other cat fanciers, identity formation and maintenance, winning competitions through breeding 'good' show cats and the subsequent accumulation of social status. During the ethnographic fieldwork, the embodied participant observation provided rich and in-depth insights into experiences within the cat fancy, both building upon other studies and adding an original case study through which to explore human-animal leisure. I have provided insights and raised key questions relating to the ethicality and potential future of the activity, bringing to the fore suggestions for changes that could be made to improve the wellbeing of the cats and outlining possibilities for a move towards a more congenial 'interspecies etiquette' (Taylor and Carter, 2013; Warkentin, 2011).

Are breeding practices and discourses reminiscent of nineteenth and twentieth century eugenicism and are notions of 'pedigree' and 'lineage' still prevalent within the contemporary cat fancy?

Skoglund and Redmalm (2016) highlight the necessity for researchers to consider the place of biopolitics in the context of human relations with other-than-human animals. However, much of the research which has begun to do this has been focused on traditionally non-companion species (e.g. Coppin, 2003; Holloway et al., 2009; Holloway and Morris, 2012; Rosenberg, 2016; Shukin,

2009; Twine, 2010; Wolfe, 2012). In this research, I have further extended the application of Foucault's (1977) notion of biopower, investigating its role within the cat fancy. I have also addressed the question of whether contemporary breeding practices and discourses can be considered reminiscent of nineteenth and twentieth century eugenicism, and whether what might be considered eugenically loaded notions of 'pedigree' and 'lineage' still pervade the cat fancy. As the breeding practices and discourses discussed in depth in chapter five demonstrate, some of the normative practices utilised and advocated within the cat fancy could be argued to constitute a form of eugenics. If these same practices were conducted upon humans, then they would indeed be labelled as such. Notions of pedigree and lineage still factor heavily within decision-making processes around breeding in the cat fancy, shaping the cats that are produced. Breeding decisions are often made based on ideas of being 'good for the breed' and individual flourishing can be sacrificed for the goal of perpetuating certain breed ideals. As such, I have furthered theoretical discussion of the applicability of biopower to other species and considered some of the ethical implications of these biopolitical practices using the conceptual framework of nonhuman eugenics.

What particular intraspecies and interspecies relationships form within the cat fancy?

Another key intention of this research was to question the kinds of intraspecies and interspecies relationships that form within the cat fancy. Through this investigation, I have contributed to knowledge surrounding notions of more-than-human kinship (e.g. Charles and Davies, 2008; Irvine and Cilia, 2017),

interspecies sociality within human-cat relations and interactions between cats within multi-cat households (e.g. Alger and Alger, 2003; Atkinson, 2018). I have also built upon work on more-than-human care (e.g. Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012; Srinivasan, 2013; Tuan, 1984; van Dooren, 2014) highlighting the ethical complexities and entanglements within caring decisions that relate to feline companions. Through this exploration, I have added empirical and theoretical insights to support Birke and Thompson's (2017) argument that there is not a simple cruel/humane dichotomy but instead a multitude of conflicting intentions and knowledge on ideal cat care.

The complexities and oppressions of care did not only impact upon the cats. My discussion touched upon human grief for the loss of the cats and the rituals associated with feline death, contributing to growing research in nonhuman thanatology (e.g. King, 2013). Furthermore, by exploring the intricate relationships between humans and felines, I have built upon work looking at the existence of human-cat intersubjectivity, feline subjectivities (e.g. Alger and Alger, 1997; 1999; 2003; White, 2013) and animal agency (e.g. Dashper, 2016; 2017b; Gillespie, 2016; McFarland and Hediger, 2009; Pearson, 2013). I have shown how all three influence the judging experience at shows and the bond that can develop between cat fancier and cat. However, despite the clear existence of individual cat subjectivities and the ability of cats to express their own agency, oftentimes these can be temporarily dismissed by cat fanciers in the performance of exhibitions or in breeding.

What kinds of people and cats are shaped through cat fancy social structures?

Building on Haraway's concept of 'becoming-with' (2008b: 4), the relationships that form between cats and humans can be seen as processes of co-shaping. The notion of co-shaping relates to a further aim of the research which was to investigate the kinds of cats and humans that are produced through the cat fancy and its social structures. Multiple ways of conceptualising cats emerge in the cat fancy. Cats can be seen, for instance as kin, companions, status symbols, aesthetic objects and lively commodities, to name just a few. These conceptualisations may appear contradictory, but I found that within the cat fancy they can comfortably coexist. Humans are produced as 'cat people' and 'good breeders' with shared elements of identity stemming from their adoption of broadly similar norms of care and attitudes towards the cats. These insights have contributed to knowledge surrounding human-cat relationships more generally, as well as to comprehension of the role of 'serious leisure' and multispecies leisure to the formation of individual and group identities (e.g. Dashper, 2017a; Fox, 2009, Syrjälä, 2016). I also showed how the apprenticeship of judges, stewards and cat fanciers can be seen as a form of enskilment contributing to work by Ingold (2000) and Grasseni (2005), and demonstrated how this enskilment influences the ways in which different cats are valued, with implications for the ongoing manipulation of feline bodies.

Throughout this research I have questioned the well-being implications of involvement within the cat fancy for the cats and their minimised opportunities to flourish under its practices and prevailing discourses. I have looked closely at the social construction of breeds and at how the valued aesthetic and 'standard of points' influence breeding decisions that can impact upon the morphology and health of the cats. This discussion adds to research within animal welfare and veterinary circles on the wellbeing implications of pedigree breeding that has

traditionally focused on pedigree dogs (e.g. Asher et al., 2009; Pedigree Dogs Exposed, 2008; Turner, 2010) but is now increasingly concerned with pedigree cats (e.g. Farnworth et al., 2016; Milne, 2018a; Turner 2010). My aim has been to produce a piece of research that represents a form of applied anthrozoology, contributing to knowledge of the consequences of involvement in the cat fancy for individual cats whose agency and individual preferences may be misinterpreted or neglected. The thesis also draws attention to the value placed upon (and subsequent treatment of) cats deemed as 'pedigree' relative to 'non-pedigree' and those who do or do not meet the breed standards. In doing so, I hope this thesis has problematised the concept and category of the 'pedigree cat'.

Directions for Further Research

This thesis is one of the first anthrozoological explorations of the cat fancy and pedigree cats in general. As such it provides a springboard for further research within this area. There are other areas of interaction that I have not been able to explore in depth that will provide further novel insights into our shared lives with cats. This research has focused predominantly on the show space with some observations within the home environment. However, research could be conducted further within the domestic sphere, engaging more deeply with breeding practices and incorporating observations of the reproduction process rather than depending on narratives from human participants. Another common theme within this research was the distinction between 'good' and 'bad' breeders, with participants distinguishing themselves as 'good' breeders. I only touched upon those considered 'bad', namely those known as 'backyard breeders'. It would be of benefit if further study were to be focused upon this category labelled

as 'bad' breeders to determine the implications of their practices for the cats, the wider pedigree cat industry, and for cat guardians more generally. Additionally, although examined briefly in chapter seven, there has been minimal attention devoted to leash walking cats, which is a growing trend with important implications for well-being (see Walker, 2017; Yorke, 2018). Furthermore, research on the lived experiences of all household members within cat fancy homes would be valuable to determine a broader spectrum of multispecies sociality, including other companion species, and how this influences feline flourishing.

As an in-depth ethnography of the cat show world, I tried to attend as many different shows as possible across the UK. Also, as well as forming part of my ethnography, through the use of social media as a recruitment tool, I have been able to engage with cat fanciers from the width and breadth of the country. For instance, despite being unable to physically attend a cat show in Scotland, I have spoken with numerous Scottish cat fanciers. However, due to logistics and trying to also follow my participants to shows of relevance to them, I was unable to attend every show. I have, therefore, not been able to engage directly with all geographical parts of the UK. It would be useful to examine the extent to which my findings are confirmed by further research across a wider geographical area, including internationally.

As noted at numerous times throughout this thesis, I have wanted to engage directly with the cat's subjective experiences of being a (non-consenting) member of the cat fancy and being used for breeding and showing purposes. However, other than substantial interactions and observations at shows and in the home with cats, I have had to rely on the narratives told to me by my human participants.

As such, there is a need to engage further with the cat's perspective. This further incorporation of the cat could be achieved by utilising a qualitative assessment tool, such as QBA (Qualitative Behaviour Assessment) developed by Wemelsfelder (2007) to draw on behavioural datasets. It could also be advantageous to involve cat fanciers themselves in the collection of behavioural data as this may encourage them to see examples of stress-related behaviours within their own cats that are currently often misinterpreted. Although I illustrate my observations by reference to many individual cats named and described by my research participants and observed by myself, it would also strengthen research in this area to pay more attention to the intricacies of individual cat stories, or the biographies of individual animals in what Coulter (2018) refers to as an 'animal-centric ethnography'. There is also scope to include behavioural studies within the domestic sphere or breeding household to explore the interactions and behaviours that are occurring between individual cats, humans, and other animals within the household.

Human-Cat Flourishing into the Future

Since humans and cats began a journey of co-domestication, approximately 10,000 years ago, the human-cat relationship has altered dramatically. It began with a likely commensal interaction with cats attracted to grain stores in search of prey and humans benefitting from rodent control, eventually developing towards companionship. From here, around 150 years ago, humans began to take on a more controlling role in human-cat relations. Through selective breeding and exhibiting practices that place value upon aesthetic 'beauty', some cats came to be known as 'pedigree cats'. Human control has been heightened through care

practices such as high neutering rates of non-pedigree cats and indoor confinement. The human-cat relationship has clearly evolved.

Based on this research, I believe we are now at a juncture in human-cat interactions where we need to rethink how we currently 'use' companion cats and initiate a phase of human-cat co-existence where well-being and flourishing are given precedence. The underlying drivers and discourses of the cat fancy mean that a prioritisation of the cat cannot exist under the current system. As discussed throughout this thesis, the cat fancy needs to reconsider and reinvent itself in light of new understanding of cat behaviour and well-being. The positive intersubjective human-cat bonds that emerge provide a basis on which to build a more ethical relationship with cats, one that is more broadly in line with an appreciation and understanding of the feline umwelt and individual subjectivities.

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