

## Talking with the Wolf Man

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### Abstract

Individuals self-identifying as lycanthropes appear to be engaged in an ongoing negotiation of what can broadly be considered empowerment and stigmatisation from considering themselves capable of physically undergoing metamorphosis into werewolves and back. Before this study, there was still much to understand about how such individuals discursively construct their identities, and the cultural resources used to aid their identity claims. To better understand this area, interviews were carried out using a discourse analytic methodology to give a voice to the 'wolf man' exploring what it means to claim a lycanthrope identity, 'undergo' metamorphosis and to enact the werewolf.

### Keywords

Lycanthrope, Werewolf, Stigma, Identity, Discourse Analysis, Metamorphosis

## **Introduction**

Exploring identity and who we believe ourselves to be is a critical part of understanding the way we talk about and view the world, as well as the way we live our lives. Over the past decades, increasing attention has been paid to studying identity as a means to more fully understand how people construct themselves and the social spaces they inhabit (Lawler 2013). While identity can be considered pivotal for the way people make sense of the world and themselves, there is still much to elucidate for the complex interplay between what can bluntly be regarded as positive and negative aspects of any identity. This is particularly the case where individuals or groups feel their identities to be stigmatised, in turn limiting their willingness to voice their experiences related to their identities (Castle & Lee 2008).

Lycanthropes are a potential example of this challenge and due to a possible fear of stigmatisation may feel inclined to stay out of mainstream discourses, choosing not to speak about their claimed identities. This is not to say that these individuals do not seek a voice, or even discuss their identities, but that their desire to reduce identity-based stigma can at times limit their willingness to more openly discuss their experiences and perceptions. By giving self-identified lycanthropes a direct means to speak through these interviews within this study, we explore their identities through what they say, unpacking what it means for them to be lycanthropes and werewolves. These identities appear not to sit in isolation from common perceptions and wider socio-cultural constructions of being a lycanthrope, werewolf or 'undergoing' metamorphosis, particularly from Hollywood films. In this study, the term lycanthrope is used to denote individuals who claim to be capable of physically transforming into werewolves. With these physical changes not being substantiated by extant scientific literature, we have addressed the notion of the lycanthrope, metamorphosis and werewolf through the lens of identity, exploring how these individuals discursively construct themselves.

## **Literature Review**

The belief that people can shape shift into different animals, and potentially back again, is known as therianthropy and has a long and rich history spanning multiple cultures.

Lycanthropy is one of the most well-known examples of therianthropy and exists within a variety of socio-cultural notions for people who believe they can physically transform into wolves and back again. These depictions found in books, films and other socio-cultural discourses can present lycanthropy in a variety of ways, with twentieth-century films being a popular resource for people to draw on in their construction of lycanthropes (de Blécourt

2013). Acknowledging that lycanthropy, the werewolf and metamorphosis can have numerous socio-cultural depictions we allowed the respondents in this study to discuss the resources they drew on and that they felt important to their identities. Perhaps not surprisingly, and as will be discussed in this study, these werewolf sources were often argued by the respondents as the most commonly available and easily accessible to them, but with some aspect of selecting preferred narratives of what it is to be a werewolf.

Simply, lycanthropy is derived from the Greek words of *lykoi* (wolf) and *antropos* (human) (Nasirian, Banazadeh & Kheradmand 2009), with much socio-cultural knowledge coming from a variety of sources including Continental European folklore, and more recently Hollywood, for what it is to become and live as a lycanthrope and werewolf. However, while there are numerous sources discussing the werewolf phenomenon, individuals are not only more likely to encounter certain depictions of the werewolf based on their day-to-day activities, but also specific sources they may seek out and choose to rely on. Thus, as we explore in this study, modern films have a high prominence in the construction of lycanthrope and werewolf identities. Importantly though, and as de Blécourt (2013) argues, modern films often depict lycanthropy quite differently from historical and academic texts, with film depictions rarely being grounded in these other areas. This suggests a skew towards certain constructions of lycanthropy, facilitating potential socio-cultural preferences amongst certain individuals for what they regard as a werewolf. Film representations often show lycanthropy as a consequence of a human being bitten by a werewolf, leading to the bitten individual becoming a lycanthrope and transforming into a werewolf at the onset of a full moon, as depicted in the film *An American Werewolf in London* (1981). This suggests an aspect of contagion, with lycanthropy being transmitted from human to human, and although popular in some film depictions, such as *The Werewolf of London* (1935), this method of becoming a werewolf is not grounded in werewolf legends (Carter 1998). Before undertaking this study, we recognised that the individuals constructing themselves as lycanthropes might draw on a variety of sources and depictions to enact their identities. We, therefore, sought to unpick how and why the respondents constructed themselves as such.

Addressing the lycanthrope and werewolf as identities necessitates elucidating both of these identities as well as identity 'boundaries', to understand where one identity 'stops' and another 'begins'. Constructing clear identity boundaries is not always achievable, where elements of different identities may sit in isolation or combined with each other. Briefly, identity can be viewed as a negotiated mix of the social and cultural space we occupy, often in transition, influenced by the things we engage with, who we consider ourselves and others

to be, as well as how we believe others see us (Lawler 2013). It is not uncommon for individuals to have multiple identities, enacted in different parts of their lives, but with a dominant 'centralised' identity used in day-to-day living (Settles, Jellison & Pratt-Hyatt 2009).

Different identities have various levels of desirability, with some elevating social status and others reducing it. Examining the diversity of cultural resources showcasing lycanthropy, a variety of potential lycanthrope depictions can be found, ranging from the simple beast to more nuanced and empowered constructions, with an example being the lycanthropes in the *Underworld* film series (2003-12). While arguably still bestial, these lycanthropes can become the werewolf as a means to increase their physical strength, agility and to, at some level, become 'super-human'. Thus, individuals constructing themselves as lycanthropes have numerous Hollywood film depictions, as well as other cultural resources, to negotiate and draw upon for their claimed lycanthropic and werewolf identities and enacted behaviours.

Potentially damaging to identity is the notion of stigma. Drawing on the thoughts of Goffman (1963), where individuals or groups perceive their actions or identity may be viewed negatively, stigma and shunning can occur, leading to insecurities about the way they interact with others. Trying to understand stigmatisation is problematic, as many variations exist, but in this study, it is viewed as individuals undergoing an aspect of identity 'otherness' containing a 'mark' of undesirability (Jones et al. 1984), with socially contrary characteristics (Crocker et al. 1998). While individuals may feel stigmatised, it is important not to consider stigmatisation as static, but to view it in a continuous state of flux, where what is desirable changes alongside cultural notions of desirability (Parker & Aggleton 2003). Where individuals have stigmatised identities, they can tell themselves stories to facilitate or reject stigmatisation through nuances in identity construction. In this way, identity can be viewed as a consequence of stigmatisation, as well as a potential means to mitigate and resist it (Castells 1997).

For individuals identifying as lycanthropes, there is the potential for stigmatisation to arise, with it not being uncommon for this phenomenon to be linked to individuals suffering from unusual delusions (Garlippe et al. 2004), mood disorders (Nasirian, Banazadeh & Kheradmand 2009), demonic possession (Khalil, Dahdah & Richa 2012), or brought on by the use of illicit substances (Keck, Pope & Hudson, 1988; Garlipp, Koch & Dietrich 2004). Where there is discrimination against different social groups and enacted identities, individuals may shift to what they perceive as a more socially acceptable centralised identity

(Bourguignon et al. 2006), which in this study is shown as the lycanthrope predominantly being favoured over the werewolf. Albeit potentially stigmatised, it is noteworthy that not all societies view transformative shape-shifting from human to animal as an illness, with some shamanic cultures believing it to be a vehicle to restoring health (Bobrow 2003).

Unfortunately, the extant literature examining the lycanthrope and werewolf identities related to stigma is limited. We have therefore explored the relationship between these identities and stigma as well as how such individuals negotiate this aspect. Stepping beyond regarding lycanthropy as ‘just an illness’, and giving these individuals a legitimate voice to speak, stigma and identity are unpicked in this study. While labelling someone a lycanthrope is simple to do, it leaves much to be understood for how these individuals live their lives and see themselves while enacting these identities. Pulling this section to a close, the themes emerging from the extant literature suggest that identity and stigmatisation may be critical parts of being a lycanthrope, as well as Hollywood films to construct identity, which amongst other themes are explored throughout this study.

### **Methodology**

This study sought to better understand how individuals self-identifying as lycanthropes and werewolves discursively construct their identities through what they say. Initial contact was made with one male self-identifying as a lycanthrope/werewolf through my (the first author’s) emic sensitisation to this area from having engaged with ‘alternative’ spiritual and lifestyle groups (Kottak 2006). Speaking with the first respondent and offering a potential ‘voice’ for this individual resulted in trust being developed, and three further respondents being identified through the first respondent (Bryman & Bell 2011). Thus four UK-based Caucasian male respondents (herein referred to as respondent A-D) aged between twenty-four and thirty-nine were identified to produce a purposive sample of ‘experts’ to engage with through separate semi-structured interviews (Wengraf 2004). Care was taken throughout the research process to safeguard the respondents, giving them the right to withdraw at any point.

This study was carried out using a qualitative case study methodology (Yin 2009) using discourse analysis (Wood & Kroger 2000) as a means to give the respondents a voice to speak about their perceptions and experiences of being lycanthropes and werewolves (Billig 1996). In discourse analytic studies, language is not limited to being a descriptive tool or as a medium of communication but is a social practice and a way of doing things. Discourse is thus given a central role in social life, where the phenomenon of interest is

constituted in and through discourse (Wood & Kroger 2000). As Sampson states: ‘discourse theorists maintain that talk is constitutive of the realities within which we live, rather than expressive of an earlier, discourse-independent reality’ (1993: 1221). More simply, discourse can be viewed as creating the social world and is not limited to reflecting what is perceived to be there. Importantly, discourse does not deny physical reality but is a means through which physical reality is understood, unpicked and where social interactions take place.

Through the use of a discourse analytic methodology, I functioned as an active participant in the interview process, co-partnering the construction of meaning alongside the respondents, to more fully capture the richness of their experiences. The interviews were driven by three main themes of trying to understand what it is to be a lycanthrope, undergo metamorphosis and to be a werewolf. Within each theme, multiple interview questions were asked, with examples shown in the Appendix.

Through this methodological approach, a total of over twenty-one hours of recorded data was produced, with transcription occurring within twenty-four hours after each interview to maintain the integrity of what was said (Eisenhardt 1989). From this initial transcription, several further transcriptions were produced, read, and re-worked to aid in multiple interpretations being drawn out. Both authors sought to establish patterns and similarities to further elucidate the potential meanings of the discourse.

From transcribed data, content analysis was carried out to highlight emergent themes against the aims of this study. The examination of frequency can be useful for identifying potentially relevant overt themes brought to life through respondent discourses, to start to understand how respondents construct their relevant social structures (Halliday 1973). Upon completing this stage, analytical coding was subsequently carried out, enabling discursive themes and their frequency to be considered for their potential importance based on the frequency of their use.

Throughout the discourse analysis stage, maintaining the integrity of respondent discourse features is paramount, although it is often reworked and further contextualised (Wood & Kroger, 2000). As such, quantification is kept to a minimum and is perceived as useful for pre-analytic work, and to support the prominence of themes emerging from and important to the respondents (Schlegoff 1993).

To aid in the reliability and quality of the worked data, warranting was carried out to provide a contextual understanding of the justification of claims made (Wood & Kroger 2000). In practice, this involved the data being reworked several times between both authors and themes drawn out from within each interview and between interviews. As mentioned

previously, several discursive meanings were often unpicked, and while accepting the potential for these different meanings, where clarity was needed, the respondents were sought to aid in the claims being made.

When considering lycanthropic discourses, the issue is raised of whether any voiced account can be considered truth or fiction. While common perspectives may well frame a distinct difference between truth and fiction, in social life this divide is no longer clear, and at some level, all discourses can be considered to have an element of storytelling about them (Rorty 1991). Taking a broadly phenomenological stance (Bogdan and Taylor 1975), both authors undertook to 'see' the world of the lycanthropes through their eyes (Hycner 1999). In accordance with the respondents, both authors constructed a divide between respondent truth (their sense of being lycanthropes, werewolves and undergoing metamorphosis linked to their favourable socio-cultural perceptions) and fiction (their sense of less favourable cultural notions of lycanthropy, werewolves and metamorphosis). Drawing a divide for how the respondents claimed to see the world, both authors were also aware of their perspectives of what they saw, heard and read in the transcripts about the respondents, particularly while the respondents 'shapeshifted'. Thus, both author perspectives of truth and fiction often varied from what the respondents considered truth and fiction.

## **Data Analysis & Interpretation**

### ***Being a Lycanthrope***

All four respondents self-identified as lycanthropes, frequently using this term, as a 'catch-all' for how they viewed themselves as existing in a human state capable of changing into a werewolf. Importantly, these individuals all argued that they were lycanthropes, either as humans or wolves, and also made a clear distinction that the lycanthrope referred to them in their human state, choosing to refer to the wolf state as being the werewolf. The use of the term lycanthrope was considered to be more socially acceptable, with the least stigmatisation, and as such was preferentially used. As respondent B commented '*I'm a lycanthrope. It is a relatively neutral name. If I say I'm a werewolf it conjures up all kinds of images of wolves eating chickens! Being a lycanthrope allows me to choose what I am*'. This was a common theme amongst the respondents, suggesting a preference to claim an identity they perceived as favourable to themselves and what they perceived as socially more acceptable in their eyes. While they acknowledged potential stigmatisation from being a lycanthrope, they sought to create distance from negative cultural notions of the werewolf identity, but importantly still felt they could claim the werewolf due to some perceived advantages. This is

not to suggest that the respondents perceived the werewolf wholly negatively, but that enacting this identity was regarded with caution, with the lycanthrope as a more suitable identity for day-to-day social activities. Thus a complex negotiation for identity enactment was described for everyday living on the journey to mitigate stigmatisation and to normalise the lycanthrope identity.

These individuals positioned the lycanthrope as their centralised and dominant identity, from which they could transition into a werewolf. The respondents predominantly claimed day-to-day benefits from being lycanthropes in comparison to being non-lycanthropes. Benefits included having a greater perception of the world from inherent wolf qualities, but with negative aspects from people learning about their werewolf identity and transformation, which they felt could be linked to mental illness. Discussing this, respondent C claimed: *‘Being a lycanthrope enhances parts of my daily life, I can smell and see better than humans, my precognition is better, particularly through dreams, and I am healthier’*. The same respondent went on to say: *‘I worry about what people will think of me as a lycanthrope and werewolf, will they think me mad?’* This suggests an anxious state, where these identities can create numerous challenges for the individuals enacting them.

The respondents stated that they had been sensitised to Hollywood depictions of lycanthropy from encountered and chosen films, but while they were influenced by Hollywood, their identities were not limited to Hollywood constructions. The respondents claimed that Hollywood films provided a defined but restricted view of what it is to be a werewolf in comparison to a lycanthrope, meaning a greater potential to individually construct the lycanthrope identity. Simply, with claims of limited knowledge derived from cultural sources about being lycanthropes, the respondents argued that they had little to reference in their construction of this identity. Discussing this, respondent A said: *‘As a lycanthrope I’m just a human and wolf mix, showing greater or lesser parts of these. I’m a human with wolf mixed in when I’m being me, or wolf with human mixed in when I’m a werewolf’*. Continuing with this theme, the same respondent went on to say: *‘I’m a wolf in human’s clothing, but not when I change, then I’m a human in wolf’s clothing, and I am me as me in the human me, but a different me as the wolf’*. Importantly this suggests that from the perspective of the respondents, metamorphosis does not create a human separate from a werewolf, or werewolf separate from human, but identities in continual negotiation. As the respondents discussed, this resulted in minor identity-based aspects of the werewolf being enacted while the respondents were lycanthropes, and elements of being human enacted while being werewolves.



### ***Metamorphosis: Shifting Between ‘Human’ and ‘Wolf’***

According to all four respondents, a pivotal part of being a lycanthrope is the ability to change into a werewolf. The respondents described this as involving a physical change from human to werewolf, as well as a perceptual change in the way they view the world. As respondent D stated: *‘The metamorphosis is painful, everything changes. I’m no longer a man, but a werewolf. I will be physically different, speak differently and see everything differently. Man plus beast!’* This suggests that both the lycanthrope and werewolf identities shift from one to another. Examining what might trigger this transformational change, the respondents again highlighted Hollywood films, predominantly focussing on the moon as a driving factor. Discussing this, respondent B claimed: *‘Everyone knows the influence of the moon on the lycanthrope. Every werewolf film shows it. The full moon gets you, I can’t resist it’*. Set against what was described as an ‘unstoppable influence’, the ability of the moon to create these changes was treated with trepidation, as the respondents claimed to be beholden to the moon’s power to transform them. While lunar cycling was given importance to physical transformation, it was not considered the only means of transitioning from lycanthrope to werewolf. Disturbances to individual wellbeing were also claimed to be responsible for changing into a werewolf, as a means of protecting these individuals. While each individual made this claim, the severity of stimuli was described as varying between the individuals, from slight insults through to severe risks of physical harm. Importantly, though, much concern was displayed for transforming into a werewolf in the presence of others, due to their hidden ‘ability’ to transform being ‘discovered’. As respondent B discussed: *‘The moon isn’t too bad, as I can plan for that. But if I transition due to being upset it could happen anywhere! Imagine doing it shopping or being in McDonalds!’* Although all respondents stated a desire to be able to transition when they desired, it was something that none of them claimed to have successfully achieved/performed. As such, metamorphosis was described as something that they were at the mercy of, and that they had to live with. Mention was however made of being able to limit the impact of situations that would lead to transformation, but that even where it could be limited, it would be likely that they would experience the werewolf ‘bleeding’ into the lycanthrope, even if they believed no physical change occurred. Expanding on this aspect, respondent C added: *‘In these situations, I desperately don’t want to change into the wolf, but the wolf comes into my mind altering my speech, and I growl more, grind my teeth, and clench my fists’*. This again suggests that even

where lycanthrope and werewolf identities are viewed separately, there appears to be an enactment of both parts of these identities at the same time.

Spending time with the respondents meant that I (as the first author) was able to observe two of the respondents ‘transitioning’ into werewolves, viewed through my eyes as an identity shift but not a physical change. Importantly, only minor physical changes were observed throughout the claimed metamorphoses from lycanthrope to werewolf, which were limited to mimicking more animalistic movements, with little evidence to suggest any further physical changes, at least in a way comparable to Hollywood depictions or historic depictions of becoming a werewolf. However, major discursive shifts were observed throughout this transitional state, corresponding to what might be considered wolf-like utterances, movements and reverence for violence. In each state, the respondents engaged in conversation, discussing their changes, embodying a bricolage of cultural notions of what it is to be a lycanthrope, enduring metamorphosis, and being a werewolf. Throughout the change from lycanthrope to a werewolf, both respondents writhed, claiming to feel pain as their bodies changed, and their ‘normal’ discursive patterns became less coherent. Upon the respondents transitioning back from werewolf to lycanthrope, writhing was also observed but with increasing conversational coherence. The respondents placed a great emphasis on needing to undergo agitated writhing due to the physical transformations they were ‘undergoing’. Although only two respondents were observed undergoing these ‘transitions’, the other two respondents also made similar claims. All respondents however produced similar arguments for how they perceived a transformation should occur, based on what they had encountered from werewolf films, particularly *An American Werewolf in London* (1981) and the *Underworld* film series (2003-2012). Exploring why these films were so heavily drawn on, the respondents claimed that they were widely known about and easily accessed.

### ***Being a Werewolf***

From the perspective of the respondents, their undergoing metamorphosis has one outcome: that of becoming a werewolf. While various cultural sources portray the werewolf as unable to speak, beyond animalistic howling and growling, all four respondents claimed a limited ability to speak as werewolves, with two of the respondents talking with me as werewolves. After the transition into werewolves, the two respondents separately adopted postures sitting on the floor, mimicking dog-like poses. Tilting of the head was clearly observable, as well as the showing of teeth, and a clear gaze to meet my eyes. Encountered speech was more guttural, and less coherent, while the werewolf identity was enacted. Conversations were

directed and guided by the werewolf respondents, who made simple claims to being physically more powerful than a human. Respondent D stated: ‘I...[growl]...*werewolf* [emphasised and slurred]...I...[pause]...*p-o-w-e-r-f-u-l* [drawn out emphasis]...*no...longer...human*’. Conversations were limited to what were often short statements made by the two werewolf respondents. It appeared that what was being said was to reinforce my perception of them as werewolves having gone through a physical change. It is also possible that by talking with me, the respondents’ conversations acted as a vehicle to reinforce their perceptions of themselves as werewolves. Through their lycanthrope identities, the respondents were keen to discuss how being a werewolf was not only a physical change but also one that affected the way they viewed the world and themselves. In each case, the respondents emphasised how becoming a werewolf changed the way they spoke to a limited number of people, who knew of their ‘true’ identities, using similar werewolf discourses to those that have already been discussed. Importantly, though, the respondents also claimed that being a werewolf also limited their ability to speak to themselves, changing what they described as a rich internal dialogue to more animalistic utterances. Discussing being the werewolf before or after transitioning highlighted a fear of stigmatisation from being a werewolf, which was greater than being a lycanthrope. Expanding on this, respondent A stated: ‘*Look, everyone has negative parts to them! Being a lycanthrope is no different. Being a lycanthrope is perceived better than a werewolf let me tell you*’. Continuing with this aspect, the same respondent stated: ‘*People judge me but nobody is perfect. Who is to say that being a werewolf is worse than what anyone else is? Why are we crazy?*’ The potential to be labelled as ‘mentally unwell’ or ‘crazy’ was apparent throughout much of the discussions in this area and something that disturbed all the respondents. The respondents frequently stated that being a werewolf was only one part of their life as the lycanthrope, with their lycanthrope identities appearing to offer them more than just the werewolf. Discussing this, respondent B suggested that: ‘*People should try to look beyond us being lycanthropes, and werewolves, or as crazy. People believe all kinds of things about themselves and the world*’. Coupled with this the same respondent stated:

*I genuinely believe that I transform into a werewolf and yes there are good and bad aspects. Other people believe in a flat Earth, or that they have been abducted by aliens, believe in who knows how many Gods or no Gods at all. Are we all crazy? Who decides this stuff? Why are lycanthropes stigmatised?*

This and similar other comments raised many important questions about engaging with lycanthropes as a stigmatised but also potentially empowered group, which is explored in the following section.

### **Discussion**

The lycanthrope is an example of a stigmatised, but yet potentially advantageous identity, where claims are made that lunar cycles and stressful situations can lead to physical transformation into a werewolf. The lycanthrope and werewolf are well characterised in popular culture, albeit often varying between historical and film sources, where Hollywood film depictions often focus on the dynamic physical changes as a human becomes a beast and vice versa. The respondents in this study appear to draw on encountered cultural notions, predominantly from Hollywood, to bring to life their identities for what it means to be a lycanthrope, undergo metamorphosis and be a werewolf. The utilisation of a discourse analytic method in this study has highlighted how these respondents view the constructions of the lycanthrope and werewolf, as well as how they use different discourses, physical movements, and perceptual views of the world for these constructions. Identifying as a lycanthrope is not without challenge, where personal benefits from this enactment must be considered against potential stigmatisation from this claim. Concerns of stigmatisation were predominantly orientated towards being labelled as 'mentally unwell' or 'crazy', being linked to how the respondents considered they were 'pejoratively labelled' by Hollywood, which in turn limited an overt enactment of the lycanthrope and werewolf identity in public. Reducing their overt enactment of being the lycanthrope or werewolf, the respondents stated that they sought to moderate their undesirability (Jones et al. 1984), while potentially thriving in their own identity based on film constructions by controlling when and how much of their socially contrary characteristics could be viewed by others (Crocker et al. 1998). While there are negative aspects of identifying as a lycanthrope, there are clearly positive identity features for these individuals based on empowerment, as well as being part of a select, niche group of individuals, which goes some way to mitigate and resist potential stigma.

### **Conclusions**

This study has indicated that individuals who identify as lycanthropes are acutely aware of the social stigmas they may encounter from their enacted identities. Each of the discursive constructions used by the respondents as lycanthropes, during metamorphosis and as werewolves, indicates a different way of acting, speaking and viewing the world, drawing on

numerous cultural depictions, often from Hollywood. Having stepped beyond simply labelling these individuals, and attempting to give a legitimate voice for these individuals to speak, this study has allowed nuanced aspects of the way these individuals construct themselves as stigmatised, but yet potentially empowered, to be unpicked. There is much that future work might seek to elucidate through interpretive and discursive approaches to better understand how these individuals became lycanthropes, whether or how they interact with other lycanthropes, how they live their lives and how other non-lycanthrope identities influence the lycanthrope and werewolf identities. Of particular interest is understanding how cultural resources are drawn on, and why some are favoured and some are rejected. Finally, and at a time where identity politics is receiving more attention for the way that stigmatised groups live and describe their lives, we argue that the examination of highly nuanced individuals and groups such as lycanthropes may offer insight to other discussions currently being engaged with in academia and by the wider public.

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## **Appendix**

Examples of semi-structured interview questions that were driven by the three main themes of trying to understand lycanthropy, metamorphosis and werewolves. These questions and others were not scripted in advance but arose out of the conversation between the first author and the respondents.

1. Could you tell me about yourself?
2. Could you tell me about how you view yourself?
3. How do you understand lycanthropes, werewolves and metamorphosis?
4. Do you consider yourself a lycanthrope?
5. Could you tell me about living as a lycanthrope?
6. Are you physically a lycanthrope? And werewolf?
7. Could you talk to me about metamorphosis?
8. How do you feel others perceive lycanthropes?
9. How do you feel others perceive you as a lycanthrope?