



Animalia

An Anthrozoology Journal

Volume 5

Table of Contents

Editors' Note -----	3
<i>Aubrey Milatz & Erica Levesque</i>	
Tacit Knowledge Within Equine-Assisted Intervention (EAI): How Social Relation Theory and Emotional Work Theory Provide Access to an Elusive Form of Knowledge -----	4-13
<i>Catharina Carlsson & Daniel Nilsson Ranta</i>	
Book Review: Hunnicutt, G. (2020). <i>Gender Violence in Ecofeminist Perspective: Intersections of Animal Oppression, Patriarchy and Domination of the Earth</i>. Routledge. -----	14-15
<i>Nathan Poirier</i>	
“Don’t be so Modest, You’re a Rat”: Anthropomorphism, Social Class, and Renegotiation in <i>Ratatouille</i> and <i>Bee Movie</i> -----	16-23
<i>Reuben Dylan Fong</i>	
Liminal Animals in Liminal Spaces: A Day at Berlin Zoo -----	24-31
<i>Kristine Hill</i>	
Opening the Doors of Perception and Looking Beyond the Binary -----	32-40
<i>Paul “Pablo” Martin</i>	
Those Who Lay Eggs: Institutional Sexual Violence and Carnism in <i>Chicken Run</i> ----	41-47
<i>Reuben Dylan Fong</i>	



FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

We are so proud and excited to bring you the complete fifth volume of *Animalia: An Anthrozoology Journal*. Since we took over the management of *Animalia* in 2019, we have been working hard to improve the journal in a number of ways: We created an entirely new, easier-to-navigate website that better reflects Canisius College, the journal's home; we assembled an enthusiastic team of peer reviewers and developed a reviewer rubric and guidelines to ensure that each article receives constructive and thoughtful feedback; we gave our published articles a cleaner, more professional look; and we even joined Twitter!

We are also pleased to share that Volume 5 is the journal's most robust volume since the inception of *Animalia* in 2015. For this, we sincerely thank the authors who entrusted us with their work, as well as the peer reviewers who read the submissions that we can now share with you here.

Animalia maintains a unique status as a publication for students and early-career scholars and researchers. As the editors of *Animalia*, we feel truly honored to be able to amplify emerging voices within the field of anthrozoology and human-animal studies. In 2022, we are looking forward to bringing you Volume 6, and we aim to continue growing our online presence to reach as many readers as possible.

Wishing you health and happiness in this new year,

Aubrey Milatz and Erica Levesque, Editors

CONTACT: <https://www.animaliajournal.org/contact-us>

FOLLOW: <https://twitter.com/animaliajournal>

Tacit Knowledge Within Equine-Assisted Intervention (EAI): How Social Relation Theory and Emotional Work Theory Provide Access to an Elusive Form of Knowledge

Catharina Carlsson* & Daniel Nilsson Ranta**

* Department of Social Work, Linköping University

** Department of Sociology, Centre for Social Work, Uppsala University

Abstract: This paper aims to analyze the central features within equine-assisted intervention (EAI) and the primary concepts of Goffman's theories of social identity and Hochschild's theories of emotional work. Analyzing a dialog with participants viewing the video recordings of their own EAI sessions, led to the conclusion that relating to the horse as a subject counteracts impression management interpreted as a shift from surface acting frontstage where emotions have exchange value, to deep acting backstage where emotions have utility value. The boundaries between backstage, where the participants show their actual social identity and frontstage where they display a virtual social identity are fluid. The results indicate that the staff members are regarded more like fellow humans acting backstage, resulting in less distance to the clients. Further research is needed to investigate the processes in EAI when the emotional work seems to be changed, whether backstage or frontstage, which could change the purpose as well as the effects of EAI.

Keywords: Backstage, Emotional Work, Equine-assisted intervention, Frontstage, Social identity

There has been an increased interest in equine-assisted interventions (EAI) in recent years. Internationally, researchers have been exploring the benefits of these interventions in treatments for different target groups as well as in a range of therapeutic human service contexts. Some brief and recent examples are addiction treatment (Adams et al., 2015; Kern Godal, 2017), learning programs (Cagle-Holtcamp et al., 2019; Madders & Orrel-Stokes, 2019; Obarzanek & Pieper, 2020; Wojtkowska et al., 2019) and social work (Buck et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2020; Yorke et al., 2016). In recent research, clients in the following target groups were highlighted: ADHD (White et al., 2020) anxiety and posttraumatic

stress (Alfonso et al., 2015; Earles et al. 2015; Shelef et.al, 2019; Wilson et al., 2015), autism spectrum disorder (Ozyurt et al., 2020; Peters & Woods, 2017; Trzmiel et al., 2019; Xue-Ling Tan & Simmonds, 2019), dementia (Fields et al., 2018), first nations (Bindi & Woodman, 2019; Coffin, 2019), gambling disorders (Kang et al., 2018), neurological disorders (Pálsdóttir et al., 2020), obesity (Schroeder et al., 2019) prisoners (Robinson-Edwards et al., 2019) and veterans (Arnon et al., 2019; Boss et al., 2019; Kinney et al., 2019; Malinowski et al., 2017; Romaniuk et.al., 2018; Sylvia et al., 2019). EAI programs are hybrids that include both riding and non-riding activities (Hemmingway et al., 2019; Lentini & Knox, 2015).

The horse is often considered to be as a transitional object, a concept used in attachment theory, that creates opportunities for participant self-development (Bachi et.al., 2012). The goal is to internalize this awareness within EAI sessions and generalize it to other life situations (Carlsson, 2017; Hauge et al., 2013, 2014). Few versions of EAI indicate a theoretical standpoint, and those that do only mention theory briefly. An exception to this would be Bachi's EAI which elaborated on attachment theory (2012, 2013, 2014). Other theoretical standpoints include: Buddhist therapy, cognitive behavior therapy, empowerment, Gestalt therapy, interactionist approach, mindfulness, object relation theory, psychodynamic theory, solution-focused therapy, system theory (Arrazola & Merkies, 2020; Karol, 2007; Kovács et al., 2020; Lee & Makela, 2018; McCollough, 2011; Pendry & Roeter, 2013; Russell-Martin, 2006).

The horse has a unique characteristic of making humans respond instead of reacting, either out of respect or empathy for the horse (Arrazola et al. 2020; Carlsson et al., 2015). The horse is perceived as non-judgmental, forgiving, straightforward and honest, which are decisive factors in the context of EAI (Foley, 2008) and which facilitate authentic relationships (Andersson et al., 2016; Carlsson, 2014). The horse can help the clients as well as the professionals to

remove their “mask” because they do not need strong defense mechanisms (Buswell & Leriou, 2007). The presence of the horse can give a moment of silence, meaning that the inner critic can be silent for a while (Carlsson, 2017). However, the professional’s ability to be authentic can have an impact on whether the horse’s role becomes relevant or not (Carlsson, 2016). Furthermore, when the horse instinctively responds to the humans’ emotions and intentions there is a need to adjust and regulate certain emotions, intentions and body language, to make sure the humans are fully in the present in the moment (Scopa, et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2016). The clients as well as the professionals are given opportunities for insights and possible explanations for their own emotions and thoughts through mentalization and emotional work (Carlsson et al., 2015; Tuuvas et al., 2017).

There is still no unified, widely accepted, or empirically supported theoretical framework explanation for how and why these interventions may be therapeutic (Anestis et al., 2014; Kendall et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2020). Consequently, the following study seeks to understand and outline EAI as it is practiced in order to promote further clarity in the field. There is a need to clarify the various program theories underpinning current variations in practice before program fidelity can be assessed. Is time spent with the horse beneficial in itself (Davis et al., 2014; Pelyva et al., 2020) or are certain methodologies essential? How can we explain the therapeutic relationships in EAI from a theoretical standpoint?

Aim of the Study

Despite an increasing number of research studies about this kind of intervention, EAI lacks a firm theoretical base. Furthermore, the knowledge base consists of tacit knowledge that is developed and communicated in direct relationships, individual to individual. This paper aims to explore, using a qualitative method, the fit between the central features of EAI and the theoretical standpoints of Goffman’s theories of stigma and social identity (Goffman, 1990) and Hochschild’s theories of emotional work (Hochschild, 2003, 1979) which may inform and enrich the theory and practice of EAI.

METHOD

Participants

Approved by the ethical review board at Linköping Sweden, a sample of nine female self-harming adolescents aged 15–21 years took part in the study. The clients, who all had Swedish ethnicity, had given informed consent, and were recruited by the treatment center. Participants were chosen based on whether they had individually experienced treatment with horses for at least a couple of months (eight sessions). Additionally, eight staff members with experience in EAI, educated in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and dialectic

behavioral therapy (DBT) with different educational backgrounds took part. The staff members included a social pedagogue, psychotherapist, riding instructor, and treatment assistant. Furthermore, the horses attending varied in breed, age, gender, experience, temperament, and size. The study included Shetland ponies, Icelandic horses, Lusitanos, Dutch warmbloods and Norwegian fjord horses.

Equine-Assisted Intervention

The clients attended individually, for one hour weekly, and the goal was to increase self-esteem, modify behavioral strategies and reduce anxiety. The tasks involved varied between riding and non-riding activities, where the focus could be on relaxation, body awareness and or balance exercises. Several of the clients had no experience with horses prior to starting EAI. The intervention was tailored to each client based on his or her treatment goals and desires. Clients were helped to become aware of their thoughts and emotions, and to increase their ability to regulate the effects of them, as well as having something to reflect upon that had been experienced with the staff members.

Procedure and Analysis

First, in-depth interviews were conducted with clients and staff members separately, lasting 40–60 minutes and based on themes from early research. Conducting the same interview with both staff members and clients made comparisons possible. Next, video-recorded observations were made three times with each pair consisting of one client and a staff member pair. The benefits of video-recorded sessions from an ethical standpoint were that clients were spared from numerous observations if additional questions were raised along the way. Directly after one observation, both clients and staff members were interviewed separately for 40–60 minutes to ensure the richest descriptions of their experience as possible. Finally, the clients and staff members were again interviewed separately for 60–120 minutes in conjunction with viewing one of their video-recorded interventions. The MAXQDA program was used to group the narratives, which were compared and analyzed for patterns across cases by multiple viewings.

Inspired by heuristic inquiry, the study focused on exploring human experience from an integrative perspective, a relational approach to qualitative research (Sultan, 2018). With a focus on the tacit knowledge, the participants were allowed to be co-researchers rather than subjects of research in an explorative process to find out the horse’s role in these interventions. There has been an intersubjectivity in the analysis of these real-life examples in the study. The method directs the researcher to explore internal experiences while taking account of her pre-understanding and attitude towards the topic of the study (Moustaka, 1990). The

researcher has experience as a humanistic therapist in EAI and other interventions in social work as well as long experience in traditional horse handling, and, therefore, able to be personally involved in the search for qualities, conditions and relationships that underlie the questions of concern (Moustaka, 1990). The issues at hand were utilized along with personal reflexivity, an open dialog with other researchers and practitioners in the field of EAI while drawing on the accounts of the participants in EAI.

RESULTS

Stage Change Renegotiates the Relationship Between Professionals and Clients

Attention was given to the specific qualities of EAI that differentiate it from other therapies. The analysis concluded that the presence of the horse increased the opportunities for the clients and the staff members to be authentic and show their true intentions and emotions (Carlsson, 2017). In other words, act based on their actual social identity when the horse revealed the feelings of the clients and staff members. This contrasted with maintaining a façade, which we otherwise use to preserve a character, a false self, or the virtual social identity, to use Goffman's words (Goffman, 1990). According to Hochschild (2003, 1979) the false self can be divided into an altruistic false self, affected by the needs of others, and a narcissistic false self, which is based on the need for confirmation or admiration of others.

Depending on the social interaction as well as the different clients and staff members in the triads, the participants could present different versions of the false self. They played different roles based on what was expected of them according to social position and specific social situation, here interpreted as a "stage." This stage can be divided into a frontstage and backstage according to Goffman (1990). The stage is not perceived as an actual material scene; instead, the interpretation is about the intentions of the clients and staff members. If they try to take control and not let the so-called audience, here the client or staff respectively, see their true feelings, they are acting frontstage. To clarify further, if the horse is related to as a subject, this occurs backstage where more feelings are allowed out of empathy or respect for the horse. Goffman indicates that a person could act in a backstage style even if the person is actually frontstage (Goffman, 1990), which has been interpreted to mean a frontstage style can be acted out backstage.

The results show that the boundaries between backstage and frontstage are fluid and unpredictable. The clients and the staff members could switch between acting frontstage or backstage in one session. If "the act" (the interaction in the stable setting between clients and staff members) seemed to be determined by emotional rules, it was done frontstage. On the contrary, being affected by the

presence of the horse lead to "the performance" seeming to be backstage.

The presence of a façade in EAI could also be influenced by the role of the professionals or the role of the clients. If the participants felt they could not step out of their respective role, they would continue to act frontstage and hide their true emotions. When they were able to act backstage, the individuals were given more possibilities to show their true selves and therefore were more relaxed, here perceived as being more authentic and thereby more accessible to each other. As an example, one client at the beginning of the study did not like her assigned staff member and did not let her see her true feelings. However, this changed when the staff member lost her own horse and started to cry in one of the sessions. When the client saw the attachment the staff member had to her horse by seeing her tremendous grief, she realized that the staff member was capable of showing true feelings, and that opened up emotional empathy. Both parties let their mask down and started to talk about loss and how that could affect life (Client A, Staff G).

By confirmation and validation of the emotional experience of the other, the setting is perceived differently. Self-stigmatization is less of a problem according to the clients when their inner critic is silent, and the clients understand the staff as being human and dealing with their own emotions.

Impression Management Revealed by the Horse

Clients could be more and less accessible to the staff members depending on the degree of expectation. An excessively high expectation could result in frontstage acting. The unknown director or inner voice of the clients needed to be considered when responding to the clients. Based on Goffman's (1990) interpretation of social interactions, the self is preoccupied with how it is perceived by others, something that seemed to intensify when there were demands to perform with the horse. Here, the staff members needed to take into account the emotional vulnerability shown by the self-harming and thereby take responsibility for the client's impression management. As an example, the staff in the study could blame the horse when something did not go as the clients had wished. If the client tried to make the horse canter and the horse did not understand the client's wishes and thereby did not go from a trot to a canter the staff could say that "maybe the horse is tired today" even though the staff could see that the client was not asking the horse in the right manner (Staff D, Client H). When the staff members saw that the clients tended to hide their disappointment, the staff members could mention something about the horse's intentions and let the clients off the hook.

By impression control, each participant put their mark on the interaction and thereby created or reinforced the impressions others

received of them. They may try to present themselves in a favorable light but here the horse could be the one that reveals the whole act, something the self-harming clients learned by experience was a possibility. The staff member could interpret the horse's behavior as the horse responding to the client and then acting backstage, whereas the client was still acting frontstage. The client may not have fully understood that the horse had revealed their act or impression management.

On the other hand, it could be that the horse revealed the staff member's act. For instance, a client was bathing the horse while the horse was calm and quiet. The staff member arrived in a hurry with a smile as if everything is alright, but her arrival made the horse restless, anxious or uneasy. In truth, the staff member had come from a staff meeting where there had been discussions about problems concerning her, so she was stressed and disappointed. Upon finding out that the horse had been calm before the staff member arrived, both the client and staff member knew it was something about the staff member that affected the horse. The staff member then recognized her true feelings and regulated them so that the horse could relax again, which was interpreted as acting backstage and letting go of impression management (Client G, Staff C).

If the participants did not feel they were acting on the same stage, it could create a certain distance between the staff member and the client. This transition between stages is not a spatial movement between scenes; instead, it is about participants relating differently to each other depending on whether they act with a frontstage style or backstage style. When moving closer to the essence of EAI, the participants performed a backstage act where they were allowed to be more personal and could remove their mask. As a result, the relationship could be more authentic and the distance between client and staff member was reduced. Backstage, where the horse was perceived as a subject of their own, the staff members and the clients expressed their true emotions instead of giving in to emotional rules, as shown by Hochschild (2003).

Emotional rules could be negotiated and their formal character as either client or staff member was no longer of importance. Instead, they could put the mask aside and skip "rehearsed lines" or impression management, being more authentic. In these situations, clients commonly referred to staff members as friends, and the border between being a private or a professional person became blurred. Thoughts about what was considered professional behavior were no longer of importance when staff members and clients needed to regulate their emotions concerning the horse in order to not repel the horse or create dangerous situations. This is important because one of the main considerations when bringing the horse into the treatment context is that it is potentially dangerous and deserves

respect. The horse could be said to counteract customs and perceptions about how to act as a professional.

Commuting Between Actual Social Identity Deep Acting and Virtual Social Character Surface Acting

The horse could be considered as an audience along with the clients and the staff members if the horse were regarded as a subject of their own with agency. As the horse was perceived as non-judgmental, feelings of shame were rarely triggered. As a result, the participants were not so worried about how they should be perceived by the horse, giving them greater freedom to adopt other characters. This seemed to make possible reduced defense mechanisms and regression in the clients as well as the chance that the client would not become dissociated from the situation at hand. Instead of feeling reduced by their diagnosis, the self-harming clients could experience themselves as equal to the staff members. The shame they sometimes felt about their self-harming behavior and the results of this, leading to less self-worth were not associated with the horse.

According to Goffman's definition, the horse could be perceived as a sage when the horse considers the client without taking into account the stigma that might otherwise be relevant for this group of self-harming clients. Even though the staff members may have expectations about the client's character, understood by Goffman as the virtual social character, the horse enables the clients to act based on their actual social identity. This in turn can change how the staff respond to clients when they notice they have abilities they are not expected to have based on their diagnosis. An ability relevant in this context is emotional regulation, which other research has highlighted as something this client group has difficulties with. The act is not based on any defense mechanisms or, to use Goffman's expression, impression control (Goffman, 1990). In EAI, the clients can be liberated from the struggle between the virtual and actual social identity, something they have become accustomed to. In the interaction, here defined as the act in the stable or fields of the horses, a picture emerges of how the participants change between being authentic thanks to the horse participating as a subject of their own, to wearing a mask based on the professional's role or client's diagnosis when the horse is regarded as an object.

The horse can help to show if there is a lack of correspondence between our human selves/our actual social identity and our socialized selves/virtual social character. In other words, the participants could not avoid removing the mask when the role of the horse was actualized, here regarded as acting backstage. The interaction roles also change the functional role as the participants do not have to relate to emotional rules to the same extent. According to Hochschild (2003), that could be described as the participants not withholding their true feelings. The clients are not

acting to show the “right” feeling; instead, they are focused on making themselves aware of what they feel. When they become aware of their feelings and that they can adjust them in relation to the horse, it could be considered as impression control toward the horse.

The difference for the participants, when regarding the horse as an audience, is that they cannot engage in surface acting, as defined by Hochschild (2003, 1979), which could be linked to the false self or virtual social identity. Together with the horse, both staff members and clients needed to engage in deep acting where emotions get a utility value, according to the theories of Hochschild (2003). When emotions have a utility value, they are based on the individual's actual needs connected with the actual social identity. Here the horse could be perceived as a bridge by helping participants recognize their own needs. The staff members and clients needed to relate to the horse's needs in the present moment by realizing that their true emotions have utility value when affecting the horse. As an example, a client realized that if she is scared then the horse could also become scared. The client was concerned that the pigeons on the roof above them would scare the horse. The staff member then asked the client to take a couple of deep breaths to calm her down, which made the horse calmer as well. Then the client responded by saying “but if I can make the horse calm by breathing and be more mindful then the horse can feel when I am sad” (Client D). The staff member confirmed the client's conclusion and the expression on the client's face changed (Staff C).

If the horse is allowed to be a subject themselves then the focus is not on formal rules and what is socially accepted but rather on informal rules in the interaction between staff members and clients. The main concern is rather on what the participants—clients, horses and staff members—gain from the relationship. Through empathy the actual needs and emotions become the center of attention. The contrary could be when the staff adjust their emotions to create the right mood for the clients. Emotions then have an exchange value and the staff engaging in surface acting creates a distance to the client. That could, of course, be acceptable if there is a need to support the client's impression management.

It could be said that there is a time for everything and sometimes it is not time for the real emotions at hand. Thus, it is not always optimal for the staff to let the horse be a subject themselves, which could open up possibilities for deep acting where the client as well as the staff could be more spontaneous and express their feelings. It could instead be necessary, out of empathy for the client, that the staff continue surface acting so that the client does not need to reveal their inner feelings. As aforementioned, however, if the staff do not manipulate their feelings, the emotions have a utility value. In addition to the fluidity between acting backstage and frontstage it

could be said that there is a commuting between actual social identity and deep acting versus virtual social character and surface acting in these sessions.

DISCUSSION

The present study demonstrates that understanding therapeutic relationships in EAI is not a simple question of considering the contributions of various triads of professionals, clients and horses. The starting point is that both staff and clients try to maintain their image of themselves. If their desired self-image is not met by the other, it could be perceived as a threat of not being socially accepted. To avoid that risk, they adopt a mask or a façade, but on the inside, they are still the same. However, the horse counteracts this impression management and provides occasions when the participants do not have to adjust to their inner stage-manager. This can be interpreted as a shift from surface acting to deep acting. Concluding, the triads consist of different liaisons, and depending on whether they act backstage or frontstage the emotional work is affected.

As shown in earlier research, the building of therapeutic relationships could result in unique combinations between staff members and clients even without a horse (Adams et al., 2009). Nevertheless, the goal of this study has been to try to understand the situation at hand, in other words to study the connected knowing often associated with tacit knowledge by using social relational theory and emotional work theory in the analysis. It could be said that the staff members as well as the clients relate to what has not yet been said between them. Through the interaction including the horse the participants get support from the horse for different hypotheses about the other, which in turn creates possibilities for a generative dialog between them, as highlighted earlier.

For example, when the staff could devote themselves to taking over the impression management by blaming the horse. Or, as another example, when the horse exposed the staff member's true feelings and became anxious even though before the staff entered the scene the horse had been calm. Then the staff member had to show her true feelings and adjust them to make the situation secure. The interaction, here perceived as backstage, where both parties are in contact with their true feelings and thoughts, has proven to be of importance for change in earlier research (Sundgren & Topor, 2011). The staff and clients do not have to deal with emotional dissonance if we use Hochschild's concept of deep acting (2003). Furthermore, when the boundaries between backstage and frontstage are not static but fluid, we can question the search for causal explanations and the focus on effect studies in the EAI field. Here there is a need to consider this commuting between acting backstage showing an actual social identity by deep acting where emotions have a utility

value and actual needs are highlighted, versus acting frontstage displaying a virtual social identity, either an altruistic false self or a narcissistic false self, by surface acting where emotions have an exchange value.

Conclusion

The present results indicate that the staff members are sometimes regarded more like fellow humans than professionals, acting backstage, which results in less distance to the clients. Of importance seems to be whether the horse is related to as a subject with an opportunity to make choices of its own, highlighting the importance of awareness of true feelings, as well as managing emotional regulations in accordance with the horse's needs. The emotional work seems to change depending on whether they are backstage or frontstage, which could change the purpose as well as the effects of EAI. The boundaries between frontstage, where we present our public self and backstage, an area where we display our private self are not a spatial movement rather fluid and sometimes unpredictable. Whether out of empathy or respect for the horse, the participants were able to show their actual social identity instead of a virtual social identity, sometimes regarded as a false self. The horse facilitated authentic backstage interaction, allowing for situations where the participants do not have to adjust to their inner stage manager.

The aim of the study was to study if Goffman and Hochschild's theories fit as theoretical standpoints to inform and enrich the theory and practice of EAI and applying the theories reveals that the interactions between client and staff utilize both authentic and fake self. The EAI triads consisted of different liaisons, and depending on whether the participants acted backstage or frontstage the emotional work was affected. Through the interaction with the horse the participants got support from the horse for different hypotheses about the other participants; that in turn created possibilities for a generative dialog between them. In summary, there is a need for further research to investigate the processes within the relationships in EAI when the emotional work seems to be changed, whether backstage or frontstage, which could change the purpose as well as the effects of EAI.

Further, as Kendra Coulter (2019) writes, the understanding of horses' work is a complex and uneven matter, and we need to expand our lens and sharpen our focus. There is a need for an attentive examination about the horses' experiences and perceptions of this kind of labor. We need to move beyond the idea that even if it could be beneficial for the clients attending EAI it is not automatically beneficial for the horse. Professionals doing emotional work can suffer from empathy and compassion fatigue so caring for others requires caring for oneself. Substitute trauma or emotional contagion can affect the immune system in humans, and knowing horses have

abilities to read people's emotions (Keeling et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2016), they may also need coping strategies. Better understanding of horses' emotional labor, admitting constraints on horse's agency can foster improved practice including horse welfare standards. Recognizing that horse's engagement is as diverse as the horses themselves and may follow pre-prescribed patterns, build on "learned helplessness" or deviate in meaningful ways as horses demonstrate their unique subjectivities and abilities. As Kendra Coulter (2019) highlights every therapy horse does not get anxious when a client is anxious. If the opposite occurs, those horses that are calm even if the people are stressed are normally those who have learned that it is manageable and referred to as reliable, acting "professionally" performing emotional labor; internal regulation, managing and controlling of emotions and reactions accordingly to Hochschild (2003). This calls for interdisciplinary research attuned to horses as both biological beings and social actors.

Limitations

There are key limitations to the results of this study. First and foremost, the study only considers participants from a specific client group and it is not necessarily possible to transfer these data to other client groups. Nevertheless, the study design has important merits, in an under-researched field, especially regarding tacit knowledge. By using theory, we have attempted to articulate in words the knowledge that is otherwise developed and communicated in direct relationships, individual to individual. Here the goal is to make it possible for this tacit knowledge to be conveyed outside the context in which it is created.

Acknowledgments

Funding for this project was provided in part by grants from the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden.

Disclosures

All procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments.

REFERENCES

- Adams, C., Arratoon, C., Boucher, J., Cartier, G., Chalmers, D., Dell, C. A., Dell, D., Dryka, D., Duncan, R., Dunn, K., Hopkins, C., Longclaws, L., MacKinnon, T., Sauve, E., Spence, S., & Wuttunee, M. (2015). The helping horse: How equine assisted learning contributes to the wellbeing of First Nations you in

- treatment of volatile substance misuse. *Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin* 1(1), 52-75.
- Adams, K., LeCroy, C., & Matto, H. C. (2009). Limitations of evidence-based practice for social work education: Unpacking the complexity. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 45(2), 165-186.
- Alfonso, S. V., Alfonso, L. A., Llabre, M. M., & Fernandez, M. I. (2015). Project Stride: An equine-assisted intervention to reduce symptoms of social anxiety in young women. *Explore*, 11(6). doi: 10.1016/j.explore.2015.08.003
- Arnon, S., Fisher, P. W., Pickover, A., Lowell, A. Turner, B. J., Hilburn, A. Jacob-McVey, J., Malajian, B. E., Farber, D. G., Hamilton, J. F., Hamilton, A., Markowitz, J. C., & Neria, Y. (2019). Equine-assisted therapy for veterans with PTSD: Manual development and preliminary findings. *Military Medicine*, 00, 0/0:1.
- Arrazola, A. & Merckies, K. (2020). Effect of human attachment style on horse behaviour and physiology during equine-assisted activities – A pilot study. *Animals*, 10, 1156. doi:10.3390/ani10071156
- Anestis, M.D., Anestis, J.C., & Zawilinski, L.L., Hopkins, T.A., & Lilienfeld, S.O. (2014). Equine related treatments for mental disorders lack empirical support: A systematic review of empirical investigations. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 70(12), 11151132.
- Bachi, K. (2014). *An equine-facilitated prison-based program: Human-horse relations and effects on inmates' emotions and behaviors*. Dissertation and Thesis Paper 162.
- Bachi, K. (2013). Application of attachment theory to equine-facilitated psychotherapy. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 43(3), 187-196.
- Bachi, K. (2012). Equine-facilitated psychotherapy: The gap between practice and knowledge. *Society & Animals*, 20, 364-380. doi: 10.1163/15685306-12341242
- Bachi, K., Terkel, J., & Teichman, M. (2012). Equine-facilitated psychotherapy for at-risk adolescents: The influence on self-image, self-control and trust. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17, 298-312. doi: 10.1177/1359104511404177
- Bindi, B., & Woodman, E. (2019). The potential of equine-assisted psychotherapy for treating trauma in Australian Aboriginal Peoples. *British Journal of Social Work*, 49, 1041-1058. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bez053
- Boss, L., Branson, S., Hagan, H., & Krause-Parello, C. (2019). A systematic review of equine-assisted interventions in military veterans diagnosed with PTSD. *Journal of Veterans Studies* 5(1), 23-33. doi:10.21061/jvs.v5i1.134
- Buck, P. W., Bean, N., & De Marco, K. (2017). Equine-assisted psychotherapy. An emerging trauma-informed intervention. *Advances in Social Work*, 18(1), 387-402. doi:10.18060/21310
- Buswell, D. & Leriou, F. (2007). Perceived benefits of students' service-learning experiences with hippo therapy. *Palaestra*, 23(1), 20-26.
- Cagle-Holtcamp, K., Nicodemus, M. C., Parker, J., & Dunlap, M. H. (2019). Does equine assisted learning create emotionally safe learning environments for at-risk youth? *Journal of Youth Development*, 14(4). doi:10.5195/jyd.2019.727
- Carlsson, C. (2017). *Hästunderstött socialt arbete - ett samtalsrum med potentiella möjligheter för ungdomar med självskadebeteenden och deras personal*. Doctoral Thesis. Växjö, Linnaeus University Press. 127.
- Carlsson, C. (2017). Equine-assisted social work counteracts self-stigmatization in self-harming adolescents and facilitates a moment of silence. *Journal of Social Work*. doi: 10.1080/02650533.2016.1274883
- Carlsson, C. (2016). Triads in equine-assisted social work enhance therapeutic relationships with self-harming adolescents. *Clinical Social Work Journal*. doi: 10.1007/s10615-016-0613-2
- Carlsson, C. (2016). A narrative review of qualitative and quantitative research in equine-assisted social work or therapy: Addressing gaps and contradictory results. *Animalia: An Anthrozoology Journal*, 2(1).
- Carlsson, C., Nilsson-Ranta, D. & Traeen, B. (2015). Mentalizing and emotional labor facilitate Equine-assisted social work with self-harming adolescents. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal* 32, 329-339. doi: 10.1007/s10560-015-0376-6
- Carlsson, C., Nilsson-Ranta, D. & Traeen, B. (2014). Equine assisted social work as a mean for authentic relations between clients and staff. *Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin*, 2(1).
- Coffin, J. (2019). The Nguudu Barndimanmanha Project: Improving social and emotional wellbeing in Aboriginal youth through equine assisted learning. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 7(278). doi:10.3389/fpubh.2019.00278
- Coulter, K. (2019). Horse's labour and work-lives: New intellectual and ethical directions. In J. Bornemark, P. Andersson, & U. Ekström von Essen (Eds.), *Equine cultures in transition: Ethical questions* (pp. 17-31). Routledge.
- Davis, D., Maurstad, A., & Dean, S. (2014). My horse Is my therapist: The medicalization of pleasure among women equestrians. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 29(3), 298-315.
- Earles, J. L., Vernon, L. L., & Yetz, J. P. (2015). Equine-assisted therapy for anxiety and posttraumatic stress symptoms. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 28(2), 149-152. doi:10.1002/jts.21990

- Fields, B., Bruemmer, J., Gloeckner, G., & Wood, W. (2018). Influence of an equine-assisted activities program on dementia-specific quality of life. *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementias*, 33(5), 309-317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1533317518772052>
- Foley, A. J. (2008). *Conflict and connection: A theoretical and evaluative study of an equine-assisted psychotherapy program for at risk and delinquent girls*. A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate School of the University of Colorado in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy B-A., Oklahoma State University, Department of Sociology.
- Goffman, E. (1990) *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Penguin.
- Hauge, H., Kvalem, I. L., Pedersen, I., & Braastad, B. O. (2013). Equine-assisted activities for adolescents: Ethogram-based behavioral analysis of persistence during horse-related tasks and communication patterns with the horse. *Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin*, 1(2), 57-81.
- Hauge, H., Kvalem, I. L., Berget, B. Enders-Slegers, M.-J., & Braastad, B. O. (2014). Equine-assisted activities and the impact on perceived social support, self-esteem and self-efficacy among adolescents—an intervention study. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 19(1), 1-21. doi:10.1080/02673843.2013.779587.
- Hemmingway, A., Carter, S., Callaway, A., Kavanagh, E., & Ellis, S. (2019). An exploration of the mechanism of action of an equine-assisted intervention. *Animals*, 9, 303. doi:10.3390/ani9060303
- Hochschild, A. R. (2003). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feelings*. University of California Press.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(3), 551-575.
- Kang, K. D., Jung, T.W, Park, I. H., & Han, D. H (2018). Effects of equine-assisted activities and therapies on the affective network of adolescents with Internet Gaming Disorder. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 24(8), 841-849.
- Karol, J. (2007). Applying a traditional individual psychotherapy model to equine- facilitated psychotherapy (EFP): Theory and method. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 12(1), 77-90. doi: 10.1177/1359104507071057
- Keeling, L. J., Jonare, L., & Lanneborn, L. (2009). Investigating horse-human interactions: The effect of a nervous human. *The Veterinary Journal*, 181(1), 70-71.
- Kendall, E., Maujean, A., Pepping, C. A., Downes, M., Lakhani, A., Byrne, J., & Macfarlane, K. (2015). A systematic review of the efficacy of equine-assisted interventions on psychological outcomes. *European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling*, 17, 57-79. doi:10.1080/13642537.2014.996169
- Kern-Godal, A. (2017). *The relevance of horse assisted therapy to young adults' substance use disorder treatment* (Doctoral dissertation). Institute of Clinical Medicine, Faculty of Medicine.
- Kinney, A. R., Eakman, A. M., Lassell, R., Wood, W. (2019). Equine-assisted interventions for veterans with service-related health conditions: A systematic mapping review. *Military Medical Research*, 6(28). doi:10.1186/s40779-019-0217-6
- Kovács, G., van Dijke, A., & Enders-Slegers, M.-J. (2020). Psychodynamic based equine-assisted psychotherapy in adults with intertwined personality problems and traumatization: A systematic review international. *Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 5661. doi:10.3390/ijerph17165661
- Lee, K., Dablenko-Schoeny, H., Jedlicka, H., & Burns T. (2020). Older adult's perceived benefits of equine-assisted psychotherapy: Implications for social work. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 30(4), 399-407. doi:10.1177/1049731519890399
- Lee, P.-T., & Makela, C. (2018). Mental health practitioner's strategies in equine-assisted psychotherapy: Implications for social work. *Social Work Education*, 37(1), 119-135. doi:10.1080/02615479.2017.1378318
- Lentini, J. A. & Knox, M. S. (2015). Equine-facilitated psychotherapy with children and adolescents: An update and literature review. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 10(3), 278-305. Doi: 10.1080/15401383.2015.1023916
- Madders, G. & Orrel-Stokes, R. (2019). An observational review and analysis of qualitative data to explore the benefits of equine assisted learning in improving the engagement of adolescents with complex learning needs, within the educational setting. *Advanced Journal of Graduate Research*, 6(1), 53-59. doi: 10.21467/ajgr.6.1.53-59
- Malinowski, K., Yee, C., Tevlin, J. M., Birks, E., Durando, M. M., Pornajafi-Nazarloo, H., Cavaola, A., & McKeever, K. H. (2017). The effects of equine assisted therapy on plasma cortisol and oxytocin concentrations and heart rate variability in horses and measures of symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in veterans. *Journal of Equine Veterinary Science*, 64, 17-26. doi:10.1016/j.jvevs.2018.01.011
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Application*. Sage.
- Obarzanek, L. & Pieper, B. (2020). The use of equine-assisted programs for nontraditional undergraduate clinical pediatric experiences. *Teaching and Learning in Nursing*, 15, 145-151.

- Odendaal, J.S. (2000). Animal assisted therapy — Magic or medicine? *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 49(4), 275-280.
- Ozyurt, G., Ozcan, K., Dinsever, Elikucuk, C., Odek, U., & Akpinar, S (2020). Equine assisted activities have positive effects on children with autism spectrum disorders and family functioning. *Journal Sports Science Medicine*, 9(2), 51-58. doi:10.26773/mjssm.200909
- Pálsdóttir, A-M., Gudmundsson, M., & Grahn, P. (2020). Equine-assisted interventions to improve perceived value of everyday occupations and quality of life in people with lifelong neurological disorders: A prospective controlled study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 2431. doi:10.3390/ijerph17072431
- Pelyva, I. Z., Kresák, R., Szovák, E., & Levente Tóth, A. (2020). How equine-assisted activities affect the prosocial behavior of adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 2967. doi:10.3390/ijerph17082967
- Pendry, P. & Roeter, S. (2013). Experimental trial demonstrates positive effects of equine facilitated learning on child social competence. *Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin* 1(1), 1-19.
- Peters, C. B., Wood, W., Hepburn, S., & Bundy, A. (2020). Pilot study: Occupational therapy in an equine environment for youth with autism. *Occupational Participation and Health*, 1-13. doi:10.1177/1539449220912723
- Peters, B. C. & Wood W. (2017). Autism and equine-assisted interventions: A systematic mapping review. *Journal Autism Dev Disorder*. DOI 10.1007/s10803-017-3219-9
- Romaniuk, M., Evans, J., & Kidd, C. (2018). Evaluation of an equine-assisted therapy program for veterans who identify as wounded, injured or ill and their partners. *PLoS ONE*, 13(9), e0203943. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0203943
- Russell-Martin, L. A. (2006). *Equine facilitated couples' therapy and solution focused couples therapy: A comparison study* Dissertation International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering 67 (9-B).
- Robinson-Edwards, S., Kewley, S., Riley, L., & Fisher, D. (2019). Examining prisoner experience of an equine assisted psychotherapy. *The International Journal of Therapeutic Communities*, 40(3/4), 111-124. doi:10.1108/TC-01-2019-0001
- Schroeder, K., Van Allen, J., Dhurandhar, E., Lancaster, B., Heidari, Z., Cazenave, K., Boone, D., & Erdman, P. (2019). Riding into health: A case study on an equine-assisted childhood obesity intervention. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16, 4835. doi:10.3390/ijerph16234835
- Scopa, C., Contalbrigo, L., Greco, A., Lantanà, A., Scilingo, E. P., & Baragli, P. (2019). Emotional transfer in human-horse interaction: New perspectives on equine assisted interventions. *Animals*, 9, 1030. doi:10.3390/ani9121030
- Shelef, A., Brafman, D., Rosing, T., Weizman, A., Stryker, R., & Barak, Y (2019). Equine assisted therapy for patients with post traumatic stress disorder: A case series study. *Military Medicine*, 184(9), 10:5.
- Smith, A. V., Proops, L., Grounds, K., Wathan, J., & McComb, K. (2016). Functionally relevant responses to human facial expressions of emotion in the domestic horse (*Equus caballus*). *Biology Letters*, 12. doi:10.1098/rsbl.2015.0907
- Sultan, N. (2019). *Heuristic inquiry: Researching human experience holistically*. Sage.
- Sundgren, M., & Topor, A. (Red.) (2011). *Psykiatri som social arbete*. Stockholm; Bonniers utbildning AB.
- Sylvia, L., West, E., Blackburn, A. M., Gupta, C., Bui, E., Mahoney, T., Duncan, G., Wright, E., Lejeune, S., & Spencer, T. J. (2019). Acceptability of an adjunct equine-assisted activities and therapies program for veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder and/or traumatic brain injury. *Journal of Integrative Medicine*, 18, 169-173. doi: 10.1016/j.joim.2020.01.005
- Tuuvás, M., Carlsson, J. & Norberg, J. (2017). A healing relationship: Clients' experiences of the long-term relational significance of the horse in horse assisted psychotherapy. *European Journal of Psychotherapy*, 19(3), 307-328.
- Trzmiel, T., Purandare, B., Michalak, M., Zazadzka, E., & Pawlaczyk, M. (2019). Equine assisted activities and therapies in children with autism spectrum disorders: A systematic review and a meta-analysis. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 42, 104-113. doi: 10.1016/j.ctim.2018.11.004
- Wilson, K., Buultjens, M., Monfries, M., & Karimi, L. (2015). Equine-assisted psychotherapy for adolescents experiencing depression and/or anxiety: A therapist's perspective. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 1-18. doi:10.1177/1359104515572379
- White, E., Zippel, J., & Kumar, S. (2020). The effect of equine-assisted therapies on behavioral, psychological and physical symptoms for children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder: A systematic review. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, 39. doi: 10.1016/j.ctcp.2020.101101
- Wojtkowska, M., Kaczmarek, M., & Gazdowska, Z. (2019). The influence of horse assisted education on the perception in self-efficacy in people holding leadership positions. *Journal of Education, Health and Sport*, 9(6), 456-469. doi:10.5281/zenodo.3256725
- Yorke, J., Grant, S. & Csiernik, R. (2016). Horses and baseball: Social work's cultivation of one's third eye. *Social Work Education*. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2016.1189526

- Xue-Ling Tan, V. & Simmonds, J. G. (2019). Equine-assisted interventions for psychosocial functioning in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder: A literature review. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 6, 325–337. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-018-0143-7>
- Zanus, C., Battistutta, S., Aliverti, R., Monasta, L., Montico, M., Ronfani, L., and Carrozzi, M. (2021). High-school students and self-injurious thoughts and behaviours: Clues of emotion dysregulation. *Italian Journal of Pediatrics*, 47(14). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13052-021-00958-0>

AUTHORS

Catharina Carlsson, Department of Social Work, Linköping University, SE-581 83 LINKÖPING, Sweden, catharinacarlssonfriesvik@gmail.com

Daniel Nilsson Ranta, Department of Sociology, Centre for Social Work, Uppsala University, SE-75126 UPPSALA, Sweden

Book Review: Hunnicutt, G. (2020). *Gender Violence in Ecofeminist Perspective: Intersections of Animal Oppression, Patriarchy and Domination of the Earth*. Routledge.

Nathan Poirier

Department of Sociology, Michigan State University

In this book, *Gender Violence in Ecofeminist Perspective: Intersections of Animal Oppression, Patriarchy and Domination of the Earth*, Hunnicutt illuminates how gender violence is entangled with violence against nature and nonhuman animals. The book is structured in somewhat of a “funneling” approach where each chapter is positioned as more-or-less a subset of the previous one(s). In this way, Hunnicutt emphasizes that gender violence, even on the interpersonal level, is inseparable from wider human domination over nature in general.

In slightly more detail, the first chapter defines the concepts Hunnicutt primarily works with, namely, ecofeminism, nature, and gender violence. The use and values behind each of these terms are discussed. Chapter 2 discusses how the ideology of patriarchy closely resembles that of domination of nature. The crux of this similarity lies in differentiating one group from another by “othering” one group, and then devaluing this group. Once “othered,” groups are devalued for not possessing the traits of the valued group. Furthermore, and an important point of Hunnicutt’s, is that *which* particular group is othered is interchangeable. Replacing “nature” with “women” changes how violence manifests but it does not change the fact that violence is employed as a means of domination, control, and separation.

Chapter 3 looks at various ways nature, nonhuman animals, and women are devalued. Using examples of meat eating, blood sports, and sexual assault, Hunnicutt continually returns to the notion of humans constructing themselves as separate from and superior to nature. Chapter 4 considers how environmental catastrophes such as climate change differentially impact women over men, and nonhuman animals over people. The concluding chapter comments on how to build societies founded on cooperation instead of domination.

While the first chapter serves as a literature review for the book, the book as a whole serves as somewhat of a literature review for intersecting oppressions. Hunnicutt draws from a wide range of disciplines, from gender to critical animal studies, peace studies, environmentalism, and anarchism. Throughout the book, Hunnicutt stresses that violence is always enacted in a gendered way, whether it be violence against nature, nonhuman animals, or other humans. Men overwhelmingly commit acts of violence against all three groups. Men also tend to commit different, and usually more severe, acts of violence than women. A fundamental tenet of the book is that societies with larger gender stratification tend to have higher rates of violence against women and nature (including animals). Conversely, societies that are more egalitarian tend to have little violence. Hunnicutt thus links social and ecological harms. It is not that one causes the other, *per se*, but that both reinforce and sustain each other. Therefore, this book is especially important for those working within the realms of human violence to get an introduction to the theory being gender violence being embedded within a much broader context of domination of nature and of the Other as nature.

There are two key strengths of this volume. The first is that Hunnicutt keeps nonhuman animals in focus. This is what generally separates ecofeminism from other feminist approaches to the environment, such as feminist political ecology or environmental justice. Animals are frequently overlooked in approaches to the environment, including traditional conservation biology, which allows the “sacrifice” of individuals for the good of the species. The second strength is that Hunnicutt does not only stick to women, animals, and the environment. Rather, she continually weaves in multiple oppressed groups such as those with disabilities, children, and people of color. As a result, this book presents a general and balanced overview of intersecting oppressions. Thus, anyone working for

justice of a marginalized or devalued – that is, “othered” – group can find this book useful. Hunnicutt does not sideline any particular group, but rather illustrates how the oppression of each group is embedded within a larger framework of domination, all of which are foregrounded by the human domination of nature. It is important not to lose sight of this, as many who work within issues of human justice and equality overlook the domination of nature (which necessarily includes nonhuman animals) as a contributing factor.

Therefore, Hunnicutt’s primary conclusion is that social justice is inseparable from ecological justice. Neither can be adequately solved without the other. The onset of COVID-19 provides an all-too-sobering example of Hunnicutt’s premise. Hunnicutt states that when the privileged side of a dualistic hierarchy is challenged, violence is often deployed as a strategy to maintain power and keep the devalued group under control. This is evident in all sorts of social movements – such as #HimToo as a counterprotest against #MeToo, Blue Lives Matter as a counterprotest to Black Lives Matter, or instances of humans harming animals for attacking them when the human provoked the animal first.

Humans constantly live in fear of the “natural world” harming them through natural disasters or disease. COVID-19 is no different. Humans have provoked the wider environment and it is now exposing humans’ vulnerability. Understandably, many people are upset at the conditions we must live in due to the onset of this disease. But the important point is how we will deal with it. Will humans accept the fact that we are part of the environment and “hear” what it is trying to tell us? Or will we use violence to further subdue nature after the pandemic has passed in an effort to reassert our challenged supremacy?

The answer is impossible to predict, but Hunnicutt’s point with this book is that if we do not respect nature or begin to live more responsibly and respectfully towards it, we will continue to bring further violence on ourselves. For those who have not already come to this realization, this connection urgently needs to be made in the throes of COVID-19. As such, this book is a critical text for all those who may be unclear on the entanglements of human and nonhuman violence, especially connections between violence towards nature and violence towards women.

AUTHOR

Nathan Poirier, Department of Sociology, Michigan State University, poirinat@aquinas.edu

“Don’t be so Modest, You’re a Rat”: Anthropomorphism, Social Class, and Renegotiation in *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie*

Reuben Dylan Fong

School of Social Sciences, University of Auckland

Abstract: One of the common fantasy stories involving anthropomorphized nonhuman animals in animated children's films is of humans and animals discovering they can communicate as equals. The human-animal relationship in the premise of these films exemplifies the idea of questioning and renegotiating ingrained social barriers. This article will analyze two such films (Brad Bird's 2007 film, *Ratatouille*, and Simon J. Smith and Steve Hickner's 2007 film, *Bee Movie*) using existing empirical research in child developmental psychology. I posit that these films use anthropomorphized animals and humans as allegories for the working class and middle class. These class allegories are often framed as ethnic stereotypes because children have a strong fluency of ethnic stereotypes from a young age. While these stories are ostensibly about the disassembling of social barriers, *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie* ultimately model a heavy regulation on social mobility which largely reinforces existing status quos of class difference.

Keywords: Anthropomorphism, Children's Films, Ethnicity, Human-Animal, Social Class

Children's films can often be perceived as trivial in both audience impact and thematic complexity. However, children's films might appear this way, they can often be hugely impactful in modelling social dynamics and concepts such as social class to their young audience. Brad Bird's 2007 film *Ratatouille* and Simon J. Smith and Steve Hickner's 2007 film *Bee Movie* are two such films which largely reinforce existing status quos of class difference, using parallel coding of upper and working class with ethnic caricatures to better impact children. Although these films do showcase individual cases of social mobility, they do so only to exhibit discrete cases of individuals transcending their original social class while using anthropomorphism to establish that such cases of social mobility should be heavily regulated and generally discouraged.

While animated children's films may not immediately appear as important or influential ideological texts, several scholars have argued that such films have their own unique properties with which to model concepts and social behaviors to their young audience. In his article, “Children's Films as Social Practice,” Joseph Zornado (2016) posited that the prolific use of animation in children's films can be attributed to their social responsibility as cultural-pedagogical texts. Zornado advocated reading children's films through the lens of iconology, quoting film theorist Sandy Flitterman-Lewis (1987) in defining iconology as the premise that that “when we watch a film we are somehow dreaming it as well; our unconscious desires work in tandem with those that generated the film-dream” (p. 180). As children's films are seen as having the social function of educating their young audiences, the use of animation is a highly effective means of iconologizing cultural ideologies through the technical and psychodynamic aspects of the medium (Zornado, 2016). Zornado (2016) likened the iconology of animation within children's films to the iconology of religious art in the Renaissance:

[I]conology understands the animated feature as a perfect merging of ideology and pedagogy both in the way the animated feature represents pedagogy in terms of narrative while enacting pedagogy in terms of the positioning of the spectator as one in a community of passive recipients of the film screen's action. The animated features exhibit pivotal “truths” that are “obvious and true” because [they are] common and familiar, yet moving, and still beautiful. (p. 3)

Animated children's films are important tools in explicitly or implicitly informing children about the world. Animation has long been intertwined with the presence of nonhuman animals (often anthropomorphized).

Children's films have strong ties to animation and so by extension, children's films also have strong ties with

anthropomorphized animals. In his 2013 book, *The Animated Bestiary: Animals, Cartoons, and Culture*, Paul Wells, a prominent academic in the study of animated animals and anthropomorphism, noted the predominant use of anthropomorphism in film animation since the early days of the medium – the first animated personality being a dinosaur. The ability to animate nonhuman animals was an impressive and moving visual spectacle. Such a spectacle was an appealing response to difficult societal conditions such as the Great Depression that led to “funny animals” often being popular respites for animated film patrons. Wells argued that the reputation for triviality held by children’s films, anthropomorphized animals, and cartoons is unwarranted. Indeed, he posited that this reputation can empower and embolden symbolic explorations of human identity and difference in the aforementioned media content. He asserted that anthropomorphized animals could operate under the nonhuman guise distanced from social commentary yet still be strongly evocative of issues regarding identity:

[A]nimal personae within literary contexts have been used the sidestep the overt engagement with political, religious, and social taboos more usually explicit in any human-centered, realist mode of storytelling.... [A]nimated characters [can be seen] in the first instance as phenomena and, consequently, able to carry a diversity of representational positions. At one and the same time, such characters can be beasts and humans, or neither; and can operate innocently or subversively, or as something else entirely. (Wells, 2013, pp. 7, 15)

Like Wells, in Judith Halberstam’s 2011 book, *The Queer Art of Failure*, they considered how anthropomorphized animals in animation can be intensely subversive. In their chapter, “Animating Revolt and Revolting Animation,” Halberstam posited that animated films involving anthropomorphized animals are particularly conducive to exploring symbolic themes of (human) identity and social dynamics: “Building new worlds by accessing new forms of sociality through animals turns around the usual equation in literature that makes the animal an allegorical stand-in in a moral fable about human folly,” Halberstam wrote. “Most often we project human worlds onto the supposedly blank slate of animality, and then we create the animals we need in order to locate our own human behaviors in ‘nature’ or ‘the wild’ or ‘civilization’” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 32).

One of Halberstam’s foundational principles was that childhood itself can be considered a “queer” experience, in that children themselves are the non-normative, powerless faction in an adult-driven society. Utilizing this perspective, children’s films have the

potential to explore how different kinds of queerness can be represented. Halberstam (2011) identified a subsection of children’s films which they termed “Pixarvolt” – animated children’s films featuring anthropomorphized characters which tell stories about how characters might be queer in ways that revolt against or revolutionize systems of governance.

Halberstam (2011) noted that animated films released after 1999 have featured more mature and adult-oriented themes than previous eras of animations, and such themes have become integral to the emotional impact and success of these films. One of the more mature and adult-oriented notions of Pixarvolt films is how anthropomorphized nonhuman animals are used “to recognize the weirdness of bodies, sexualities, and genders in other animal life worlds, not to mention other animated universes” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 48). In their initial definition of Pixarvolt films, Halberstam (2011) posited that:

Pixarvolt films make subtle as well as overt connections between communitarian revolt and queer embodiment and thereby articulate, in ways that theory and popular narrative have not, the sometimes-counterintuitive links between queerness and socialist struggle...the queer is not represented as a singularity but as part of an assemblage of resistant technologies that include collectivity, imagination, and a kind of situationist commitment to surprise and shock. (p. 29)

Pixarvolt films emphasize the critique and questioning of normalcy in social constructions. Although Halberstam’s (2011) chapter was mainly focused on linking animation to animals to queer notions of the Self, I would also connect Halberstam’s Pixarvolt films to stories of revolution and struggle against the social order through the medium of animation. Before applying Halberstam’s Pixarvolt queerness to *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie*, I will review existing empirical research on how children perceive social class and ethnicity in order to establish how these films ultimately reduce and minimize the queerness of Pixarvolt’s struggles for communitarian revolt.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children’s Perception of Social Class

Ratatouille and *Bee Movie* both use stereotypical ethnic traits in their anthropomorphized animals as a means of re-skinning an allegory about class difference as ethnic caricature. These allegories often ostensibly involve renegotiating class differences but ultimately reinforce the necessity for those divisions. I would posit that part of

this reinforcement is borne out from children's dispositions in their understanding of social class.

The burgeoning research on children's perception of class difference does not span the entirety of childhood but tends to focus on middle childhood (after infancy and at the beginning of childhood) to late childhood (the end of adolescence). What the research does indicate is that children in this age range are not ignorant or socially deaf to class difference. On the contrary, by the time that children are of school age, they are incredibly adept at identifying different social classes and competent in prejudicial practices in perceiving different social classes. In the meta-analysis, "Elementary School Children's Reasoning About Social Class: A Mixed-Methods Study," Mistry et al. (2015) observed survey results which demonstrated that while upper-middle-class adolescents were fairly accurate at self-assessing their own social class, most working-class adolescents also tended to identify as middle or upper middle class. Additionally, these surveys noted that those working-class adolescents aspired to upper-middle-class lifestyles as adults. The authors observed that

[T]his pattern of identification among working-class youth is consistent with findings from adults – research with adults (both in America and internationally) shows an overwhelming tendency to subjectively identify as middle class, regardless of actual levels of income and wealth.... Toward the end of elementary school (i.e., between the ages of 10 and 12), children begin to show links between internal attributes (e.g., working hard, being smart) and social class group membership. Most of these beliefs are stereotypes in which being poor is associated with more negative attributes than being rich.... [A] qualitative study with middle-class and poor children found that children described middle-class families in an idealized, positive way (e.g., good manners, happy, responsible), regardless of their own social class background. (Mistry et al., 2015, pp. 1655-1656)

The first point of note was that children (and adults) were more inclined to believe themselves to be middle-class, regardless of whether or not they actually were. The second point was that, regardless of their own social class, children idealized middle-class living and negatively stereotyped strangers who were perceived as poor.

In a similar study, researchers investigated statistical studies performed on children's perceptions of social class and economic class mobility. The researchers found that the younger the children were, the less likely they were to see poverty as a malleable condition (Mistry et al., 2016). Another important finding was that children were more likely to suggest individualistic factors (e.g., receiving money) for upward class mobility as opposed to social or institutional

factors (e.g., social connections or education). The authors found the following:

[C]hildren's reasoning about helping those living in poverty suggest that younger children (6-8 years old) emphasize more egocentric ways of helping (e.g., giving money directly to a poor person) while older children (14-16 years old) focus more on structural forms of help and creating greater economic opportunities (e.g., the government creating more jobs). (Mistry et al., 2016, p. 763)

From this study, it could be reasoned that because younger viewers were more inclined to conceptualize means of escaping from poverty to be both unlikely and based on individualistic (as opposed to structural) factors, children's films that explore class differences portray upward social mobility in social class systems as individual, rather than institutional, cases.

The Parallel Codification of Social Class and Ethnicity in First Contact Films

Within depictions of anthropomorphism, there are varying degrees to which animals and humans are shown as similar and dissimilar. I would posit that certain depictions may be labeled as "First Contact" – those which feature humans and anthropomorphized animals discovering each other as cognitive equals (e.g., Betty Thomas' 1998 *Dr. Dolittle*; Simon J. Smith & Steve Hickner's 2007 *Bee Movie*; Brad Bird's 2007 *Ratatouille*). This discovery of humans and animals is analogous to the anthropological use of the phrase, "first contact," the first meetings between two cultures previously unknown to one another. In First Contact films, where the renegotiation of human-nonhuman boundaries embeds class conflict and mobility in the thematic foundation, social difference under the guise of ethnicity is significant. Because social class may be seen as more malleable and mobile than ethnicity, parallel-coding ethnicity with social class allows children's films a means with which to explore issues of social class that young audiences can follow.

In her 1988 developmental child psychology study, Frances Aboud considered ethnic and racial awareness (and prejudice) from a child-oriented perspective rather than considering displays of ethnic prejudice from children to simply be the miniaturized form of adolescent or adult ethnic and racial prejudice. In her review of the two leading theories of ethnic prejudice in children – social reflection theory and inner state theory – Aboud (1988) concluded that children develop a notable grasp of ethnic and racial categorizations by the time they are four or five years old and considered the two classic child development theories about the psychodynamic origins of prejudice in children to have strengths and flaws in explaining all facets of child prejudice. Aboud (1988) believed that social reflection theory, where children simply self-identify with their parents and

adult authority figures and mirror the prejudiced actions and behaviors of those adults in an attempt to please them (Allport, 1954), did not account for the relative lack of variety of prejudice from children with parents from ethnic minorities, nor the fact that there was no increase in prejudice as the child grew older, which one might have expected as the child integrated more prejudiced behaviors into their psyche.

The second child prejudice theory Aboud (1988) considered was inner state theory, wherein a child punished for expressing hostility and aggression toward parental figures causes that child to generate anxiety and guilt (Adorno & Frenkel-Brunswik, 1950). The inappropriate reaction of this sequence of emotions causes a child to have antisocial and negative impulses and displace these feelings toward people who lack authority and power (e.g., minority groups). However, Aboud (1988) found the lack of specifying what targets children might take and how they decide upon them to be a significant weakness in explaining the psycho-social origins of prejudice.

Although she found the theoretical origins of ethnic prejudice in children to be inconclusive, Aboud (1988) observed from existing empirical research that while the levels of adult and adolescent ethnic prejudice have steadily declined in the past forty years, the levels of child ethnic prejudice have remained consistently high, suggesting that the phenomenon of child ethnic prejudice is not merely reflecting that of adolescents and adults.

In his essay, "Ethnicity and Disney: It's a Whole New Myth," Edward Rothstein (1997) noted how Disney films portray ethnicity: [E]thnicity involves complicated relationships between an outsider and a supposed center, between an immigrant and the mainstream, an aspiring lower class and a complacent middle. And these relationships are often the very subjects of the films themselves. Disney movies do not just incorporate ethnicity; they are, in a broad sense, about it. (para. 10)

Rothstein's (1997) main argument was that every character Disney produces carries an implicit ethnic allegory through their ethnic performativity and relationship with an outside protagonist that will eventually achieve mainstream success – the Italian puppeteer Geppetto to Pinocchio, the Jamaican anthropomorphic crab Sebastian to Ariel the mermaid, and the Eastern-European dwarfs to Snow White are all cases where marginalized companion characters who are primarily defined through their ethnicity become instrumental in helping the protagonist transition from fellow outsider to mainstream success without themselves benefitting from this transition.

For Rothstein (1997), these ethnic categories were not something to be admired or negotiated with. Instead, he believed

they should be seen as a destabilization to the equalization of native and non-native cultures by suggesting that native cultures are best reduced to prejudiced, lower-class ethnic stereotypes whose societal function is to serve and aid the dominant ethnic class (Rothstein, 1997). Rothstein's (1997) argument of Disney's ethnicization of marginalized characters underscored a larger trend in the children's film genre to conflate non-dominant ethnicities with aspiring lower classes and to contrast those with the mainstream complacent middle class.

RATATOUILLE

The human-nonhuman dynamic in *Ratatouille* strongly enforces the ideal that the status quo of class difference is (and should be) structurally and morally sound. *Ratatouille* follows Remy, a wild rat, who has a natural gift for cooking and has ambitions of becoming a chef – something that his pack of rats cannot understand. "I know I'm supposed to hate humans," Remy says in a voiceover during the film's opening sequence, "but there's something about them...they discover, they create – just look at what they can do with food" (Bird, 2007). Remy parallels the eponymous *Pocahontas* (Goldberg et al., 1995) in their conflict against their "colonizers." Like Pocahontas, Remy is able to compromise with, and listen to, the humans prejudiced against him and questions why he should be prejudiced against them. Remy performs as an "aspirational animal," where nonhuman animals act "as a tool by which to demonstrate favorable human qualities and heroic motifs" (Wells, 2008, p. 52). As will be outlined later, Remy's realization of the aspirational animal acts as a form of the lower social classes reinforcing the class system.

An early expression of Remy's aspirational animality is his un-rat-like fixation on hygiene, which connects to his desire to prepare gourmet food. During the film's opening act, Remy's brother Emile is introduced while digging through an iconic cylindrical tin trash can, with the camera focused on the garbage. Emile's introduction as an unclean animal is underscored by the jump cut to a two-shot of Emile and Remy discussing cleanliness while walking side by side, with Remy walking bipedally and using his front limbs to carry food while Emile walks on his four limbs dragging food on the ground with his mouth. The framing of Remy and Emile displays the juxtaposition between their modes of walking, and their conversation ties those modes of walking with cleanliness:

Emile: Why are you walking like that?

Remy: I don't want to constantly have to wash my paws.

Did you every think about how we walk on the same paws that we handle food with? You ever think about what we put into our mouths?

Emile: All the time.

Remy: When I eat, I don't want to taste everywhere my paws have been.

Emile: Well, go ahead, but if Dad sees you walking like that, he's not going to like it. (Bird, 2007)

Emile's introduction and dialogue with Remy quickly establish the human standard of rats as unclean while also correlating cleanliness with food. This correlation also later informs the humans as middle-class characters.

After being separated from his colony after a physical confrontation with a human, Remy finds a human, Alfredo, who works in a menial position at Gusteau's, a gourmet restaurant. After Remy's discovery by the kitchen staff, Alfredo is tasked with drowning Remy in a canal as rats are considered unclean animals that have no place in the kitchen. Instead, Alfredo recognizes Remy's sentience and culinary skills, and the two secretly team up to work as a chef at Gusteau's. Through their mutually beneficial relationship that exists despite their species (and symbolic social) difference, Remy and Alfredo show that certain morally acceptable ambitions are the means to social and species mobility. The moment of first contact – Alfredo talking at, and subsequently to, Remy by the canal as Alfredo grapples with having to drown a rat – is filmed through a series of shot/reverse-shots over the shoulders of the two characters. The framing of the sequence makes each character occupy a similar amount of space within the screen which gives the impression that Alfredo the human and Remy the rat are the same size. By being framed as being of similar size, the human-rat dynamic is temporarily leveled by removing Alfredo's power advantage of size compared to Remy. This leveling belies a form of interspecies kindness where the two are of the same kind by being of the same (filmic) size.

The film's story uses the obvious rhetorical particularities of rats to encode the anthropomorphized rats as stereotypes of the poor as parasitical, unclean pests; in contrast, the humans (all of whom are gourmet chefs or high-society food critics) fulfill the stereotypes of the middle class as cultured, influential, and talented. One way that *Ratatouille* encodes symbolic statuses of class in its characters is through vocal performance. The rats speak in typical New York accents, an accent often perceived as "lower class, ethnic or crude" (McClear, 2010, para. 31), but also as signifiers for Italian Americans due to the accent's widespread use in the mafia film genre often set in New York. In a conspicuous contrast to the rats, the human characters speak in cartoonish French accents (befitting the Paris setting) or, in the case of one malevolent food critic, an upper-class English drawl encoding them as European.

Alfredo, the human chef who Remy secretly puppeteers to prepare food in the gourmet restaurant, is strikingly voiced in an American accent that far more closely resembles the rats' New York

accents than the humans' French accents. As a mediator who is enacting the transcendence of the human-nonhuman binary, Alfredo's ethnic vocal performance disqualifies him as a middle-class human. *Ratatouille* parallels class difference with ethnic difference, and Alfredo's status as an imposter in middle-class European ethnicity belies a duplicitous element in helping the lower-class New York rats. Alfredo is constantly patronized by the other human characters in the film, hinting at the fact that he is symbolically passing as an ethnic equal and in the film's conclusion, Alfredo is happily relegated to the role of a waiter as if he has fulfilled his class role as an ethnic inferior to the other European-coded humans. While Remy becomes a chef at the end of the film, his role is both managed and hidden by human characters in order to avoid provoking systemic changes to the species (and ethnic) prejudice.

Although there is a clear power disparity between the rats and humans (symbolic of the class disparity between the working class and middle class), the film shifts the onus of this disparity away from the humans and suggests that the disparity is largely a function of nature and not an active and intentionally designed power structure. The shift of the disparity's root cause absolves humans of the disadvantages the rats experience (compared to the humans) which in turn implies that both the rats and humans have equal culpability for their contempt for the other as both species are merely players within this hegemonic system.

In a scene which punctuates the "natural" order of the human-nonhuman dynamic, Remy's father Django shows Remy a line of rat carcasses hanging in the window of a "pest" control store. As lightning and rain dramatically underscore the disparity of power between humans and rats, Django says "you can't change nature" as a way of demonstrating punishment for daring to attempt class mobility. However, this scene does not seem to vilify humans as inherently less-moral beings than the rats (who are never shown trying to kill humans). The rats' hatred of humans stems from the fact that humans poison them, but this naturalized hatred is equalized by the humans' hatred of rats, suggesting that both sides are equally wrong in their hatred and are simply misguided as Remy and Alfredo manage to transcend the human-rat (class) conflict through their culinary ambition. Rather than emphasizing the negative aspects of class difference, *Ratatouille* naturalizes the ideology that all animals have a social class, and that this understanding should be respected.

Remy's individualistic transcendence of the class divide is further reflected by the sociogenic identity of his species. The difference between rats as abject pest or adored pet is in numbers: a single rat has "undergone a process of cleansing" to reduce its contagion to a minimum (Edelman, 2005, p. 126). This cleansing process works as a means of delineating those cleansed individuals from the masses of wild and disease-ridden rats (Edelman, 2005).

The sociogenic difference between an individual rat cleansed by humans and the contaminated masses of rats is conferred in the anthropomorphism of rats in *Ratatouille* in two forms: the first being a rat as an individual aspiring for upward social mobility; the second being a rat aspiring for upward social mobility as an individualistic and nonconformist desire. Remy's singular aspiration as a symbolic blue-collar individual wanting to advance to a white-collar position isolates and contains the threat of institutional traversing of class; it is not just that Remy achieves some success in social mobility as an individual (although it is limited and maintained through his social access to humans), but it is precisely because his success is presented as an inversion of the conforming masses of the working class.

The class codification of the human-nonhuman dynamic in *Ratatouille* does not totally disavow the possibility of social mobility and the essentialism of social class; instead, the film colors that possibility in the same vein of the fantastical and implausible nature which resonates with human-nonhuman first contact. By conflating social mobility with the unlikelihood of human-nonhuman first contact, *Ratatouille* almost completely extinguishes notions of institutional changes that would promote mass social mobility. For these children's films, elevating from the blue collar to the white collar is a feat on par with talking animals, and while *Ratatouille* demonstrates that this elevation can happen, it could never happen on a large scale, nor could it be normalized in any common extent.

BEE MOVIE

Bee Movie follows Barry B. Benson, a bee recently graduated from bee college, who, after getting lost on a pollen expedition to New York City, discovers that humans have been harvesting honey from bees for centuries to supply to grocery stores. To confront the humans, he reveals the humanlike sentience of bees to them in order to challenge the humans' exploitation of the bees. The bees in *Bee Movie* are anthropomorphized in a way that heavily allegorizes them as Jewish American. Aside from the prominent Jewish star, Jerry Seinfeld, as the writer and producer of *Bee Movie* as well as the voice of protagonist bee Barry, there are several stereotypical markers of the Jewish American identity in the portrayal of bees. The bees display Jewish humor that is often predicated on self-deprecation, Barry's mother is characterized as the stereotypical nagging, coddling Jewish mother, the bees have a strong emphasis on community and the dangers of leaving their communal spaces to see ethno-racial (and in this case, species) Others, bees scoffing at the thought of Barry dating a human woman because she is not "Bee-ish," and the bees' many nasal vocal tics of "eh" reminiscent of Jewish characters in other forms of media (such as the television sitcom, *Seinfeld*).

I would posit that while the symbolic Jewish characters (the bees) in *Bee Movie* are portrayed as living middle-class lifestyles,

these characters are, in many ways, alternate variants of middle class that have not wholly left behind the historical Jewish "outsider" status. Portraying the bees as stereotypical Jewish Americans acts as a form of basic reassurance known as "Jewissance" – a play on the French *jouissance* (Abrams, 1972, p. 1). The Jewissance stereotypes act as a means of grappling with and overcoming the historical turmoil of Jews through emphasizing the contested images and intricate ideological implications of Jewish identity. By being portrayed using non-threatening, recognizable archetypes, the portrayals of the Jewissance reduce the anxiety and discomfort of the underlying connotations of the Jew as outsider and invader (Abrams, 1972). While these Jewissance stereotypes offer secure points of Jewish identification and can ridicule the exclusion of Jews and Jewishness, there is still vestigial historical Otherness that highlights tensions of Jewish assimilation into the middle class.

In discussing modern American representations of Jewishness, Alan Warren Friedman (1972) considered the Jewish identity to be somewhat inherently self-conflicted by the past legacy and future succession of Jewish "uniqueness." Friedman (1972) posited that the legacy of Jewish identity is intrinsically connected with "a historical grandeur and sense of destiny that, however, best manifests itself [through] suffering" (p. 42). Friedman's (1972) conceptualization of Jews emphasized the dissonance of Jews becoming middle class as they gained upward social mobility with their historical suffering as outsiders.

One continuous visual signifier of the bees' outsider status is the fluorescent yellow color of the bees and their beehive. While inside their beehive, the bees' yellow color scheme matches their surroundings, displaying their connection to a living space that is physically distanced from the mainstream human environments. When the bees move to anthropogenic spaces like apartments, courthouses, and airports, their bright yellow exteriors strongly contrast with the more muted greys, browns, and greens of the human environments. The contrast of colors between the bees' and humans' spaces constantly marks the bees as having an inconsistent placement in the non-bee landscape.

This idea of Jewish dissonance, then, as well as the notion of Jewish destiny through suffering, resonates in *Bee Movie* in various forms. In *Bee Movie*, the bees are characterized through this ethno-cultural (rather than religious) Jewish identity, as well as solidly middle-class lifestyles, parallel-coupling the film's social class coding with ethnic coding. However, for the bees, the middle class is treated as an alternate ethnic variant of the human middle class; the bees' own class system acts as a social microcosm reflecting – but not interconnected to – the human middle class. While *Bee Movie*'s Jewissance re-skinning superficially centralizes their identity as middle-class, the bee-human conflict acts to remind the viewer that

while the symbolic Jews are an affluent community, there is an Otherness to them relative to the wider society. Indeed, the bees are physically segregated by living in hives, so even though their middle-class lifestyles are comparable to humans', they are still geographically displaced from the rest of society. The bees' contentment and acceptance of suffering through their unwitting exploitation of labor by humans is indicative of how embedded the bees' suffering is to their cultural identity.

Barry, however, incensed by the humans' corporate theft and exploitation of the bees, sues the human race in a (human) court of law on behalf of the bees for ownership and the intellectual property for the world's supply of honey. After exposing the fact that beekeepers forcibly expose bees to smoke (likened to the dangers of cigarette smoking) in beehives (likened to internment camps), Barry wins the trial and the world's supply of honey and honey-related products is returned to the bees. The attorney for the humans, Layton T. Montgomery, gives a cryptic message to Barry after the judge's verdict: "This is an unholy perversion of the balance of nature, Benson. You'll regret this" (Hickner, 2007). After the honey is returned to the bees, the bees discontinue honey production and thereby stop pollinating the world's plants, leading the earth's flora to quickly die out, as well as the bees becoming dejected due to their "unemployment."

Barry eventually takes responsibility for the dying ecosystem and works to save both the bees' sense of purpose and the world's plants. The film resolves with humans and bees working together to license bee-approved brands of honey and the bees continuing to produce honey (and thereby pollinating plants). Barry's repatriation of honey is treated as an act of empowerment for the ethnicized bees. It also works as an acknowledgement and recognition that the bees are, in fact, outsiders by decisively dividing assets with the humans; this division separates the human middle class from the bees' isolated and human-independent middle-class community. The later lack of work for the bees brings malaise and ennui to the community, as if their work (and suffering) defined them; the bees' dependence on work for self-worth mirrors Friedman's (1972) argument that the Jewish sense of identity is manifested through suffering, thereby reinforcing the naturalization of the Jew as someone whose only purpose is to work. The recognition of the value of bees as individuals who suffer for their work is an act of reclamation by demonstrating that bees find meaning in this productive form of suffering.

Like *Ratatouille*, *Bee Movie* uses the First Contact renegotiations of human-nonhuman boundaries to alleviate the culpability of humans for anthropogenic effects on nonhuman animals to suggest that class difference is a necessary societal framework upon which people must depend for sustainable societal living. By remodulating

the power dynamics between humans and bees through introducing interspecies kindness, these films are able to accentuate the necessity for class divisions for societal sustainability. Although *Ratatouille* suggests that humans culling rats is simply an intrinsic part of the species hegemony dynamic, *Bee Movie* actively suggests that humans and nonhuman animals are vital parts and essential players for their continual social and ecological existence. While the bees have visual markers of the American middle class (wearing ties, having bee-themed college educations, speaking in "white," middle-class American accents), their tangible work as honey producers is what gives their lives and community an ethno-cultural purpose and meaning.

Bee Movie suggests that both humans and bees alike depend upon their interspecies relationship – a relationship of inequality grounded in ecological diversity – for survival; without the stability of an unequal human-nonhuman relationship, survival of society itself is threatened. This mutual dependency between human society and symbolic Jewish class is crystallized by Barry willingly accepting the blame for the ecological catastrophe that emerged from the bees' abstinence from pollination (rather than blaming the humans for failing to compensate the bees or blaming all parties for passively engaging in an inherently inequitable class system). Barry's acceptance of blame is characterized as a moment of personal growth, as though accepting such an inequality of class paradigms is a marker of maturity. Barry taking the blame minimizes the humans' role in nonhuman exploitation by offering a worse fate for both human and nonhuman animals. The status quo of ethnic difference in *Bee Movie* can only ever be sustainable when founded on hegemonic structures that are acknowledged by all participants; the bees should be tireless workers for the humans because that is the "natural" biological purpose of bees, and without purpose, the bees have no ethno-cultural meaning to their lives. Moreover, the film clearly presents nature and the ecosystem from the perspective of unmalleable and unwavering biological functional fixedness where certain species not only excel but are designed for a specific subset of tasks (i.e., humans must take honey from bees to motivate bees to produce honey, bees produce honey to pollinate flowers). As the ecosystem is symbolic of social class stratification, it cements both the danger and rigidity of class mobility for the Jewish community. While Remy the rat cooks gourmet food under the auspice of a human avatar, Barry B. Benson is punished for refusing to cooperate in the interdependence of biological functional fixedness by shouldering the blame for nearly causing ecological collapse.

The difference between these two nonhuman animals challenging the alleged fixedness of nature is that Remy disguises his actions through a human figurehead while Barry's openly nonhuman status violates the human monopoly on the anthropogenic

discussion. Barry's punishment acts as a form of basic reassurance, the karmic or cosmic balance of being punished for morally "bad" behavior. While Barry had morally upright intentions in reclaiming the world's supply of honey, he is punished for the litigious insurrection as the lawsuit rebels against his outsider status as a member of the Jewish class.

CONCLUSION

As allegories of social class and ethnicity, *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie* seem superficially to promote social mobility through liberation from white hegemonies – they are First Contact films where the human-nonhuman divide is seen through the prism of the middle class and the working class, and the nonhuman protagonists knowingly seek to challenge this divide. In many ways, these films are resolved through token inclusion of nonhuman animals into the human societal framework: Remy and his rat colony are secretly employed in the kitchen of a restaurant, and Barry continues to allow honey to be sold by humans through a non-detailed stamp of bee approval. These nonhuman characters singularize the Other and allow human privilege only for the most exceptional nonhuman characters without causing the child audience to question the current human-nonhuman status quo or invalidate the child audience's prejudices against social class. Although these nonhuman characters contravene species/class norms, the child audience is also never presented with any actionable morals for either rising in social strata or coping with the current system; as the aphorism goes, these exceptional nonhuman characters are exceptions – they prove the rule. By making exceptions on individualistic bases, children's films offer the possibility of social mobility and transcending social class while largely reaffirming the general legitimacy of class hegemony.

REFERENCES

- Aboud, F. E. (1988). *Children and prejudice*. B. Blackwell.
- Abrams, N. (2012). *The new Jew in film: Exploring Jewishness and Judaism in contemporary cinema*. Rutgers University Press.
- Adorno, T. W., & Frenkel-Brunswick, E. (1950). *The authoritarian personality*. Harper & Brothers.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Addison-Wesley.
- Bird, B. (Director). (2007). *Ratatouille* [Film]. Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Edelman, B. (2005). From trap to lap: The changing sociogenic identity of the rat. In J. Knight (Ed.), *Animals in person: Cultural perspectives on human-animal intimacies* (pp. 119-140). Routledge.
- Friedman, A.W. (1972). The Jew's complaint in recent American fiction: Beyond exodus and still in the wilderness. *Southern Review*, 8(1), 41-60.
- Gabriel, M., & Goldberg, E. (Directors). (1995). *Pocahontas*. [Film]. Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Halberstam, J. (2011). *The queer art of failure*. Duke University Press.
- McClear, S. (2010, February 6). Why the classic Noo Yawk accent is fading away. *New York Post*.
<https://nypost.com/2010/02/06/why-the-classic-noo-yawk-accent-is-fading-away/>
- Mistry, R. S., Brown, C. S., White, E. S., Chow, K. A., & Gillen-O'Neel, C. (2015). Elementary school children's reasoning about social class: A mixed-methods study. *Child Development*, 86(5), 1653-1671.
- Mistry, R. S., Nenadal, L., Griffin, K. M., Zimmerman, F. J., Avetisan, C. H., Thomas, C., & Wilson, C. (2016). Children's reasoning about poverty, economic mobility, and helping behavior: Results of a curriculum intervention in the early school years. *Journal of Social Issues*, 72(4), 760-788.
- Rothstein, E. (1997, December 14). Ethnicity and Disney: It's a whole new myth. *New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1997/12/14/movies/cultural-view-ethnicity-and-disney-it-s-a-whole-new-myth.html>
- Smith, S. J., Hickner, S. (Directors). (2007). *Bee Movie* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.
- Wells, P. (2008). *The animated bestiary: Animals, cartoons, and culture*. Rutgers University Press.
- Zornado, J. (2008). Children's film as social practice. *Comparative Literature and Culture*, 10(2), 1-10.

AUTHOR

Reuben Dylan Fong, School of Social Sciences, University of Auckland, rfon572@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Liminal Animals in Liminal Spaces: A Day at Berlin Zoo

Kristine Hill

Exeter Anthrozoology as Symbiotic Ethics (EASE) Working Group, University of Exeter

Abstract: This reflexive essay is based on a visit to Berlin Zoo on an overcast February day. It attempts to make sense of the “zoo experience” through critical self-reflection and observations of how visitors relate to animal others. The concept of zoo inhabitants as liminal beings, neither domesticated nor truly wild, is explored. Animals born and raised in captivity do not belong in the wild any more than their ancestors belonged in a zoo. Although they likely could not survive in their “natural” habitats, they are no less “elephant” or “tiger” than free-living members of the same species. These animals occupy liminal spaces where they are subject to “the gaze” and exist as entertainers and educators. Despite concerns regarding the ethics of keeping captive wild animals, I argue that, given proper respect and husbandry, keeping some individuals as ambassador animals could be justified. However, any moral justification for captivity should be considered from the perspective of individual animals and species.

Keywords: Animal Exhibits, Gaze, Liminality, Zoos

Contemporary Western zoos arose from the nineteenth-century culture of colonialism, with emphasis on leisure and consumerism (Willis, 1999), but evolved in response to “cultural changes in the perception of the interactions between humans and nature” (Ginsberg, 1993, p. 4). Whereas nineteenth-century zoos were essentially menageries of “exotic” animal collections, modern layouts in accredited zoos are based on ecological themes, with animals exhibited in enclosures intended to represent their natural surroundings (Powell, 1997; Benbow, 2004; Milstein, 2009). In response to charges of cruelty, zoos moved away from promoting entertainment at the expense of the wellbeing of the animals (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier, 2004). In the late twentieth century, many zoos increased their focus on species preservation via captive breeding programs (Miller et al., 2004; Milstein, 2009; Tribe & Booth, 2003).

Historically, the plight of these animals was much worse (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier, 2004). Kawata (2013) asserted that “history is often inconvenient” and insisted we not forget that the well-adapted apes of America’s accredited zoos “stand on heaps of

dead conspecific; untold numerous lives perished during capture, transport and after the arrival” (p. 29). Despite the considerable improvements seen in reputable modern zoos, Kawata (2013) did not believe the recent success of captive-animal breeding programs atoned for the atrocities committed upon their ancestors.

Critics contend that modern-day breeding efforts focus on species for whom zoos hold a vested interest in exhibiting with little concern for their wild counterparts (Hancocks, 2001; Milstein, 2009). Furthermore, the majority of captive zoo animals today are not endangered species and zoos typically do not pursue reintroduction programs (Jamieson, 1995; Milstein, 2009). Nonetheless, others still conclude that the role of these zoos is to raise awareness about conservation issues, educate the next generation, and provide an influential voice in conservation debates (Miller et al., 2004).

The mission of modern zoos is grounded in education (Ginsberg, 1993; Benbow, 2004; Miller et al., 2004; Falk et al., 2007; Milstein, 2009; Marino et al., 2010), although visitor motivations are predominantly entertainment-based (Reade & Waran, 1996; Tomas et al., 2003). Therefore, zoos must cater to visitor expectations if they are to fulfill their mission to educate. They seem to be successful in this respect; zoos are popular, with an estimated 600 million annual visitors worldwide (Gusset & Dick, 2011). American zoos attract more visitors annually than professional baseball, football, basketball, and hockey games combined (Milstein, 2009). Willis (1999) reports that “in no other tourist venue including theme parks and resorts, have I observed people so bemused, so enraptured, as they are in zoos” (p. 677).

Despite their popularity, zoos exhibit a highly skewed representation of the animal world. The so-called “ABC animals” are the large carnivores, such as big cats and bears, and large herbivores, such as elephants, rhinos, and giraffes, without whom zoos would be less popular (Hanson, 2002; Kawata, 2013). Not only are zoos mammalocentric, but the popular ABC-type mammals themselves make up a very small minority of all mammalian species (Kawata, 2011). Similarly, birds are over-represented by penguins, raptors, ratites (mostly flightless, large, and long-legged birds), and parrots (Kawata, 2013). While many shorter-lived, underrepresented species tend to live longer and readily reproduce in captivity, the

popular ABC-type animals suffer the most in terms of health, longevity, and reproductive success (Kawata, 2013; Tidière et al., 2016). Furthermore, longevity and physical health alone are not good measures of quality of life as they do not consider emotional wellbeing, and veterinary care may mask psychological problems by treating the physical manifestations (Hutchins, 2006; Kitchener & Macdonald, 2005; Mason & Veasey, 2010).

BERLIN ZOO

Many zoos were founded in Europe and North America during a time of rapid urbanization when more and more people were feeling removed from nature (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier, 2004). Berlin Zoo was established in 1844 and was immediately open to the public. This set Berlin apart from other European zoological collections of the time, such as Amsterdam and Antwerp, which were exclusive to elite scientific societies (Bruce, 2017). Motivated by human interests in either science or entertainment, the founders of the nineteenth-century zoos likely did not dwell on the ethics of placing wild animals in captivity (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier, 2004; Bruce, 2017). However, the animals were “loved” by the publics who visited them, and Berlin Zoo has a long history of celebrity animals. For example, a three-year-old gorilla named Bobby arrived to Berlin Zoo in 1928, and as the only member of his species in Europe at the time, he became an instant sensation. Bobby remained a popular attraction until his death in 1935 and his image remains the official zoo logo (Bruce, 2017). Other famous inhabitants – all ABC-type mammals (Bell, 2001; Bruce, 2017) – included Rostom, an Asian elephant who in 1881 became the zoo’s second elephant to kill an employee, Knautschke the hippo, who survived the WWII bombing of 1943, Evi (1961-1995), a sun bear born in Berlin and raised by the family of the zoo director, and Knut the polar bear (2007-2011).

This paper attempts to make sense of the zoo experience by observing how myself and other visitors relate to animal others. This reflexive essay is based on a visit to Berlin Zoo, Germany, on February 26, 2017. The day was dry but overcast, with an average temperature of 8°C. I chose to follow the prescribed path and absorb the zoo experience while making notes and taking pictures. This was my first visit to the Berlin Zoo. The paper develops the concept that zoo inhabitants are liminal animals who are neither truly wild nor domesticated.

Liminal Animals in Liminal Spaces

Root-Bernstein et al. (2013) placed anthropomorphism on a continuum, with “stronger” anthropomorphism being an “endorsement of a personally held belief that the non-human agent has humanlike characteristics or traits” (p. 1579). This can potentially lead to misrepresentation and misunderstanding of nonhuman behaviors and emotions and is most damaging to non-mammalian

species with whom we have less in common (Dwyer, 2007). At the other end of the continuum, anthropomorphism is about “identifying similarities between ourselves and the anthropomorphized object (Root-Bernstein et al., 2013, p. 1579).

As humans, we understand the world around us in human terms, using thoughts and emotions to which we can relate. However, humans are animals too, and behaviors and emotions thought to distinguish humans from other animals invariably turn out not to be exclusively human (Buchanan, 2015; Laland & Hoppitt, 2003). Philosophical ethology is an approach to research which asserts that understanding others should be guided by “an investigation of human animality rather than human exceptionalism” (Buchanan et al., 2014, p. 2). Following this same principle, Marchesini (2017) stresses that “human subjectivity is not the result of emancipation from a generic animal condition, but rather the very expression of a specific animal condition” (p. 62). The framework of philosophical ethology is not dissimilar from what Milton (2005) conceptualized as “egomorphism” – using personal experience to understand other persons (both human and nonhuman).

My personal experience as a human may help or hinder my understanding of the lives of zoo animals. Therefore, I chose not to attempt to garner a better understanding of what it might be like to be a zoo animal. Instead, I considered what my anthropomorphic (or egomorphic) interpretation might say about how I, and potentially other visitors, related to zoo animals. This is relevant because the way in which people perceive others affects how those others are treated by society.

Turning right from the zoo entrance, the elephants first grabbed my attention. Six large animals stood around in what I perceived as a rather small enclosure, showering dirt over their bodies, and lethargically tossing around fern branches (Figure 1).

Figure 1

The Elephant Enclosure at Berlin Zoo



Proximity to these massive mammals was awe-inspiring, and given my limited knowledge of elephant behavior, I believe I witnessed no undue distress. Yet at the same time, something felt wrong. Attempting to analyze this emotion, I first inferred it was because the animals appeared sad and bored. Were these animals truly sad or bored, and if not, why did I perceive them this way? Perhaps I recognized that they were captive animals and projected my own reaction to this knowledge onto these animals. Upon further reflection, it occurred to me that the chill and greyness of a February day in the city (note the cityscape backdrop in Figure 1) did not correlate with my reconceived idea of “elephant.” Elephants in documentaries are invariably shown in their natural environments and, standing in front of the enclosure, I was reminded of a photo my mother shared with me while visiting an elephant sanctuary in Sri Lanka. Those elephants seemed more real to me than the ones I stood next to in Berlin.

Rather than dismissing these projections as “sentimental anthropomorphism” (Lockwood, 1985), however, they can be considered within the framework of symbolic interactionism to understand human interactions with other animals (Irvine, 2012). Symbolic interactionism is the theory that interpersonal communication is facilitated by symbols that have acquired conventionalized and shared meanings (see Aksan et al., 2009; Blumer, 1969). Essentially, people respond to social symbols and objects via interpretation of their socially assigned meaning (Blumer, 1969). Like most visitors, I came to the zoo with some prior understanding of captivity, zoos, and the animal inhabitants. My intention here is to reflect upon my own subjective position and examine how I am perceiving the zoo inhabitants.

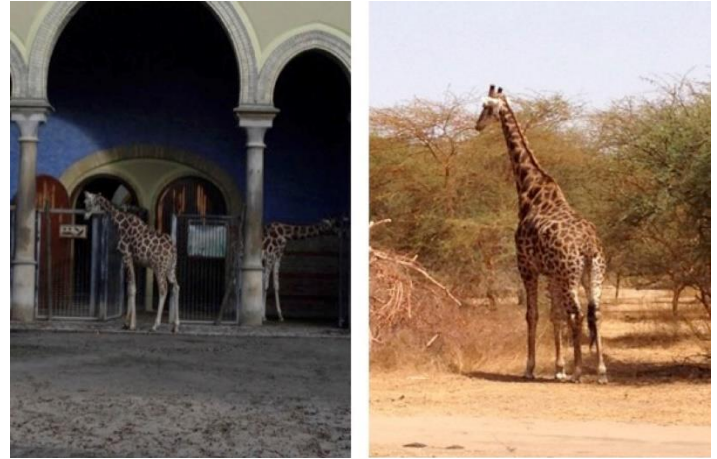
After leaving the elephants, I experienced a similar emotional reaction at the giraffe enclosure, which I contrasted to my memories of giraffes at Senegal’s Réserve de Bandia in 2013 (Figure 2). I perceived the free-roaming West African safari park animals as being at home, whereas the Berlin giraffes and elephants struck me as out-of-place.

My feeling persisted that these animals did not belong there. Others have described modern zoos – where wild animals live in captivity – as culturally liminal spaces (Hanson, 2002; Milstein, 2009). Arguably, these individuals could not thrive in their “natural” environment as the zoo setting is all they have known. Willis (1999) described zoo animals as “body doubles, stand-ins for the real animals existing (or becoming extinct) elsewhere,” and the zoo itself as “a living cemetery” (p. 674). Describing a cheetah at the zoo, Willis (1999) wrote, “it may look like a cheetah, and its genetic code is that of the cheetah. But released into the wild it cannot be a cheetah: Its cultivation has failed to include all the skills, practices, and awareness

that cheetahs in the wild acquire in order to live in the savannah” (p. 674).

Figure 2

Encounters with Giraffes



Note: Berlin Zoo (left); Réserve De Bandia, Senegal (right)

Zoos rarely keep animals with the intention of releasing adults into the wild. Animals are kept for exhibition, education, and sometimes to preserve genetic stocks (Patrick et al., 2007; Roe et al., 2014). Therefore, these individuals need not hone skills for future survival outside of the zoo. I do not agree that being different renders zoo animals any less “cheetah,” “elephant,” or “giraffe.” However, the fact that they are unlikely to thrive if released into the wild (Beck, 1995) suggests that these individuals are fundamentally different from their wild relatives. Furthermore, breeding programs may be inadvertently initiating domestication, or at least influencing the selection of traits that better-enable these animals to thrive in captivity (Schulte-Hostedde & Mastromonaco, 2015). This latter scenario potentially threatens the success of any mission to reintroduce to the wild members of that species who are descended from many generations of captive-bred individuals. Zoo animals are liminal beings who are neither domesticated nor truly wild, and individuals raised in zoos do not belong in the wild any more than their ancestors belonged in zoos.

Exhibiting Animals

Integral to symbolic interactionism is the process of intersubjectivity, which refers to the shared space between conscious (subjective) minds where shared meaning is made. A concept of interspecies intersubjectivity developed from acknowledging that nonhuman animals also possess subjective minds (Alger & Alger, 1997; Haraway, 2008; Irvine, 2004). The ways in which zoo animals interact with their keepers, the visitors, and other inhabitants shape both the human minds and the minds of the sentient nonhuman beings. The

focus here is on the human perception of zoo animals, but human perceptions of other animals are directly relevant to how these animals are treated by society. Emel (1995) stressed that “how we represent and identify ourselves and others – whether they be animals or people – means everything for what and how we feel or do not feel” (p. 708). Therefore, zoos have a responsibility to not perpetuate harmful misunderstandings or exhibit “exoticism” by exhibiting animals in such a manner that serves to justify poor treatment of individuals of that group or species (Bettany & Russell, 2011; Borkfelt, 2011; Emel, 1995).

In keeping with Berlin Zoo’s education mission, information boards describing the species and their natural habitat accompanied the various enclosures. However, most visitors appeared to give these information boards no more than a cursory glance. The two observed exceptions were one family, evidently attempting to educate their young children, and a school group fulfilling assigned educational activities. The majority of visitors seemed happy to gaze at the animals, enjoy a day out with family or friends, and take photos.

Carr and Cohen (2011) recognized that “despite the questionable morality of zoos as sources of entertainment it is vital today to engage the interest of potential visitors and ensure they have a ‘good time’ during their visit to a zoo” (p. 186). Thus, despite the greater emphasis placed on animal wellbeing and education, the zoo residents nonetheless remain exhibits, and essentially, performers. As exhibits, the animals are “objects of a spectacular show, ranked and displayed so as to please, thrill, amaze, and instruct the human visitor” (Willis, 1999, p. 671). Hanson (2002) described zoos as occupying “a middle ground between science and showmanship, high culture and low, remote forests and cement cityscape, and wild animals and urban people” (p. 7). Milstein (2009) suggested that the fact that zoos are culturally “in-between places of tension” and occupy a “liminal cultural space” can account for their popularity.

Benbow (2004) reported that spaces and boundaries in modern zoos reflect a compromise between providing for “the aesthetic demands of visitors as well as some of the needs of captive species” (p. 15). This was apparent in the architecture and artifacts placed in many of the enclosures at Berlin Zoo. For example, while the mountain-like terrain in the mountain goat enclosure might be for the inhabitants’ benefit, the little wooden cabin was clearly meant for the aesthetic enhancement.

The glass wall is another common feature, often employed in exhibits featuring aquatic animals (Willis, 1999), but also used at Berlin Zoo for other exhibits (see the wolves in Figure 3), Willis (1999) likened the effect to “peering into an ant farm,” and described the way it “puts the viewer in a position he or she could not otherwise attain except when swimming and diving” (p. 679).

Figure 3

Glass Fencing Surrounding the Wolf Enclosure



Surprisingly, Willis (1999) took a very negative perspective of this form of display, claiming the objectification of the animals and the dissection of their habitat. However, the exhibition of animals in this way remains a central function of zoos.

The Gaze and Power

Milstein (2009) described gaze and power as two underlying themes that have remained fundamental to the concept of the Western zoo as it evolved from a place of nineteenth-century colonial exhibitionism to the more education-based contemporary model. Although the latter better considers the wellbeing of the animals on display, they remain at the mercy of their keepers, and all decisions regarding their health, diets, and living spaces are made on their behalf.

Control is a dominant feature of zoos (Willis, 1999), and animals must be caged for their own protection as well as for the safety of visitors. Furthermore, the animals are there to be observed. The bodies of zoo animals are on almost constant display, necessitating the need for panoptic-like constructions. However, unlike in Foucault’s panopticon – a form of control exerted via the knowledge that one is being observed, the animals need not know that they are being gazed upon and efforts may be made to conceal the human gaze from them (Palmer, 2003). Yet power is manifested in other ways. The fact that the human is free to leave while the zoo animal is objectified renders the gaze as one-way, subject-to-object (Kaplan, 1997; Palmer, 2003). Milstein (2009) wrote, “the visitor sees the animals, gains pleasure, knowledge, power, and entertainment from them” while remaining “protected from feelings and realities of vulnerability via the animals’ captive state, and devoid of reciproc[ity]” (p. 32).

Willis (1999) likened modern zoos to gardens by suggesting that zoos “display and use animals much as a horticulturalist deploys plant material” (p. 696). Indeed, both the garden and the zoo are about taming nature and exhibiting specimens. Drawing a comparison to how “gardening journals are full of accounts of how to kill or keep animals out of the garden,” Willis (1999) believed similar problems exist for zoos whose perimeter fences are invariably breached by native fauna (p. 696). Zoo architects also consider that “overt human domination of the visual field can produce a failed exhibit” (Willis, 1999, p. 677). For example, the San Francisco Zoo wanted visitors at their primate center to enjoy treetop views but were mindful to design the viewing platform such that the monkeys would not perceive the humans as dominating them from above (Canty, 1985). However, because there is very little that zoo animals can do to resist the degree of control exerted over their bodies, Palmer (2003) asserted that “the relationships between humans and animals in zoos come very close to those Foucault describes as domination” (p. 54).

Berlin Zoo advertises its various “feeding times” as “shows,” and feeding time in the Great Ape House during my visit drew a crowd several rows deep (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Dinnertime at Berlin Zoo’s Great Ape House



Comments on how human-like the apes were could be easily overheard, along with jokes about the “dinner-table conversations” viewers imagined being exchanged between the orangutans. Tait (2012) claimed “circus took full advantage of how animals are anthropomorphized” and how by learning and repeating prescribed movements, “animal bodies became enveloped in human emotions” (p. 1). By eating in front of an audience at scheduled times, the animals at Berlin Zoo are, essentially, performing. I could not resist comparing the fascination with these animals doing seemingly

ordinary activities with the phenomena of reality TV, or the obsession with the daily lives of celebrities. Although most people are aware that reality TV is staged and dramatized to varying levels, the distorted reality is not always apparent to young or impressionable viewers (Peek & Beresin, 2016). However, in the context of the zoo, the first priority is for young visitors to take an interest in the zoo animals. Indeed, for young viewers, a wildlife documentary may not grab their attention in the same way as watching animals close up at the zoo.

Many zoo animals tend not to look directly at the humans gawking at them (see Figure 5), but gorillas often do. Willis (1999) wrote that “when it comes to gorilla watching, humans are enthralled” (p. 678). The naturalist George Schaller (2007) wrote, “no one who looks into a gorilla’s eyes – intelligent, gentle, vulnerable – can remain unchanged, for the gap between ape and human vanishes: we know that the gorilla still lives within us. Do gorillas also recognize this ancient connection?” (p. 84).

Figure 5

Gazing at the Gorilla



Of all the animals, I could most readily imagine changing places with the Great Apes and relate to how it might feel to be watched. I am most uncomfortable with our closest living relatives being on display this way. This is something others have recognized too:

Of all the animals in the zoo, the gorilla, especially the dominant male, is most likely to return the look, to meet one’s eyes and stare rivetingly and disdainfully back into them. It is an uncanny and unnerving experience because the same lines of sight which in every other instance ensure human domination are here used by the animal to contest domination. (Willis, 1999, p. 678)

CONCLUSION

While critics claim zoos could be doing more in respect to conservation, zoos have been instrumental to breeding programs that have facilitated the recovery of thirteen endangered species (Conde et al., 2011; Fa et al., 2014; Hoffmann et al., 2010). Others argue that the role of zoos need not be focused on conservation per se, but more on inspiring people to support efforts to preserve wild habitats and native populations (Patrick et al., 2007; Roe et al., 2014). I prefer seeing animals in safari parks or reserves, but these are less accessible for many people. Willis (1999) claimed that a “half hour tuned to Animal Planet can provide more drama than a lifetime spent at the zoo” (p. 685). While this might be true in some instances, I question whether documentaries can captivate children or disinterested adults in the same way a zoo experience can. Berlin Zoo works closely with school groups to educate and promote interest among young people, and studies have demonstrated that zoos provide a long-term positive effect on attitudes toward other animals (Falk et al., 2007). I relate to the objection that wild animals do not belong in captivity but recognize that wild populations can only be protected if people care about them.

However, the plight of less charismatic animals may be overlooked because they are not major attractions. Furthermore, it is the large ABC-type mammals who are the ones who have been – and continue to be – the most negatively impacted by captivity (Kawata, 2013; Tidière et al., 2016). For the current inhabitants, life outside of a zoo is unlikely to be in their best interests. Rather than an overarching statement such as, “giraffes do not belong in zoos,” perhaps we should think more in terms of individuals. Zoos are home to liminal animals, and given proper respect, husbandry, and enrichment, they could live acceptable lives as ambassador animals.

Yet the question remains as to whether it is ethically acceptable to condemn unborn individuals to a life of captivity, and if so, under what circumstances. Hanson (2002) recognized the modern zoo as a cultural in-between place of tension – between recreation and education, and between science and showmanship. Zoos reflect the societies in which we live, including tastes in entertainment, academic and educational trends, environmental conscientiousness, moral values, and empathy for other animals (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier, 2004; Kawata, 2013; Roe et al., 2014). Milstein (2009) asserted that the zoo is a “symbolic-material cultural site” that “also serves to shape discourse” about how we relate to other animals (p. 32). Perhaps now is the time for zoos to encourage visitors and critics to shift from thinking in generalizations about zoos as institutions, to considering captivity from the perspective of individual animals and species.

Disclosure

All photos captured and provided by author.

REFERENCES

- Aksan, N., Kisac, B., Aydin, M., & Demirbukan, S. (2009). Symbolic interaction theory. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1(1), 902–904.
- Alger, J.M., & Alger, S.F. (1997). Beyond Mead: Symbolic Interaction between Humans and Felines. *Society & Animals*, 5(1), 65–81.
- Baratay, E., & Hardouin-Fugier, E. (2004) *Zoo: A history of zoological gardens in the West*. Reaktion Books.
- Beck, B. (1995). Reintroduction, zoos, conservation, and animal welfare. In B.G. Norton, M. Hutchins, E.F. Stevens, & T.L. Maple (Eds.), *Ethics on the ark: Zoos, animal welfare, and wildlife conservation*. Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Bell, C. E. (2001). *Encyclopedia of the world's zoos*. Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers.
- Benbow, S.M.P. (2004). Zoos: Public places to view private lives. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 33, 13–23.
- Bettany, S., & Russell, W.B. (2011). Disney discourses of self and other: Animality, primitivity, modernity, and postmodernity. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 14(2), 163–176.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Prentice Hall.
- Borkfelt, S. (2011). Non-Human otherness: Animals as others and devices for othering. In M. Beville, S. Y. Sencindiver, & M. Lauritzen (Eds.), *Othering: A multilateral perspective*. Peter Lang.
- Bruce, G. (2017). *Through the lion gate: A history of the Berlin Zoo*. Oxford University Press.
- Buchanan, B. (2015). The metamorphoses of Vinciane Despret. *Angelaki - Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 20(2), 17–32.
- Buchanan, B., Bussolini, J., Chrulaw, M. (2014). General introduction: Philosophical ethology. *Angelaki - Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 19(3), 1–3.
- Canty, D. (1985). Soaring Simian Conservatory. *Architecture*, 42–49.
- Carr, N., & Cohen, S. (2011). The public face of zoos: Images of entertainment, education, and conservation. *Anthrozoös*, 24(2), 175–189.
- Conde, D.A., Flesness, N., Colchero, F., Jones, O.R., & Scheuerlein, A. (2011). Zoos and captive breeding — Response. *Science*, 332(6034), 1149–1151.
- Dwyer, J. (2007). A non-companion species manifesto: Humans, wild animals, and “The Pain of Anthropomorphism”. *South Atlantic Review*, 72(3), 73–89.

- Emel, J. (1995). Are you man enough, big and bad enough? Ecofeminism and wolf eradication in the USA. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 13(6), 707–734.
- Fa, J.E., Gusset, M., Flesness, N., & Conde, D.A. (2014). Zoos have yet to unveil their full conservation potential. *Animal Conservation*, 17(2), 97–100.
- Falk, J.H., Reinhard, E.M., Vernon, C.L., Bronnenkant, K., Deans, N.L., & Heimlich, J.E. (2007). *Why zoos & aquariums matter: Assessing the impact of a visit to a zoo or aquarium*. Association of Zoos & Aquariums.
- Ginsberg, J.R. (1993). Can we build an ark. *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, 8(1), 4–6.
- Gusset, M., & Dick, G. (2011). The global reach of zoos and aquariums in visitor numbers and conservation expenditures. *Zoo Biology*, 30, 566–569.
- Hancocks, D. (2001). *A different nature: The paradoxical world of zoos and their uncertain future*. University of California Press.
- Hanson, E. (2002). *Animal attractions: Nature on display in American zoos*. Princeton University Press.
- Haraway, D. (2008). *When species meet (Posthumanities)*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Hoffmann, M., Hilton-Taylor, C., Angulo, A., Böhm, M., Brooks, T.M., Butchart, S.H.M., Carpenter, K.E., Chanson, J., Collen, B., Cox, N.A., Darwall, W.R.T., Dulvy, N.K., Harrison, L.R., Katariya, V., Pollock, C.M., Quader, S., Richman, N.I., Rodrigues, A.S.L., Tognelli, M.F., ... & Stuart, S.N. (2010). The impact of conservation on the status of the world's vertebrates. *Science*, 330(6010), 1503–1509.
- Hutchins, M. (2006). Variation in nature: Its implications for zoo elephant management. *Zoo Biology*, 25(3), 161–171.
- Irvine, L. (2004). A model of animal selfhood: Expanding interactionist possibilities. *Symbolic Interaction*, 27(1), 3–21.
- Irvine, L. (2012). Sociology and anthrozoology: Symbolic interactionist contributions. *Anthrozoös*, 25(S1), 123–137.
- Jamieson, D. (1995). Zoos revisited. In B.G. Norton, M. Hutchins, E.F. Stevens, & T.L. Maple (Eds.), *Ethics on the ark: Zoos, animal welfare, and wildlife conservation*. Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Kaplan, E.A. (1997). *Looking for the other: Feminism, film, and the imperial gaze*. Routledge.
- Kawata, K. (2011). Romancing the celluloid nature: A review of American zoo exhibits, part I. *Zoologische Garten*, 80(5), 239–253.
- Kawata, K. (2013). Rambling thoughts on zoo animal collection and conservation: A historical perspective. *Zoologische Garten*, 82(1–2), 26–39.
- Kitchener, A., & Macdonald, A.A. (2005). The longevity legacy: The problem of old animals in zoos. In *Proceedings of the EAZA Conference 2004 Kolmarden* (pp. 132–137).
- Laland, K.N., & Hoppitt, W. (2003). Do animals have culture? *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews*, 12(3), 150–159.
- Marchesini, R. (2017). What is philosophical ethology? *Humanimalia: A Journal of Human/Animal Interface Studies*, 9(1), 46–68.
- Marino, L., Lilienfeld, S.O., Malamud, R., Nobis, N., & Broglio, R. (2010). Do zoos and aquariums promote attitude change in visitors? A critical evaluation of the American zoo and aquarium study. *Society & Animals*, 18(2), 126–138.
- Mason, G. J., & Veasey, J. S. (2010). How should the psychological well-being of zoo elephants be objectively investigated? *Zoo Biology*, 29(2), 237–255.
- Miller, B., Conway, W., Reading, R.P., Wemmer, C., Wildt, D., Kleiman, D., Monfort, S., Rabinowitz, A., Armstrong, B., & Hutchins, M. (2004). Evaluating the conservation mission of zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, and natural history museums. *Conservation Biology*, 18(1), 86–93.
- Milstein, T. (2009). Somethin' tells me it's all happening at the zoo: Discourse, power, and conservationism. *Environmental Communication*, 3(1), 25–48.
- Milton, K. (2005). Anthropomorphism or egomorphism? The perception of non-human persons by human ones. In J. Knight (Ed.), *Animals in person: Cultural perspectives on human-animal intimacies*. Berg Publishers.
- Palmer, C. (2003). Colonization, urbanization, and animals. *Philosophy and Geography*, 6(1), 47–58.
- Patrick, P.G., Matthews, C.E., Ayers, D.F., & Tunnicliffe, S.D. (2007). Conservation and education: Prominent themes in zoo mission statements. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 38(3), 53–60.
- Peek, H.S., & Beresin, E. (2016). Reality check: How reality television can affect youth and how a media literacy curriculum can help. *Academic Psychiatry*, 40, 177–181.
- Powell, A.E. (1997). Gardens of Eden. *Landscape Architecture*, 87(4), 78–99.
- Reade, L.S., & Waran, N. K. (1996). The modern zoo: How do people perceive zoo animals? *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 47(1), 109–118.
- Roe, K., McConney, A., & Mansfield, C. F. (2014). The role of zoos in modern society — A comparison of zoos' reported priorities and what visitors believe they should be. *Anthrozoös*, 27(4), 529–541.
- Root-Bernstein, M., Douglas, L., Smith, A., & Veríssimo, D. (2013). Anthropomorphized species as tools for conservation: Utility

- beyond prosocial, intelligent and suffering species. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 22(8), 1577–1589.
- Schaller, G.B. (2007). *A naturalist and other beasts: Tales from a life in the field*. Sierra Club Books.
- Schulte-Hostedde, A.I., & Mastromonaco, G.F. (2015). Integrating evolution in the management of captive zoo populations. *Evolutionary Applications*, 8(5), 413–422.
- Tait, P. (2012). *Wild and dangerous performances*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tidière, M., Gaillard, J.-M., Berger, V., Müller, D.W.H., Bingaman Lackey, L., Gimenez, O., Clauss, M., & Lemaître, J.-F. (2016). Comparative analyses of longevity and senescence reveal variable survival benefits of living in zoos across mammals. *Scientific Reports*, 6, 36361.
- Tomas, S., Crompton, J., & Scott, D. (2003). Assessing service quality and benefits sought among zoological park visitors. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 21(2), 105–124.
- Tribe, A., & Booth, R. (2003). Assessing the role of zoos in wildlife conservation. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, 8(1), 65–74.
- Willis, S. (1999). Looking at the zoo. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 98(4), 809–842.

AUTHOR

Kristine Hill, Exeter Anthrozoology as Symbiotic Ethics (EASE) Working Group, University of Exeter, kh458@exeter.ac.uk

Opening the Doors of Perception and Looking Beyond the Binary

Paul “Pablo” Martin

Sustainability and Communication Studies, San Diego Miramar College

Abstract: The great intellectual strides attributed to the ontological shift born of the Cartesian Divide have come at a cost. Constricting reality into binary and hierarchical structures often renders holistic points of view either superfluous or invisible and limit our analyses to only those observations that pass through our terministic screens (Burke, 1966). Instead, adopting contemporary physics’ understanding that the universe is an integrated whole comprised of dynamic relationships invites paradigmatically different observations to the world of animal scholarship. This paper explores two theoretical framings that demonstrate this: Milstein’s (2011) work on identification and consubstantiality in whale tourism as it relates to animal autopoiesis, and Schutten and Burford’s (2017) application of coherence that reveals orca behavior as a form of internatural communication. By applying such open and egalitarian perspectives in more of our efforts to understand non-human animals, human animals can continue to expand and refine their own perceptive capabilities.

Keywords: Animal Communication, Autopoiesis, Internatural Communication, Hierarchy

PROLOGUE

It was in early spring when a few of us rented a beach house in northern Baja, California. A friend and I suited up to go for a surf as soon as we arrived. Despite the water being glassy and smooth, the waves looked a bit unruly. But the sun was shining, and the waves were big enough to keep things interesting, so we decided to paddle out. Thirty minutes into our session, as we were heading back out through the breaking waves, I heard an enormous *WHOOSH*. It was not just loud. It *felt* big, and at some instinctive level, I knew it was from a whale’s blowhole. I tried to breathe through the knot in my stomach to calm down and be more present in the situation. After all, how often has anyone been in the line-up with a whale? We both saw him¹ then, a majestic and graceful gray whale, as his lower spine

breached the water before he undulated back under the waves. After the set² passed, we kept our eyes open, keen for another sighting. Twenty minutes later, as another set of waves was building on the horizon, he was back, and he was close! He had circled back and could not have been more than 25 yards away from us. Suddenly I was struck by a pang of worry – the set I had seen was looming now and he was in the impact zone, where the waves break most intensely. I wanted to call out some kind of warning. But what?

There was no need, of course – this was his home. He glided gracefully toward the peak of the large swell and rolled his body through the wave just as it was cresting. I will never forget that moment, or the image of his body, backlit by the setting sun – the silhouette of a playful giant bathed in golden-green light.

Afterward, my friend and I sat on our boards awash with wonder, joy, and disbelief at having shared this moment with one of Earth’s largest animals. Later, my friend stumbled across *Lagoon Time* (Swartz, 2014), written by one of the first people to study the gray whales of San Ignacio Lagoon. It included eye-witness accounts of adolescent male whales playing and surfing in the waves at the mouth of the lagoon. Looking back with this new lens, I was finally able to process what I had seen. That gray whale we saw that afternoon knew exactly what he was doing. Not only did he pass through that big wave set unscathed – it was what he was there for. I have shared the line-up with pelicans for decades, and I have often watched, rapt, as they effortlessly and endlessly glided aloft on the air currents caused by the rolling swells. Having seen it so many times, I have a hard time denying outright that what is likely an energy-saving practice is also something from which pelicans derive great pleasure.

Belatedly, I can now appreciate the possibility that this whale was just another surfer in the line-up, albeit one who happened to be migrating thousands of miles north along the Pacific coastline. This behavior is not so different from my own when I used to grab a few waves during my lunch break.

While I argue that gray whales, pelicans, and other animals have probably been surfing for millennia if not millions of years, it is

¹ I identify this whale as a male based on eye-witness accounts of similar whale behavior that I discuss below.

² Larger waves tend to arrive at the shore in “sets,” or groups of waves.

difficult to perceive this possibility unless we are willing to see these animals as more than objects. This can happen when we allow animals to exist as beings with agency and choice. It is precisely this shift in my own intellectual framework that has allowed me to perceive the possibility of a whale who understands and appreciates wave riding as much as I do. I wonder, what else could we learn if we were to cleanse our perceptual filters of the hierarchical, binary thinking that has dominated mainstream society for generations?

BEYOND THE BINARY

At 22 feet and 12,000 pounds, [Tilikum] was a would-be ocean king reduced to a court jester with a floppy dorsal fin, splashing delirious SeaWorld audiences at the end of circus-style shows. (Zimmerman, 2016)

A wondrous thing happens when an animal moves from population status to individual standing: it can no longer be treated with impunity. (Morton, 2002)

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: Infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

– William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

The dominant paradigm that has shaped humanity's understanding of the external world is based on the notion that all things are separate, distinct, and knowable. In the words of Descartes, "I think, therefore I am." Embedded in this celebrated axiom is the binary distinction between mind and body, "I" and "it." While great strides in philosophy, life sciences, and other fields can be attributed to this Cartesian Divide, there have also been great losses. Concomitant with the view that all things are separate is the implication that they are also unequal. Look around at the contemporary world. Where you see the separation of the world into binaries, you will see the corresponding hierarchy of each pairing – subjects and objects, self and other, civilization and wilderness, human and animal.

The pairs tend to exist in subjugation to or domination of their supposed opposite. Koons (2011) argued that "the subject-object relationships that structure gender, race, and class injustice" that permeate law and language can be traced back to this basic binary construct (p. 50). Indeed, I would argue that the Black Lives Matter movement that took hold around the world after the murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 revealed the ubiquity, as well as the persistent and grave danger this paradigm poses not only for human relations, but for humanity's relationship with the world and everything in it. Following Koons' (2011) argument further, we can see that today's dominant worldview is a neoliberal order deeply

embedded in a binary ontology: Markets are either free, or they are regulated.

For Singer (1974), when one makes another subject an "other," domination follows, and for Bookchin (2015), "the very idea of dominating nature stems from the domination of human by human (p. 31). Koons (2011) went further, adding that such an outlook "supports the exploitation and degradation of Nature, viewed as a 'resource' to be used by humans without compunction and as a wilderness to be tamed, as in Humanity versus Nature" (p. 50). Contemporary, cutting-edge animal rights theorist Tema Milstein (2011) lamented the great number of scholars of nature and culture who argue that "discursive abstractions [are devices for] distancing and objectifying nature, further reifying human nature binaries and exacerbating humanity's devastating ecological destruction" (p. 4). While Haraway (1991) wrote, "animal societies have been extensively employed in rationalization and naturalization of the oppressive orders of domination in the human body politic.... They...continue to accept the ideology of the split between nature and culture" (p. 11). This paradigm has deep and wide-ranging impacts on human and nonhuman animals alike.

Let us begin by looking at its impact on human beings and the manner in which human societies have employed binaries and hierarchies among each other. Olivier and Cordeiro-Rodrigues (2017) observed that "[t]he dynamics of racism that occur to produce these hierarchies typically consist of three forces: *Differentiation*, inferiorisation by comparison, and invisibility (p. 2, emphasis added). Taussig (1986) provided an additional conceptual layer, arguing that the idea of "the other" was largely, if subconsciously, created to justify their subjugation. What Taussig (1986) termed "the colonial mirror of production" worked thus: In the lands they came to exploit, colonizers created narratives that demonized the indigenous people they encountered. They were described as savage, animalistic, and monstrous – descriptions that were often rendered before the indigenes were slaughtered most brutally. Besides serving as convenient justification for the exploitation of "newfound" land and resources, these descriptions often had more to do with the colonizers' fears (or latent desires) than actual, observed reality of the native peoples.

Once the mythopoesis was complete, the colonists were free to enact these very same brutalities from their lofty and noble station. Thus, the savage could be civilized and elevated to Western standards while they and their lands were justifiably dominated and exploited. In other words, the colonizers were required to wage brutal wars of terror on the indigenous peoples before the natives could do the same, inevitable thing to them. It is clear that the colonizer did not, or was unwilling to see native peoples as equals, much less entirely human subjects. Conveniently then, having created a void where

human agency should lie, they were able to fill it with their own monstrous reflections. Taussig's (1986) colonial mirror could therefore be seen as binary thinking deployed as a tool that both justifies domination and produces the nature of the dominator's behavior in their subjugation of the other. Wolfe (2009) adapted this theoretical lens to highlight the role played by the human-animal binary: Humans animalize other humans in order to oppress them. Derrida (2008) went further and brought us back to Taussig's (1986) mirror of production. He proposed that the violence humans have perpetrated against animals does not violate our humanness, it actually helps constitute it. Thus, I wonder: Do the qualities we ascribe to "wild animals" have more to do with the human psyche than observed animal behavior? Has the lens of dominant human perception been so clouded by binarism and the desire to exploit the other that we could expand Taussig's (1986) term to "the oppressor's mirror of production"? What will it take, if not to cleanse, then at least to pry open, these doors of perception?

I argue that human animals within the dominant, mainstream culture have a strong tendency to see nonhuman animals through a false binary. This binary divides our worlds so completely that, to paraphrase Blake (1790), we are left looking at the animal world through only the narrowest chinks of our cavern. Within this worldview, deep thinking and feeling belong to the human side of the divide, the rational side and are thus impossibly unavailable to the brutes and beasts on the other, irrational side. For Weil (2006), citing Rilke (1963) and Grandin and Johnson (2005), epistemological lenses help us to see some things but prevent us from seeing others – in this case, from "seeing what animals see" (p. 88). Burke's (1966) concept of the "terministic screen" was similar – thinking beings such as ourselves can only perceive and comprehend that which is fine enough to pass through our epistemological lens or screen. The terminology we use to describe reality "must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality" (p. 45, emphasis added).

Moreover, these are not the only flaws in the ontological foundation that is the Cartesian duality. Burford and Schutten (2017) argued that, on the whole, it "is symbolically arrogant and materially impossible" (p. 10). The very scientific revolution that Descartes helped to create has led to myriad discoveries that, in fact, discredit the simplified model of reality he promulgated. The "new physics" revealed that the "universe is not reflected in hierarchy or separation" (Koons, 2011, p. 51), but is a "single, integral whole composed of a dynamic network of relationships" (Cullinan, 2011, p. 47). In an effort to better understand the animal's world, Wolfe (2009) argued that any discipline working to that end should seek to dismantle, not reinforce, hierarchies and return society to a place where animals and humans exist on a continuum. Doing so

"fundamentally challenges the schema of the knowing subject and its anthropocentric underpinnings sustained and reproduced in the current disciplinary protocols of cultural studies" (Wolfe, 2009, pp. 568-569). This is my goal here – to situate the observer of animals as one among equals. Or, to use Derrida's (2008) term for "neither a species nor a gender nor an individual, [but]...an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals" (p. 41), as *animot* among *animot*.

Situated thus, we can see all animals, human and non, as part of a network of interconnected beings functioning within the greater Earth system. Lippit's (2000) application of Deleuze and Guattari's (1989) rhizome attempted to further such efforts. According to Lippit (2000), the rhizome serves to unblock "communication between human and animal worlds" (p. 128) for it is not constrained by boundaries or difference – the rhizome exists within and across different modes of being. As humans move into this rhizomatic space, we become animal (Deleuze & Guattari, 1989). Such egalitarian perspectives allow for new and paradigmatically different relationships and understandings. The observer is liberated to perceive the world of *animot* reflectively and empathetically in an attempt to understand their experience and – dare I say – intent.

With a shift of perspective, scholars need no longer understand the relationship between human and nonhuman animals as a divide that must be bridged. Deleuze and Guattari's (1989) rhizome enabled us to see the permeating interconnections between human and nonhuman animals, while Derrida's (2008) *animot* invited us to enter and become the abyss. Rhizomatic space offers us a way to dive into the abyss between human and nonhuman animals so that we may begin to perceive and appreciate our many commonalities.

Documentary filmmaker and naturalist Craig Foster did just this, albeit his "abyss" was a shallow kelp forest in False Bay, South Africa. His widely acclaimed and award-winning film, *My Octopus Teacher* (2020) documented the year he spent observing a female octopus he encountered there. Foster was so enthralled by their initial interactions that he dedicated himself to spending every day in the water with her. By immersing himself in the octopus's world, his ontological foundations shifted, and he discovered a "whole new way of looking at this underwater forest" (Briger, 2020, para. 4). Foster came to see himself as being a part of that world, as opposed to apart from it. He subsequently developed an entirely new understanding of the network of life in the kelp forest – that all living beings within False Bay were inextricably and deeply linked to one another.

There is great heuristic power in seeing the "other" as another subject who, when looking at us from their "absolute alterity" (Derrida, 2008, p. 11), sees an "other" in us, too. To quote Weil (2006), "insofar as animals bring us to think, or to unthink, they can have an immensely powerful effect" (p. 95). Combined with ethical pluralism as "a deep sense of responsibility for an affinity with those

who may be different from us” (Wolfe, forthcoming in 2009, as cited in Weil, 2006, p. 96), these open and egalitarian perspectives can expand and refine the perceptive capabilities of scholars (i.e., human animals) as we endeavor to understand nonhuman animals. In the next section, I explore two efforts to do just that through autopoiesis and internatural communication.

Autopoietic Subjects

If we see the universe as being comprised of autopoietic subjects, that is, beings with the inherent ability to self-organize and be self-aware (Cullinan, 2011), we can begin to see nonhuman animals in a very different light. Given that most dominant cultures in the world are steeped in hierarchical valuation systems, both within the human and greater animal communities, we need tools that help us see beyond these structures. Here, I explore two theoretical framings that are promising in this regard. The first is Milstein’s (2011) work on identification and consubstantiality in whale tourism. Milstein (2011) argued that specific positionalities can foster the perception that whales, in this case, are very like their human observers in many ways. The second framing is inspired by Plec’s (2013) work on coherence, a way of interacting with others that respects their individuality and the integrity of one’s relationship with them, and internatural communication, a term Plec (2013) coined to embrace “the possibilities of human and animal communication with other life forms” (p. 6). Here, I employ Schutten and Burford’s (2017; Burford & Schutten, 2017) application of coherence to put the behavior of an orca into clear relief as a form of internatural communication.

Milstein (2011) wrote:

I use the term “humanimal,” humanature” and “ecoculture” throughout my writing as a way to reflexively engage human and animal, human and nature, ecology and culture, in integral conversation in research as they are in life. *These discursive moves are turns away from binary constructs and notions of humans as separate from animals, nature and ‘the environment’ and turns toward a lexical reciprocal intertwining reflective of living symbolic-material relations....* The terms are in league with Haraway’s use of “naturecultures” to encompass nature and culture as interrelated historical and contemporary entities (*When Species Meet*). (p. 179, Note 1, emphasis added)

Additionally, Milstein (2011) argued that “Burke’s (1950, 1984) notion of consubstantiality, or identification through shared substance, is one sort of identification device advocates used to seed greater humanature connections” (p. 5), connections that transcend binary constructs. Citing Carbaugh (1999), Milstein (2011) added that “[t]he act of identification also opens channels to *listening to nature*” (p. 18, emphasis added).

Individuality matters. Milstein’s (2011) study of wild whale tourism in the Canadian-American Pacific coast region demonstrated that assigning whales unique alphanumeric identifiers helped initiate “a cultural paradigm shift” (p. 17) in how humans perceived orca individuality, relationships with other orcas, and orca lives in general. Her work “examine[d] the restorative potential of a distinctive, highly individualizing act of identification” (Milstein, 2011, p. 5), an act that can position “whales as active agents and sometimes interactive subjects” (Milstein, 2011, p. 17). The transformative potential of identification is great. For Sowards (2006), “[u]sing identification to connect to the nonhuman world is effective and important in destabilizing the artificial boundaries between culture and nature” (p. 59).

Based on data collected as a participant observer during the summers between 2005 and 2008, Milstein (2011) witnessed the power of “pointing and naming” in fomenting new ways of seeing (p. 4). When the whale experts, or “insiders,” engaged in this act when speaking with tourists, the tourists perceived (at least) some elements of nature as important, unique, and special (Milstein, 2011, p. 7). Many insiders believed that it is this shift that paved the way to make the capture of wild orcas illegal in North America. The ability to identify individual whales provided the foundational knowledge to observe their culture – namely, that they lived in matrilineal pods and that each pod communicated using its own unique dialect (Milstein, 2011; Morton, 2002). Thus, the seemingly banal process of identifying individual whales opened up entirely new ontological vistas for the observers. When insiders identified whales by their unique names or numbers, Milstein (2011) found that it helped evoke a sense of consubstantiality in the tourists they spoke with and allowed those tourists to then “position whales as subjects and agents” (p. 11) in their own comments. Such positioning placed tourists within a rhizomatic space (Deleuze & Guattari, 1989) alongside the whales as preexisting boundaries were erased by the shared appreciation of family and individuality in both species. Thus, both consciously and unconsciously, the orca insiders passed an autopoietic perceptual bridge along to the whale-watching tourists.

Milstein (2011) found that some whale experts were more successful than others in helping tourists identify with the whales. On insider “employed identification...not only in relating the scarcity of whales due to capture, but also by negotiating perceptions of whales as existing in their own right” (p. 12). Another “connect[ed] the act of identification with coming to discern orcas as complex beings, directing tourists to apply this knowledge to whales in front of them and mediating visitor perceptions” (p. 9). Both insiders were successful in getting at least some tourists to question the presence of orcas in amusement parks.

The perceptual opportunities afforded by identification also led the insiders to develop intimate relationships with the whales in the local, resident pods. Kent, an insider who was particularly astute at whale identification, recounted a time when he passed on a party with his human friends in favor of staying home and listening to the calls among a pod with whom he felt a deep affinity. The way he and other insiders referred to the orcas in these pods as friends and their friends' children reminds me of the way an aunt or uncle might speak about their own family. Milstein (2011) found that "[i]dentifying whales helped protect them, help[ed] connect people to them, and help[ed] people keep track of them" (p. 12). Despite the creative power that identification and consubstantiation afford, however, Milstein (2011) lamented "the near absence of the ecological" element in the dialogue between whale insiders and tourists, a concern to which I return in the following discussion of the second theoretical frame of focus – coherence.

Coherence and Internatural Communication

Focusing on orcas in captivity, Schutten and Burford's (2017; Burford & Schutten, 2017) work was concerned with the ways Tilikum was represented to and understood by viewers through his portrayal in the film *Blackfish*. The narrative that Burford and Schutten (2017) identified within the film helps us create new metaphors and models for understanding nonhuman animals. Their work built upon Plec's (2013) internatural communication³, communication that "includes the exchange of intentional energy between humans and other animals as well as communication among animals and other forms of life" (p. 6). Moving beyond the binary, Burford and Schutten (2017) "argue[d] that the case study of orcas in captivity as a whole illustrates systems thinking...which in turn shows coherence as a way to 'hear' internatural communication" (p. 2). Coherence encompasses being with others, human and nonhuman animals alike, in ways that honors their integrity and the integrity of our relationships with them (Plec, 2013). Speaking to efforts to disrupt binary and hierarchical thinking in particular, coherence "begins with 'a radical critique of duality' and moves toward an 'emancipatory understanding of language and life'" (McPhail, 1996, as cited in Plec, 2013, p. 6). Coherence thus enables us to see Tilikum and other captive orcas as agents with their own free will.

Standing, or rather, swimming, with orcas in this manner, Schutten and Burford (2017) saw Tilikum as "an imprisoned orca attempting a jailbreak, taunting his captors, and demanding liberation" (pp. 261-262). To refute accusations of anthropocentric elitism, they cited the Wevekin principle: "[I]n advancing an

embodied critical rhetoric, the researcher attends to the corporeal experience of the nonhuman world so as to articulate the symbolic-material tensions obscured by predominant systems of meaning" (Salvador & Clarke, 2011, p. 248). Freed from such systems, namely those that are hierarchical in nature, we can perceive the orcas' actions in captivity as deliberate spectacle, even activism. This interpretation is difficult to deny when we consider that Tilikum engaged in multiple attacks on trainers during shows, and that he displayed the body of his second victim, the only non-trainer that he killed, as if they were a trainer as well: After the marine park closed, Daniel Dukes entered Tilikum's tank; when SeaWorld crews arrived at their workstations the next day, they found Tilikum swimming in circles around his tank with Dukes' body draped across his back, just as a trainer would ride him during shows (Schutten & Burford, 2017). Seeing the murder at SeaWorld in this manner is one way that we can "listen to the other-than-human, but [also] treat them as agents, as active participants in the construction of meaning" (Burford & Schutten, 2017, p. 274). Through his violent actions against trespassers and trainers alike, "Tilikum demanded the world confront his reality, Shamu's reality, which involved separation from family, confinement, boredom, chronic disease," and more (Zimmerman, 2016, para. 4). As an infant kidnapped at the age of two (Zimmerman, 2016) and then held captive until his death 34 years later, Tilikum actively exposed the "political injustice" (Burford & Schutten, 2017, p. 9) he was forced to endure for most of his life. If he were human, Tilikum would likely be seen as an autonomous subject taking vengeance on his tormentors. Yet dominant culture limits the perception of Tilikum as an object without agency – an unwitting, if monstrous, victim.

However, as agents atop the Cartesian hierarchy we have created, human animals have choice in how we perceive Tilikum's actions as they were portrayed in *Blackfish*. Although the film served to educate many on the plight of captive orcas and offered a sympathetic portrayal of the animals, it is still limited to binary oppositions. On one hand, we can choose to retain this bifurcated worldview, seeing captive orcas as SeaWorld would – representing "a symptom of psychosis that can be fixed with...a larger and more visually pleasing pen" (Burford & Schutten, 2017, p. 2). Or we can operate as if orcas, and perhaps all beings, are autopoietic in nature and should not be penned in the first place. In this view, "Tilikum's actions...[created] a breach that bridges the divide of human/orca communication by illustrating alternative symbolics" (Schutten & Rogers, 2011, as cited in Burford & Schutten, 2017, p. 2). These alternative symbolics include listening and responding to "the orca's

³ Plec (2013) wrote, "[s]ome of this work might elsewhere be termed 'zoosemiotics,' 'biorhetoric,' 'communiobiology,' 'ecossemiotics,' 'anthrozoology' or even 'corporeal rhetoric' or 'transhuman communication.' I choose the term internatural

communication not to compete with these other labels but rather as a term that can be inclusive of their meanings as well as embracing the possibilities of human and animal communication with other life forms" (p. 6).

clear communication, rather than try[ing] to explain it away as ‘hysterical’ psychosis or an exceptional, out-of-the-ordinary event” (Burford & Schutten, 2017, p. 7). Burford and Schutten (2017) thus warned human animals against engaging in the same limited, dismissive manner in which SeaWorld and *Blackfish*’s documentarians framed Tilikum’s behavior. Indeed, the trope of the “hysterical female” has often been used to dismiss legitimate concerns raised by an other group long subjugated to “the male” in another hierarchical binary. It is time we expand our intellectual spectrum even further and endeavor to decode the utterances of these others. In what amounted to an inversion of Taussig’s (1986) colonial mirror of production, Burford and Schutten (2017) recounted a scene in *Blackfish*:

Tilikum...shifts his gaze toward the audience. This shift becomes a self-reflexive mirror where humans have their actions as captors reflected back to them via the resistance of Tilikum and others like him. His actions reflect agency and intent switching the subject position and potentially moving audiences toward coherence. (p. 8)

By positioning orcas as beings with agency, scholars are less inclined to fall into limited and limiting “power-over discourses” with them (Burford & Schutten, 2017, p. 8). Instead, “power-with paradigms” (Burford & Schutten, 2017, p. 8), which put our two species on equal footing, can help us to explore intellectual and perceptual opportunities heretofore unavailable to us.

Conclusions

Through these studies of orca and human interaction, we see how identification and coherence promotes the recognition of other beings’ autoopoiesis. While this recognition can lead human animals to develop empathy and deep concern for other animals’ experiences, we must also recognize “the impossibility of complete understanding” (Burford & Schutten, 2017, p. 16). Like Burford and Schutten (2017), I too argue that perhaps understanding should not be our immediate goal. Instead, our focus could be “to promote and nurture *different* modes of symbolic activity that embrace both ‘nature’ (the other-than-human) and the natural dimensions of human cultural and communicative existence” (Rogers, 1998, as cited in Burford & Schutten, 2017, p. 260). Lippit (2000) argued that we can achieve this embrace through Deleuze and Guattari’s (1989) rhizome, something we see in Milstein’s (2011) work with whale insiders. As we engage with animals as fellow subjects in these ways, they are humanized. Or, to be more accurate, the human animal can accept that nonhuman animals may also have those “human” qualities precluded by the Cartesian lens. This is the heart of what we might call an Animal Humanities.

As Olivier and Cordeiro-Rodrigues (2017) argued in their discussion of pain in nonhuman animals, simply because humans

cannot directly observe or decipher the way nonhumans experience pain does not preclude its existence. Like that pain, as well as the pleasure I observed in the aforementioned wind-riding pelicans, we can also observe that nonhuman animals grieve. In August of 2018, many commiserated with the orca mother Tahlequah who pushed her dead calf around the North Pacific “for at least 17 days and 1,000 miles...in an unprecedented show of mourning” (Cuthbert & Main, 2018, para. 1). Yet another compelling expression of the emotional lives of animals is demonstrated by the relationship between Peter, a dolphin, and Margaret Howe-Lovatt, a volunteer naturalist for Dr. John Lilly. As part of one of Lilly’s experiments, Margaret and Peter cohabitated for six months and developed a strong emotional attachment to one another (Riley, 2014). When Lilly’s lab ran out of funding, the two were abruptly separated and Peter was moved to a much smaller, and solitary, indoor aquarium. Observers reported he was listless and appeared to be suffering from depression. Within three weeks, in the words of Lilly, Peter “committed suicide” (Riley, 2014, para. 39). Clearly, at least some animals have deep and powerful emotional lives, and seeing Tilikum’s life from this point of view can offer us more sophisticated and nuanced interpretations of his behavior.

To acknowledge these aspects in the lives of nonhuman animals raises difficult questions, however. It forces human animals to confront a well-entrenched and profitable aspect of our dominant paradigm – the subjugation of nonhuman animal bodies for everything from entertainment to food. As Milstein (2011) wrote, “[i]t is one thing as a tourist...to learn whales are unique familial individuals, but quite another to learn...that practices of one’s species are to blame [for their suffering], and that one must and can work to change these practices at individual and systemic scales” (p. 20). As such, she suggested one way to help align human knowledge with human actions is for those who share the stories of nonhuman animals to weave them into their proper ecological context. This practice could also be applied in “endangered species rulings [as they] might encounter more public understanding and compliance” (Milstein, 2011, p. 19) once affected human populations understand the benefits their sacrifices could have for the target species. While these steps could foster new understandings, Gould’s (2007) observation could take us even further. Gould (2007) reminded us that humans are most likely to fight for other species and their environments if they have powerful emotional connections with them. Emotional compassion and ecological contextualization might provide the synergistic force that could shift the dominant, oppressive paradigm that subsumes all other animals under its human iteration.

By applying more open and egalitarian perspectives in our efforts understand nonhuman animals, human animals can continue

to expand and refine our own perceptive capabilities. On the other hand, value systems based in binaries and hierarchies help prop up systems of oppression and allow phenomena like the colonial mirror of production (Taussig, 1986) to thrive in nearly every context. Whether it is in the written descriptions of the jungles and their hearts of darkness, a nature documentary, or a horror film, we have long seen its application in our efforts to represent nonhuman animals. Constructing nonhuman animals as cruel, unpredictable, and ruthless has enabled human animals to treat them thus in return.⁴ But by looking at nonhuman animals as individual subjects, we can begin to step out of the mist of hierarchical, dominant ideology. With newfound clarity, empathy becomes possible and enables us to construct new narratives that afford animals a richer and broader range of qualities. Coming from a place of self-reflection that seeks an empathetic understanding, these qualities can then be defined less by the observer's preconceived notions of the other, and more by what arises out of our interactions with one another. Instead of seeing a whale in danger of getting beached by the surf, I can see a whale choosing to play among the waves. When we break free of the subject-object binary and no longer separate ourselves from those that do not communicate as we do, we can see orcas, and all animals, anew.

Milstein (2011) demonstrated that identifying whales as individuals provided the critical ontological shift that led to our ability to perceive their culture and language. Seeing whales as subjects also enables us to wonder what they might be saying to one another, and what they might say to us. These explorations are not available to us if we see animals as mere objects, as others. But seeing them as fellow agents who are actively engaged in and part of the Earth system along with us, new questions like this can arise.

Let us consider whale communication. The early ancestors of whales and dolphins were land animals who returned to the oceans. Their evolution in that three-dimensional space likely changed the way they perceive their surroundings as well as how they communicate (Morton, 2002). Using a device developed to turn sound waves into images,⁵ Kassewitz et al. (2016) proved that dolphins are able to send each other visual imagery through sound, or sonograms. Unconstrained by a hierarchical value system, Kassewitz et al. (2016) were open to perceiving that dolphins are capable of sending and receiving three-dimensional sonographic facsimiles of their world. It is worth noting that this ability is still beyond human technology. Indeed, “[a]nimals – and their capacity for instinctive,

almost telepathic communication – [might] put into question the primacy of human language and consciousness as optimal modes of communication” (Lippit, 2000, p. 2).

Weil (2006) noted:

We cannot know for sure which is right; all we can do is attempt to listen and respond through an act of empathy that may require becoming someone or something we have never been and imagining a response that is other than what we have known. (p. 96)

With our perceptions cleansed of hierarchical value systems and empowered to see nonhuman animals as agents in their own rights, one has to wonder: What other discoveries await us?⁶ By being open to different ways of knowing and communicating, we might discover media more sophisticated than human language to communicate with dolphins and whales, not to mention among ourselves. We know that dolphins can share three-dimensional sonograms with one another, and we know that their brain structures are very similar to our own (Morton, 2002). Can humans learn to process and produce such messages? After all, humans who lose their sight at an early age can develop heightened echolocation abilities (Kassewitz et al., 2016). Given this, and the general plasticity of infant human brains, perhaps there are ways to bridge the communication abyss with dolphins.

This is the potential result of just one discovery, with one animal species. If we apply this more open-minded, egalitarian perspective in our approach to the nonhuman animals with whom we share this world, not only might we find ways to keep Earth habitable for all of its animals; just imagine the undreamt possibilities that wait to be discovered with our new eyes. As research continues in this vein, we might even develop the ability to communicate with other animals and transcend our current misnomer, *Homo sapiens*, and rejoin the Earth community as *Homo conciliator*. Maybe we will even find our way back into the great web of life.

EPILOGUE

I grew up in the 1970s and '80s in Village Park, a thoughtfully planned and open (i.e., not gated) community in Southern California. An early incursion into native chaparral that is now endangered, it was a community surrounded by miles of native habitat that was rife with coyotes and other wildlife. To the kids in the neighborhood, it was the wilderness – and home to our fantasies and

⁴ *Jaws* is one of the most notable examples of the animal-based horror and its resulting mirror of production. After the release of *Jaws*, people slaughtered sharks in numbers that absolutely dwarfed the shark's death toll in the film (Ellard, 2020).

⁵ The CymaScope is “an analog instrument in which a water-filled, fused-quartz cell is acoustically excited in the vertical axis by a voice coil motor directly coupled to the cell. The resulting wave patterns were recorded with a digital video camera” (Kassewitz

et al., 2016, p. 1). One arresting image showed a man standing at the bottom of the aquarium; the resolution approximated that of an early television signal.

⁶ I am reminded of the critically acclaimed science fiction film *Arrival* (2016), in which a linguist saves the world when she learns to communicate with the alien visitors whose perception of time and communication are wholly foreign to the human experience.

fears. When I was about ten years old, developers started razing the land in earnest. I remember walking through the newly denuded and (de)graded dirt. As I made my way home up one of the newly paved roads, I was stopped dead in my tracks by the sight of a large frog or toad who had been crushed by a large vehicle, flattened into a sundried pancake along the grey concrete gutter. I have always been a sensitive person, and that day, I was overwhelmed by the loss of that precious, innocent life. I was too naïve to understand the details, but I knew that that life had been snuffed out as a mere by-product of “progress,” and that no-human-body would mourn its loss. Nobody but me, a child who has grown into a man whose heart still aches at the endless and senseless deaths along humanity’s path toward infinite growth. I felt the weight of the world that day. Why was I, a ten-year-old, the only one who appeared to be lamenting this loss? How could it be that it was, and would remain for decades, an unknown, unaccounted for, and externalized cost that never appeared on any developer’s ledger?

I am still saddened whenever I recall this experience. Perhaps it is because the injustice it represents has only accelerated, and I have felt powerless to stop it. Today, it is not just roadkill on a small suburban street, it is megafauna dying on the superhighway of progress. It is orcas who cannot find enough fish to eat to bring their offspring to term. Or, in the increasingly rare chance that they do, it is mothers who unwittingly poison their babies with milk laden with mercury. The race for infinite growth is no longer making inroads into the wild – it has paved paradise and tainted every square inch of the world with its total disregard. Even the “maiden snow” of the arctic cannot escape the (micro) plastics of progress (Katz, 2019). Our paradigm of dominance is a dangerous illusion. It is time we try something completely different.

REFERENCES

- Blake, William. (1908). *The poetical works of William Blake* (J Sampson, Ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Briger, S. (2020, October 15). *Filmmaker finds an unlikely underwater friend in ‘My Octopus Teacher’*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/09/985360600/filmmaker-finds-an-unlikely-underwater-friend-in-my-octopus-teacher>
- Burford, C., & Schutten, J. K. (2017). Internatural activists and the “Blackfish Effect”: Contemplating captive orcas’ protest rhetoric through a coherence frame. *Frontiers in Communication*, 1, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2016.00016>
- Burke, K. (1966). *Language as symbolic action*. University of California Press.
- Cullinan, C. (2011). *Wild law: A manifesto for earth justice*. Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Cuthbert, L., & Main, D. (2018, August 13). *Orca mother drops calf, after unprecedented 17 days of mourning*. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/orca-mourning-calf-killer-whale-northwest-news>
- Derrida, J. (2008). The animal that I therefore am. In M.-L. Mallet (Ed.), & D. Wills (Trans.), *The animal that therefore I am* (pp. 1–51). Fordham University Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1989). A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 19(4), 657. <https://doi.org/10.2307/203963>
- Ehrlich, P., & Reed, J. (Directors). (2020). *My octopus teacher*. [Film]. Netflix.
- Ellard, S. (2020, June 28). *Jaws: Sharks were the REAL victims of the classic thriller*. CBR. <https://www.cbr.com/jaws-sharks-were-real-victims-of-classic-thriller/>
- Gould, S. J. (2007). *Eight little piggies: Reflections in natural history*. Vintage Books.
- Grandin, T., & Johnson, C. (2005). *Animals in translation*. Scribner.
- Haraway, D. J. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. Routledge.
- Kassewitz, J., Hyson, M. T., Reid, J. S., & Barrera, R. L. (2016). A phenomenon discovered while imaging dolphin echolocation sounds. *Journal of Marine Science: Research & Development*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.4172/2155-9910.1000202>
- Katz, C. (2019, August 14). *Microplastics found in arctic snow*. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/08/microplastics-found-in-arctic-snow/>
- Koons, J. E. (2011). Key principles to transform law for the health of the planet. In P. Burdon (Ed.), *Exploring wild law: The philosophy of earth jurisprudence* (pp. 45–58). Wakefield Press.
- Lippit, A. M. (2008). *Electric animal: Toward a rhetoric of wildlife*. University of Minnesota Press.
- McPhail, M. L. (1996). *Zen in the art of rhetoric: An inquiry into coherence*. SUNY Press.
- Milstein, T. (2011). Nature identification: The power of pointing and naming. *Environmental Communication*, 5(1), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2010.535836>
- Milstein, T. (2013). Banging on the divide: Cultural reflection and refraction at the zoo. In E. Plec (Ed.), *Perspectives on human-animal communication: Internatural communication* (pp. 162–181). Routledge.
- Morton, A. (2002). *Listening to whales: What the orcas have taught us*. Ballantine Books.

- Olivier, A., & Cordeiro-Rodrigues, L. (2017). Racism, speciesism and suffering. In L. Cordeiro-Rodrigues, & L. Mitchell (Eds.), *Animals, race, and multiculturalism* (pp. 147–174). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66568-9_7
- Plec, E. (Ed.). (2013). *Perspectives on human-animal communication: Internatural communication*. Routledge.
- Riley, C. (2014, June 8). *The dolphin who loved me: The NASA-funded project that went wrong*. The Observer. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jun/08/the-dolphin-who-loved-me>
- Rilke, R. M. (1963). *Duino elegies* (J. B. Leishman & S. Spender, Trans.). Norton.
- Rogers, R. A. (1998). Overcoming the objectification of nature in constitutive theories: Toward a transhuman, materialist theory of communication. *Western Journal of Communication*, 62, 244–272. doi:10.1080/10570319809374610
- Salvador, M., & Clarke, T. (2011). The Weyekin principle: Toward an embodied critical rhetoric. *Environmental Communication*, 5(3), 243–260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2011.586713>
- Schutten, J.K. & Burford, C. (2017) ‘Killer’ metaphors and the wisdom of captive orcas. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 47(3), 257–263. DOI: 10.1080/02773945.2017.1309911
- Schutten, J., & Rogers, R. A. (2011). Magick as an alternative symbolic: Enacting transhuman dialogs. *Environmental Communication*, 5(3), 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2011.583261>
- Singer, P. (1974). All animals are equal. *Philosophic Exchange*, 5(1), 103–116.
- Sowards, S. K. (2006). Identification through orangutans: Destabilizing the nature/culture dualism. *Ethics & The Environment*, 11(2), 45–61.
- Swartz, S. L. (2014). *Lagoon time: Our life and times among the gray whales of Laguna San Ignacio*. Laguna San Ignacio Ecosystem Science Program.
- Taussig, M. T. (1986). *Shamanism, colonialism, and the wild man: A study in terror and healing*. University of Chicago Press.
- Weil, Kari. 2006. Killing them softly: Animal death, linguistic disability, and the struggle for ethics. *Configurations*, 14(1), 87–96.
- Wolfe, C. (2009). Human, all too human: “Animal studies” and the humanities. *PMLA*, 124(2), 564–575.
- Zimmerman, T. (2016, March 15). *Tilikum, SeaWorld’s killer orca, is dying*. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com.au/animals/tilikum-seaworlds-killer-orca-is-dying.aspx>

AUTHOR

Paul “Pablo” Martin, Associate Professor, Sustainability and Communication Studies, San Diego Miramar College, pmartin@sdccd.edu

Those Who Lay Eggs: Institutional Sexual Violence and Carnism in *Chicken Run*

Reuben Dylan Fong

School of Social Sciences, University of Auckland

Abstract: Vegetarian ecofeminism posits that all forms of oppression (both human and nonhuman) are linguistically and ideologically interlinked. In her book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol J. Adams argued that both consumption and depictions of meat literalize and feminize the metaphor for sexual violence against women, as well as patriarchal conceptualizations of women and intersectional with institutional oppression of animals. The mutually constructive conceptualizations between the oppression of women and the oppression of meat-purposed animals are exemplified in Peter Lord and Nick Park's 2000 film, *Chicken Run*. In the film, this dyad of oppressions is primarily depicted in three forms: The regulations of egg-laying as feminine gender capital to achieve the institutional compliance and passivity of women, trading eggs for tools with masculine rats as a patriarchal bargain, and the chickens' eventual freedom from their oppressors, restoring their reproductive rights through the reclamation of their eggs as childbearing systems.

Keywords: Anthropomorphism, Carnism, Children's Films, Sexual Violence

Humans continue to eat meat, despite evidence that doing so contradicts medical, economic, and environmental wellbeing: Eating meat can present several health risks (e.g., heart disease, diabetes, pneumonia, and bowel cancer), nonmeat food products are readily commercially available to consumers, and there is an increasing amount of media coverage around the ethical and environmental issues of farming and slaughtering millions of nonhuman animals per year in order to sustain industries connected to animal produce (meat, dairy, leather, etc.) (Lennon, n.d.; Qian et al., 2020). However, even in the face of such downsides, only a small percentage of the world's population self-identify as vegetarian or vegan, which suggests that the vast majority of the population consumes some amount of food products made partially or fully of

animal flesh (Friends of the Earth Europe, 2014). To identify the discourse of meat-eating as ideological rather than dietary, social psychologist Melanie Joy (2010) originated the term *carnism*. Joy's (2010) explanation for the necessity of the term is to distance the phenomenon from its entrenched philosophies which have dominated modern society. Just as the label "vegetarian" often refers to an ethical orientation rather than merely "plant-eating," the label "carnism" does not refer simply to "meat-eating," but also to the rationales and justifications which sustain the animal industrial complex (Joy, 2010, p. 29).

The central thesis of the ideology of carnism is that humans eating nonhuman animals (as well as making items out of nonhuman animal products such as leather or fur) is often presented as a normal, natural, and necessary phenomenon – or the "Three Ns of Justification" (Joy, 2010, p. 96). Carnism theory also considers the speciesist framework of selecting certain kinds of animals to be eaten by humans as part of a larger system of species oppression. For example, the Western variation of carnism supports the use of cows as meat, while in India, the consumption of beef can be a source of controversy (Sathyamala, 2019). In China, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, the consumption of dog meat has until recently been legal (BBC, 2017), while in contrast, the social norms of Western cultures characterize dogs as companion or service animals, and traditionally hold strong taboos against dog meat. Joy (2010) noted that this system of oppression and rationalization is the basis for a *carnistic schema* (p. 131). A carnistic schema is a means of cataloging knowledge around nonhuman animal farming and exploitation and informing the actions an individual can take based on this knowledge. Joy (2010) asserted that carnism is an ideology inherently premised on violence, as it is organized around, and reliant upon, humans treating and killing nonhuman animals violently in order to perpetuate the social norms of its ideological underpinning (p. 20). At the same time, carnistic schemas encourage people to deny the harm of meat production to

animals and the environment through elaborate myths of self-deception, psychic numbing, and *carnistic defense* – attempting to hide the effects of carnistic violence (Monteiro et al., 2017, p. 52).

There are several forms of carnistic defense. These include beliefs that nonhuman animals enjoy being on farms and that their slaughter is tangential to their farm lifestyles; that nonhuman animals have ambitions to be eaten in order to fulfill their purpose (or at the very least, lack the cognitive capacity to understand their eventual fate); and that there is some essential biological desire in all non-herbivorous animals that is only satiated by eating meat and that cannot be rationalized or reasoned with.

Predating the term “carnism,” Carol J. Adams’s (2000) book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, explored meat-eating in Western society through the discourse of vegetarian ecofeminism. Adams (2000) posited that all systems of oppression are symbolically interconnected and further asserted that human suffering and nonhuman suffering are not polarized but interrelated issues with implicit structural overlap in public discourse. The core discussion of Adams’s (2000) book considered two interconnected systems of oppression: the ubiquitous cultural synchronization between patriarchal and misogynistic culture with meat culture: “What, or more precisely *who*, we eat is determined by the patriarchal politics of our culture,” Adams (2000, p. 16) wrote, further stating that:

The way gender politics is structure into our world is related to how we view animals, especially animals who are consumed. Patriarchy is a gender system that is implicit in human/animal relationships. Moreover, gender construction includes instruction about appropriate foods. (Adams, 2000, p. 16)

Adams (2000) argued that images of food (as well as the act of consuming food) are heavily loaded with gender norms, most of which are underlined with ideological positions around normative masculinity and misogynistic sexual violence.

The gender politics of meat culture dichotomize meat-eating and vegetarian diets as masculine and feminine, respectively. Consuming meat (itself an absent referent for nonhuman slaughter) is intrinsically tied to cultural ideas of masculinity and male virility and dominance while vegetarianism is seen as feminine behavior (Adams, 2000, p. 17). Furthermore, meat-eating is also symbolic of sexual violence against women. For example, women who are objectified often describe feeling like “a piece of meat,” but they cannot be speaking literally (for meat is deprived of feeling when an animal is slaughtered). Adams (2000) attributed the phraseology of the

expression to be indicative of the metaphoric system of language that describes interlinked forms of oppression and suffering. Another example of nonhuman animals being thematically tied to masculinity and related sexual violence against women can be found in the sexual objectification of waitresses who work at the popular restaurant chain, Hooters. Hooters is culturally interconnected with the slaughter of nonhuman animals for the meat-heavy menu and whose clientele are viewed as typically masculine (Adams, 2000). The interlocking of nonhuman imagery and the intense sexualization of the waitresses symbolically amalgamates the oppression of nonhuman animals and human women. In reference to Gary Heidnik, a serial killer who raped, murdered, and butchered his female victims into several pieces before cooking and refrigerating their body parts, Adams (2000) described his actions as “an overlap of cultural images of sexual violence against women and the fragmentation and dismemberment of nature and the body in Western culture” (p. 65). Adams (2000) argued that the intersecting ideological referents between carnism and symbolic sexual violence are universally geared toward misogynistic violence against women. The nature of carnism’s gendered violence is assaultive specifically to women; men may be possessive of their own flesh/meat when viewed through this paradigm while women are often butchered and objectified through the lens of meat-eating.

CHICKEN RUN

Oppression Through Egg-Laying

I would posit that anthropomorphized animals on film can often depict the literal visualization of this intersecting conceptualization between carnism and institutional sexual violence. *Chicken Run* (Lord & Park, 2000) takes place in a Yorkshire egg farm in the 1950s and is largely told through the perspective of the anthropomorphized chickens. It is a prime demonstration of how Adams’s (2000) deconstruction of carnism literalized and feminized the symbolic sexual violence against women. Having the story told from the perspective of anthropomorphized chickens on an egg farm confronts traditional carnistic defenses related to the animal industrial complex by removing filmic suppositions of animals enjoying (or at the very least, not suffering from) their captivity and exploitation while also confronting the invisibility of nonhuman animal suffering by making such animals the key players of the story. The egg farm is characterized (in both imagery and narrative) as a concentration camp for the chickens: There are tall wire fences imprisoning them, cramped sleeping conditions in the dormitory-like henhouses, roll calls carried out by the human farmers, Mr. and Mrs.

Tweedy, and executions for noncompliant inmates (chickens that stop laying eggs are slaughtered and eaten by the Tweedys). The chickens are all portrayed as women (except for one elderly male rooster named Fowler who seems to be exempt from egg-laying duties) and are largely passive in their confinement. The films' use of concentration camp iconography clearly presents a dichotomy between the humans and farm dogs – as the wicked guards and tormentors – against the chickens who are blameless victims. The iconography of the chicken farm as a concentration camp also lays out an inescapable paradigm of unjust misogynistic control and violence. As these characters are imprisoned without charges and are almost all female, the film conveys the farm as an environment where the conventional female characters are marginalized and exploited by the humans.

Another significant aspect of the Tweedys' egg farm paralleling a concentration camp is the chickens' general unhappiness with their role as egg-layers. One of the key generic conventions of most children's films is that "when physical labour is depicted, [it is] pleasant, enjoyable, and highly rewarding as an activity in its own right" (Booker, 2010, p. 2). Quite contrary to the farm animals seen in *Babe* (Noonan, 1995) or *Home on the Range* (Finn & Sanford, 2004), the chickens do not have any devotion to their farm, and in fact, find their farmers contemptible and do not value egg-laying as particularly rewarding outside of its use in dissuading the Tweedys to kill and eat them. I would posit that one of the reasons *Chicken Run* does not depict the chickens as enjoying egg-laying in its own right is that within this film, egg-laying is not physical labor, but sexual labor. The chickens as symbolic women draw upon stereotypes of sexual labor as something which is to be passively endured rather than actively participated.

The central underlying power dynamic of carnism in the film's initial status quo is the use of chicken eggs as feminine gender capital. Carol J. Adams (2000) noted that nonhuman reproductive matter collected by humans for human consumption (e.g., milk and eggs) is a specific carnist subset of nonhuman protein (what Adams referred to as *feminized protein*). This feminized protein still has the dual connotations of species oppression and sexual violence, but it also has two additional associations: the oppression of specifically female animals and the exploitation of their offspring. Adams (2000) considered these two additional underlying connotations of feminized protein to be doubly oppressive as it exploits both nonhuman mothers and nonhuman children before slaughtering and butchering them. Just as carnist ideologies abstract meat from being viewed as animal flesh, feminized protein like chicken eggs is

abstracted from denoting ideas of reproduction or motherhood in order to fit within the schema of carnism.

The egg-laying in *Chicken Run* acts as a means of conducting passivity and obedience from the chickens, suggesting the literal and psychological trappings of characters' ties to feminized protein. The chickens produce feminized protein (eggs) as biological proof of their compliance, passivity, and femininity within their imprisonment. The Tweedys' egg farm depends upon these chickens for purpose and profit, but the institution of the farm is also predicated upon the carnistic violence of appropriating the eggs without compensation. When these chickens can no longer produce proof of their femininity as their egg-laying abilities cease, they can no longer validate their gender identity as feminine. This invalidation of their feminine gender identity in this misogynistic environment results in their beheading and consumption by the Tweedys as punishment for not fulfilling their gender role. As well as being executed, being eaten by the Tweedys illustrates how the chickens' failure to enact their allotted gender role nourishes the Tweedys, and thereby helps to perpetuate this institution of misogynistic violence and control of the chickens. The use of eggs as feminine gender capital on an egg farm also initially naturalizes the notion that women's value can be measured through their capacity as female organisms, using the biological function of egg-laying (rather than any kind of skill or personality trait) as the means of quantifying what these women are contributing to their community.

In contrast to the chickens who are portrayed as performing in conventional gender roles, the Tweedys are characterized by certain gender-atypical traits. In many ways, Mrs. Tweedy acts as Freud's phallic woman by behaving in contrast to the female chickens: She is assertive (to the point of being domineering), ambitious, proactive, and vicious. She also emasculates Mr. Tweedy and his farm dogs (who can be interpreted as an extension of his masculinity) by insulting and demeaning them. Mrs. Tweedy also has an affinity for skin-tight latex gloves (stereotypical attire for a dominatrix) and blades – her introduction in the film begins with her choosing a chicken named Edwina from the ranks, slipping on her latex gloves, and using an axe to slaughter the chicken for her supper. Later in the film, she wields a large saw that is part of the chicken pie machine. Mrs. Tweedy's carnistic intention to slaughter the chickens acts as a means of reaffirming her patriarchal potency and this affinity for blades acts as a visual representation of the castration anxiety which the phallic woman poses. By having Mrs. Tweedy act as the phallic woman while also posing as a carnistic threat to the chickens, the film embodies the sexual violence against the chickens not only through a strictly

patriarchal system, but also through a figure that is far more sinister and controlling than a conventional patriarch. Physically tall and thin, Mrs. Tweedy also has an implicit masculinity that is often evidenced in her total contempt for the entire egg-laying operation and its indentured servants (whether it be chickens or Mr. Tweedy).

Similar to Mrs. Tweedy, Mr. Tweedy is also somewhat distorted from stereotypical ideals of his gender. Although he is not a biological chicken, Mr. Tweedy is a metaphorical chicken through his dedication to the farm's egg production (as were all his patrilineal ancestors). In this sense, he is committed to the status quo of producing feminine gender capital in order to prove his value, just as the chickens must. In a second sense, he also demonstrates a chicken-like passivity toward both the egg-laying gender economy and the emasculating bullying from his domineering wife. The Tweedys' gender-atypicality forms part of their role as villains. Child audiences may already be predisposed to read non-normative presentations of gender as villainous, as children between the ages of five and seven years have been empirically observed as sometimes interpreting gender-atypical acts as moral transgressions or engagement in harmful behavior (Stangor & Ruble, 1987). Due to this inclination of the film's intended audience, it might be posited that the Tweedys are gendered in a non-normative fashion to underline their wickedness – a harmful message in itself.

In the introductory montage of the film, the chicken protagonist, Ginger, continually leads the chickens in ill-fated escape attempts. After Ginger witnesses one of the chickens being beheaded by Mrs. Tweedy after failing to lay eggs for five days, the chickens hold a forum in Hut 17 – an obvious reference to the prisoner-of-war film, *Stalag 17* (Wilder, 1953) – to discuss Ginger's next escape plan. This scene in Hut 17 explicitly articulates this connection between the chickens' egg-laying and their passive compliance to violent oppression under this misogynistic institution. When discussing Edwina, the chicken who was slaughtered after not laying the requisite number of eggs, Bunty (the chicken that lays the most eggs of all) remarks to Ginger, with many other chickens literally and figuratively behind her, that Edwina would be alive "if she'd spent more time laying, and less time [attempting to escape]." Bunty's qualification as a prodigious egg-layer and her assessment of their situation establishes a dichotomy between the chickens' roles as producers of feminized protein and their ability to reject egg-laying and escape their gender roles. The metonymic use of egg-laying for feminine gender capital and compliance with patriarchal control is demonstrated in the stylized stop-motion animation of the chickens' physiology. The chickens are portrayed with bulged hips,

roughly proportional with their egg-laying proficiency: Bunty has the widest hips, while Ginger – the chicken protagonist who orchestrates escape attempts and is kept in solitary confinement as retribution, thereby settling on the other side of the egg-laying/escaping dichotomy – has the thinnest hips. Ginger's physique is comparable to the roosters to demonstrate her masculine persona, showing that her value lies in stereotypically masculine qualities such as pluck and determination. Having a visual element tied to egg-laying proficiency compounds the biological determinism of gender – and also carries over to Mr. Tweedy, who also has a round figure.

After Bunty makes this dichotomizing remark regarding egg-laying and escape attempts, the film cuts to Ginger, who is alone in the frame: "So, laying eggs all your life...and then getting plucked, stuffed, and roasted is good enough for you?" Ginger asks pointedly, continuing, "You know what the problem is? The fences aren't just round the farm. They're up here in your heads" (Lord & Park, 2000). Ginger's comment on the chickens' mentalities as egg-layers (and eventually as meat for human consumption) as an acceptable status quo belies the fact that this systematic symbolic sexual violence is not simply an external system of exploitation and confinement from their symbolic sexual oppressors, but also an ideological system reliant upon the chickens' internal compliance in and acceptance of their persecution as natural, normal, and necessary – Joy's (2010) Three Ns of carnism justification. Ginger's visual framing as the lone individual rejecting this passive acceptance implies that the initial rejection of this system of sexual violence is an act of aberration rather than a change in the collective opinion of the persecuted.

Patriarchal Bargaining and Feminine Gender Capital

Another use of chicken eggs as compliance within a misogynistic system is reflected in the eggs as currency in a symbolic patriarchal bargain. Sociologist Lisa Wade (2011) described a patriarchal bargain as

[A] decision to accept gender rules that disadvantage women in exchange for whatever power one can wrest from the system. It is an individual strategy designed to manipulate the system to one's best advantage, but one that leaves the system itself intact. (para. 4).

In addition to laying eggs in order to satiate the demands of the egg farm and the Tweedys, when the chickens require tools and materials for their escape attempts, they use eggs as a form of bartering with a pair of anthropomorphized male rats – eggs which the rats intend to eat. It is noteworthy that the rats refuse to accept chicken feed (the food the chickens themselves eat) as a form of payment, as if what is

good enough for the women's food is deemed unworthy of the men's palates. Although the eggs produced in these later exchanges are not for showing obedience to the Tweedys' slavery, they are still tokens of feminine gender capital to appease men in order to acquire valuable items. When the chickens plan their final escape attempt, Ginger meets with the rats to place an extensive order for tools (agreeing to exchange a large cache of eggs as payment). As she places the order, she hands them one egg as advanced payment, and there is a reaction shot of the rats giddy with the prospect of the eggs. In this transaction between the chickens and the rats, eggs literally function as gender capital for the chickens to obtain goods that they cannot acquire themselves (being literally trapped within a system that disadvantages them). The chickens must enact a patriarchal bargain with the rats, working with the system that depreciates and demeans them in an effort to wrest whatever power they can for themselves. The excitement of the rats receiving the eggs punctuates the nature of the patriarchal bargain being struck: The chickens are working within this misogynistic structure (pleasing men with privilege and access to gain something they cannot otherwise acquire) because without the rats' cooperation, the chickens have no means of improving their position.

The chickens' patriarchal bargain with the rats differs from their dynamic with the Tweedys' egg-farming operation through the distinction of decision. The chickens willingly part with their eggs so that the rats will provide them with tools, whereas the Tweedys seize the chickens' eggs under threat of execution. The patriarchal bargain the chickens make in order to escape the system of misogynistic oppression through carnism suggests this system of symbolic sexual violence is a fixed phenomenon: The chickens cannot dismantle the system – they can only escape it. This suggestion of the patriarchal bargain is visualized in a montage in which the chickens are using their bartered tools to convert their chicken huts into a flying machine, with parallel editing of Mr. Tweedy using his tools to repair the chicken pie machine. The montage often features Mr. Tweedy using his tools in a particular way and then match-cutting to the chickens using similar tools for a similar function. For example, Mr. Tweedy hammering parts of the chicken pie machine together is paired with the chickens hammering nails into the wood of their flying machine; Mr. Tweedy using a wrench to tighten bolts on the chicken pie machine is match-cut with a chicken tightening bolts on the flying machine. The constant match-cutting of the montage suggests that the means by which the chickens can improve their circumstance is by working within the same system that is violent and oppressive towards them, that they should not attack the system itself, but

instead use the tools of the system against their oppressors (and even then, only to eventually distance themselves from the system).

Dissatisfied by the profits of the egg farm, Mrs. Tweedy begins plans to convert the chicken farm into a chicken pie factory; in doing so, the preeminent paradigm of the farm's carnist violence shifts from feminized proteins to flesh. As the Tweedys' carnist violence shifts from oppressing the chickens to slaughtering the chickens, there is an obliteration of feminine gender capital. Traditionally, Western cultures consider overeating, as well as unrestricted or unrestrained consumption of food as antithetical to femininity and counterproductive to the ideal feminine body (Davidauskis, 2015). Although this rejection of food consumption to femininity is linked to proportions of weight gain, the act of consumption itself can also be a loaded cultural expectation as a rejection or degradation of the feminine ideal (Davidauskis, 2015). During a scene set after the Tweedys have ordered their chicken pie machine, Mr. and Mrs. Tweedy inspect the chickens in the chicken enclosure. One chicken named Babs admits that she has not laid any eggs due to her occupation with their escape attempts. Mrs. Tweedy grips a tape measure in a manner similar to a piece of bondage and measures Babs's girth, ordering Mr. Tweedy to double the chicken feed rations to fatten all the chickens up to Babs's mass. After the chicken feed trough is filled to the very brim, Ginger watches in horror as the chickens gorge themselves and she realizes the Tweedys' growing carnist intentions. The sequence where Mrs. Tweedy measures Babs is filmed and edited similarly to the one early in the film when Edwina is taken to slaughter: There are several shots of Mrs. Tweedy's boots walking into the yard, high-angled, point-of-view shots from Mrs. Tweedy's perspective as she looks down upon her victim, and low-angled, point-of-view shots from the chicken's perspective looking up at Mrs. Tweedy's gleeful face. Both sequences are accompanied with the same ominous music. The expectation that Babs will be slaughtered like Edwina emphasizes the escalating threat of sexual violence as the chickens begin to fatten themselves by ravenously consuming food, with the strong implication that women who eat excessively (or who simply eat to the point of satiation) are unknowingly courting their own death. By fattening themselves and thereby undermining their own feminine gender capital, the chickens are dramatically increasing their vulnerability as victims of a worse form of symbolic sexual violence than when they were producers of feminized protein.

Freedom, Motherhood, and What is "Natural"

In the climax of the film, the chickens use their flying machine to escape the Tweedys' farm, wrecking most of the facilities (such as the chicken pie machine and the buildings) in the process. The chickens' eventual triumph over and haven from humans is noteworthy for two reasons. The first noteworthy point around the film's ending is the chickens' success in using their flying machine to escape the Tweedys' farm. Children's films often thematize connections between "natural," the "authentic," and the "real" (Booker, 2010, p. 7). For example, in *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994), the protagonist lion, Simba, attains his "real" identity by claiming his "natural" position in the animal kingdom as the head of the lion pride. In *Dumbo* (Sharpsteen et al., 1941), the eponymous elephant eventually learns that his ability to fly is "natural" and not reliant upon psychological crutches such as his lucky feather. When this trope is employed in children's films, characters often unlock their "real" or "natural" identity during the climax of the narrative, while throughout the story, other characters usually dismiss or deny such identities or abilities in order to heighten the incredulous character growth when the moment of unlocking occurs. In *Chicken Run*, the story seems to set up the trope of the chickens discovering their ability to "naturally" fly through Ginger's initial wistfulness while watching geese fly and later, the other chickens and rats finding the idea of flying ludicrous. Ginger persuades Rocky to teach the chickens how to fly, mistakenly believing that he is a flying rooster – but Rocky unsuccessfully attempts to do so. This narrative setup would seem to build toward the chickens eventually flying to freedom through their "natural" abilities as birds. However, this turns out to be a subversion of the generic trope, and the chickens use the artificial flying machine to fly to freedom. I would posit that this subversion underscores a more nuanced "natural" aspect to the chickens, framing their success not through inherent or endowed abilities like Simba or Dumbo possessed, but instead through personality traits such as resourcefulness, courage, and teamwork.

The second point to consider about the ending of *Chicken Run* is that the film's denouement shows the chickens living in an idyllic bird sanctuary in the English countryside, away from any humans. In their sanctuary, the chickens are shown raising chicks. The inclusion of chicks in the bird sanctuary implies a realignment of eggs as objects for reproduction, away from the carnist schema of eggs as food or currency. I would posit that this alignment acts as a restoration for the chickens' gender role as women by establishing the chickens as maternal beings with offspring that are consanguineal (i.e., blood-related). This restoration also implies a mutual exclusivity between the chickens' symbolic sexual violence through their carnistic

internment and their fulfillment of being motherly, one of the core stereotypical elements of being a woman (McQuillan et al., 2008). The mutual exclusivity signals the role of women as victims or mothers – women who are victims of such misogynistic oppression cannot be mothers, and conversely, mothers are free from such oppression. Although the denouement is brief, it does idealize maternity as picturesque and paradisiacal. While the film does suggest maternity is not in itself an escape from sexual oppression, maternity is shown as the endpoint from escaping oppression. This idea of maternity as an endpoint from escaping oppression reinforces stereotypes of the ideal lifestyles for women as mothers and also posits that women's freedom from oppression is axiomatic to expectations of motherhood. Such expectations of motherhood in these stereotypes is problematic, suggesting through implication that women who are not mothers must therefore be oppressed in some form.

CONCLUSION

Carol J. Adams's (2000) *The Sexual Politics of Meat* aimed to separate the ideological carnistic and sexual violence from the dietary and gustatory phenomenon of meat-eating, illuminating how the symbolic, predatory misogyny linguistically intersects with the violence of animals. *Chicken Run* is an evocative demonstration of the ways in which the lens of carnism theory deconstructs how representations of meat-eating literalize the symbolic sexual violence against women. The film has three primary avenues with which to explore the carnistic schema as symbolic sexual violence. The first avenue is the regulation of the chickens' egg-laying as evidencing compliance of women within an institution that oppresses and preys upon them. This regulation of female biology logistically and ideologically maintains the oppression of women, while failure to actualize this regulation triggers a punishment of the female body being slaughtered and consumed by the oppressors in a way that nourishes those responsible for the sexual violence.

The second avenue the film takes is the usage of eggs as feminine gender capital in a patriarchal bargain. By using their eggs as sexual currency to transact with men, the chickens are appeasing the men to negotiate power. Such appeasement is noteworthy, as it is a tacit sign of acceptance of the institutional misogyny, and the action interacts with the oppression in a way which leaves the oppression intact.

The third avenue of exploration is the eventual reclamation of egg-laying as a means of childbearing and motherhood. After escaping the Tweedys' farm, the chickens no longer need to use their

eggs as commodities for human consumption and may instead use them to raise chicks. The transition of eggs from commodity to progeny signals the removal of the chickens' victimization of sexual violence through institutional misogyny and depicts maternity as the idealization of free womanhood. While there are plenty of children's films which depict the problematic nature of carnism, *Chicken Run* offers perhaps the clearest portrayal of what Adams (2000) described as "literalizing and feminizing the metaphor" (p. 72).

REFERENCES

- Adams, C. J. (2000). *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory* (10th ed.). Continuum.
- Allers, R., & Minkoff, R. (Directors). (1994). *The lion king*. Buena Vista Pictures.
- BBC. (2017, April 12). *The countries where people still eat cats and dogs for dinner*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-39577557>
- Booker, M. K. (2010). *Disney, Pixar, and the hidden messages of children's films*. Praeger.
- Davidauskis, A. (2015). 'How beautiful women eat': Feminine hunger in American popular culture. *Feminist Formations*, 27(1), 167-189.
- Finn, W., & Sanford, J. (Directors). (2004). *Home on the range*. Buena Vista Pictures.
- Friends of the Earth Europe. (2014). *Meat atlas: Facts and figures about the animals we eat*. Heinrich Böll Foundation and Friends of the Earth Europe. https://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/publications/foee_hbf_meatlas_jan2014.pdf
- Joy, M. (2010). *Why we love dogs, eat pigs, and wear cows*. Conari Press.
- Lennon, C. (n.d). *Leather Is more than "a by-product of the meat industry"*. One Green Planet. www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/leather-is-more-than-a-by-product-of-the-meat-industry/
- Lord, P., & Park, N. (Directors). (2000). *Chicken Run* [Film]. Pathé Distribution and DreamWorks Pictures.
- McQuillan J., Greil, A. L., Shreffler, K. M. & Tichenor, V. (2008). The importance of motherhood among women in the contemporary United States. *Gender and Society*, 22(4), 477-496.
- Monteiro, C. A., Pfeiler, T. M., Patterson, M. D., & Milburn, M. A. (2017). The carnism inventory: Measuring the ideology of eating animals. *Appetite*, 113, 51-62.
- Noonan, C. (Director). (1995). *Babe* [Film]. Universal Pictures.
- Qian, F., Riddle, M. C., Wylie-Rossett, J., & Hu, F. B. (2020). Red and processed meats and health risks: How strong is the evidence? *Diabetes Care*, 43(2), 265-271.
- Sathyamala, C. (2019) Meat-eating in India: Whose food, whose politics, and whose rights? *Policy Futures in Education*, 17(7). 878-891.
- Sharpsteen, B., Ferguson, N., Jackson, W., Roberts, B., Kinney, J., & Armstrong, S. (Directors). (1947). *Dumbo* [Film]. RKO Radio Pictures.
- Stangor, C., & Ruble, D. N. (1987). Development of gender role knowledge and gender constancy. In L. S. Liben & M. L. Signorella (Eds.), *New directions for child development* (pp. 5-22). Jossey-Bass.
- Wade, L. (2011, May 22). *Serena Williams' patriarchal bargain*. The Society Pages. www.thesocietypages.org/socimages/2011/05/22/women-damned-if-you-do-damned-if-you-dont/
- Wilder, B. (Director). (1953). *Stalag 17* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.

AUTHOR

Reuben Dylan Fong, PhD, School of Social Sciences, University of Auckland, rfon572@aucklanduni.ac.nz