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## A qualitative, participatory study of the process of becoming an advocate for nonhuman animals

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A Qualitative, Participatory Study  
of the Process of Becoming an Advocate for Nonhuman Animals  
by  
Angela Kathleen Raithby

Bachelor of Science, The University of Western Ontario, 1987

Bachelor of Arts, The University of Western Ontario, 1991

THESIS

Submitted to the Department of Psychology  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

Master of Arts

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1997

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## Abstract

This thesis begins with an overview of some published works concerning oppression, its alleviation and the interconnectedness of its various forms, as they relate to the diverse area which is loosely referred to as 'animal rights'. In general terms, the ultimate goal of choosing to do this thesis in the area of animal rights is to further the defence of nonhuman animals. The purpose of this specific project is to document, compare, and contrast a range of examples of the process of changing relationships and becoming an advocate for other animals. These examples, the experiences and life stories of five members of an animal rights group were shared through in-depth, semi-structured, conversational-style interviews. Because animal advocates come from all walks of life, yet are so often stereotyped, this project does not involve a representative sample from which one expects findings that can be generalized to the larger population (e.g., the 'typical' animal advocate). On the contrary, the focus is particular, diverse examples. The project was carried out in collaboration with members of an informal, local-level animal rights group to which I belong. All interview participants were also Research Advisory Committee (RAC) members and were involved in guiding this project from its earliest beginnings of choosing a topic within the area of animal rights. While the experiences and process of change were unique to each individual, similarities were found regarding the direction and on-going nature of change, and its positive, pervasive impact on their lives. Many benefits were derived from the participants' efforts to recall and reflect on their own life stories, suggesting that such a formal undertaking might

benefit others as well. I conclude the thesis with a discussion of some relevant works from the literature and an outline of plans for utilization of the findings.

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“The animals of the world exist for their own reasons.  
They were not made for humans any more than black people were made for whites  
or women for men.”

*Alice Walker*

from her preface to  
Marjorie Spiegel's (1988) The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery

## INTRODUCTION

In light of the fact that this is a literature review for a community psychology thesis that is about animal rights, I begin the review with a discussion of my learning about community psychology, as it applies to, or, is congruent with my learning about animal rights. In addition, I begin this way because I see strong connections between these two areas and think that, as community psychology work relates to many areas of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism), so too can it relate to the area of animal rights (i.e., speciesism - "a belief that different species of animals are significantly different from one another in their capacities to feel pleasure and pain and live an autonomous existence, usually involving the idea that one's own species has the right to rule and use others;" Spiegel, 1988, p. 7). Because the discussion of this community psychology section has much in common with that of the following section about animal rights, it is directed at a much broader audience than just community psychologists, including, for example, animal rights advocates, feminists and other social change agents.

In the sections that follow I attempt to provide an introduction to animal rights by presenting a brief introduction to the movement and some of the central ideas and theories that I encountered in my animal rights learning. It should be noted that, throughout this thesis, I use the term 'animal rights' loosely, referring collectively to a variety of theories and approaches which relate to the defence of nonhuman animals. Similarly, I use the term 'advocate' in a broad sense, referring to people who make personal efforts of change and/or efforts to encourage change in other humans'

relationships with nonhuman animals. The discussion of the literature review provides a foundation from which to describe the specific project involved. The project and its participants are described in detail in the method section, which is followed by the findings, discussion, appendices, and references.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Community Psychology Learning

In this section my focus is on the values and philosophical framework of community psychology. What follows is not intended as an objective, comprehensive review of the subject, but rather, a discussion of community psychology as I have come to consider its relevance to animal rights.

In a discussion of the commonalities between feminist thinking and community psychology, Anne Mulvey (1988) observes that both areas are “grounded in the appropriateness and necessity of action for change”, and that the theories and practice of them “recognize the essential interrelationships among the larger social structure, the immediate context, and individual well-being” (p. 70). Further, she states that both recognize structured inequality as part of our social systems, affecting groups of people in predictable and systematic ways that relate to various factors (e.g., gender, race, class). Values common to both areas include “the right of every individual to optimal well-being, respect for diversity and difference among individuals and groups, empowerment, and equality” (p. 74).

Within community psychology, there are some who recognize the social construction of knowledge (Walsh, 1987). Roderick J. Watts (1992) states that the meanings of aspects of human diversity, such as gender, race, age and sexual orientation, are socially constructed. Despite increasing attention in psychology to such social-psychological markers over the last 25 years, Watts observes that psychology in general, and community psychology in particular, are without a comprehensive framework for relating them to theory, research, and action. Thus, toward the aim of creating a framework for a psychology of human diversity, he reviews four perspectives: the cross-cultural, the sociopolitical, the ecological, and population-specific psychologies.

While elements of each of these four approaches are familiar to the conception of community psychology that I have attained through this program, the approach that I most closely align with is the sociopolitical. According to Watts (1992), this perspective is concerned with the study of “the inequitable distribution of power, its social consequences, the ways psychology serves the powerful, and strategies for social change” (p. 123). Ideology, oppression, and empowerment are considered central to theory and intervention in this approach, and it is said that the unjust exercise of power is rationalized by ideology and results in oppression. Drawing on the work of Frantz Fanon, Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan (1985) states that “the problem of oppression is a problem of violence” (p. 120). In this sense, violence, or oppression, can be subtle and/or crude, and Bulhan broadly defines it as “any relation, process, or condition by which an individual or group violates the physical, social, and/or psychological integrity of another person or group” (p. 135). In society, “this pervasive and structural violence is

often masked and rationalized as the natural order of life” (p. 121); thus, the controllers and beneficiaries of violence create the illusion of “legitimate” and “illegitimate” forms of violence. Racism and sexism have been identified as examples of special cases of oppression, which “represent historically grounded, systematic discrimination rationalized by an ideology of superiority” (Watts, 1992, p. 123).

In the sociopolitical perspective, empowerment is the favoured approach to reducing oppression and its effects. Most of the literature on empowerment considers only psychological empowerment, keeping the focus of the concept on the individual (Riger, 1993). In my reading on the subject of empowerment, I noticed it predominantly described as a state (e.g., Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988), rather than as a process (e.g., Kieffer, 1984; Lord, 1991). In either case, the conception of empowerment in community psychology is primarily concerned with the individual’s sense of control and efficacy in the competitive pursuit of access to limited power and resources (Riger, 1993). In other words, the focus is on the sense of empowerment, as opposed to actual power.

According to Isaac Prilleltensky (1989), this view of empowerment is problematic because it ignores the influence of the sociopolitical context, thus turning the political into the personal. He proposes a conception of empowerment based on the ethical principles of self-determination, distributive justice, and collaborative and democratic participation (1994). Some feminist authors (e.g., Surrey, 1991; Riger 1993) have advocated for a reconceptualization of empowerment that would incorporate the

relationality, or interconnectedness, of our lives, thus including “the traditionally feminine concerns of communion and cooperation” (Riger, 1993, p.279).

Given the prevailing focus on the individual in community psychology, it is not surprising to find that when sociopolitical education is mentioned in some articles as a means of empowerment, it is rarely developed (Watts, 1992). In this regard, Watts points to Prilleltensky’s (1989) argument for a focus on sociopolitical education as a compelling exception. According to Prilleltensky, social and political understanding are achieved by individuals through the process Paulo Freire (1970) described and called *conscientização*. In the words of Prilleltensky (1994), conscientization “refers to the process whereby people attain an insightful awareness of the socioeconomic, political, and cultural circumstances that affect their lives, as well as of their potential capacity to transform that social reality” (p. 189). Thus, the process consists of two parts: 1) denunciation, which “endeavors to deconstruct ideological messages that distort people’s awareness of sociopolitical circumstances that shape their lives;” and 2) annunciation, which “seeks to elaborate means of advancing the social ideals conducive to the good life” (p. 189).

Similarly, humans who act as advocates for other animals have identified and rejected the ideology that underlies our oppression of other animals. These people live and work to promote the changes in society and its institutions that are necessary to bring us to a world of peace and compassion for all beings. Before proceeding with an exploration of this process of change, however, I present an introduction to the ideas and theories of animal advocacy.



## Animal Rights Learning

### **(A) An Introduction to Some of the Ideas of Animal Rights**

In this section, I will attempt to focus on some central ideas of animal rights.

What is meant by the term animal rights depends largely on who you ask. In the context of this thesis I cannot possibly provide a formal review of the philosophies, theories, and actions of the current animal rights movement. Books have been written on the subject, and, for those who might be interested, I recommend the overview of animal rights theory and practice, The Animal Rights Movement in America: From Compassion to Respect, by philosophers and animal rights advocates Lawrence Finsen and Susan Finsen (1994). What I will proceed with, then, is an introduction to the movement and some of the ideas I have encountered in my learning on the subject.

Many have credited Peter Singer's book Animal Liberation with 'inspiring' or 'galvanizing' the current animal rights movement. "Animal Liberation first appeared in 1975. At that time, there was no animal liberation or animal rights movement. Instead there were traditional animal welfare, or anticruelty organizations, and antivivisection societies" (Singer, 1994, p. 36). Of course, this does not mean that the ideas of animal rights had not been considered or written about before 1975. Surveys of such writing are found in, for example, the books Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes Towards Speciesism (Ryder, 1989) and The Extended Circle: A Commonplace Book of Animal Rights (Wynne-Tyson, ed., 1988). However, referring to a bibliography of books and articles concerning animal rights and related issues, Singer points out that, whereas 95

works are cited for the period between ancient times and the 1970's, 240 works are cited from between 1970 and 1988 (1990, p. 241)!

According to Finsen and Finsen (1994), “the virtual explosion of new animal rights organizations in the 1980s is remarkable” (p. 73). These organizations vary enormously regarding perspectives and approaches, and include national, regional, local, and grassroots levels of focus. Some, for example, connect animal rights with various professions, religions, or other liberation movements. Similarly, some focus on the connection to other problems of human concern, such as the environment, human health, inter-human violence, and world hunger. Organizations and groups differ according to particular tactics, strategies, and type(s) of exploitation focused on. “Thus, the task of describing the organizations that make up the movement is utterly daunting” (p. 74).

One place to begin describing the ideas of animal rights is with the distinction between animal welfare and animal rights. It should be noted, however, that many of today’s organizations labelled animal welfare have expanded their activities to include many which have been traditionally pursued by animal rights advocates. Animal welfare historically refers to the humane tradition that:

promoted kindness and the elimination of cruelty without challenging the assumption of human superiority or the institutions that reflect that assumption. The animal rights movement, on the other hand, does not seek humane reforms but challenges the assumption of human superiority and demands abolition of institutions it considers exploitive. Rather than asking for a greater (and optional) charity toward animals, the animal

rights movement demands justice, equality, fairness, and rights (Finsen & Finsen, 1994, p. 3).

The term speciesism has been applied to this assumption of human superiority, and Peter Singer defines it as “a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species” (1990, p. 6). As the assumption of human superiority has been so widely held for so long, the concept of speciesism may initially seem absurd. Others may consider it to be an unjustified personal attack. In this regard, I wish to make clear that my intention is not to ‘blame’ individuals for their attitudes or actions, but rather, to challenge the status quo, emphasizing a systems-level analysis, and thus, suggesting new ways of thinking about our relationships with other animals. The writings of two authors come to mind as relevant in this regard:

If we wish to avoid being numbered among the oppressors, we must be prepared to rethink all our attitudes to other groups, including the most fundamental of them. We need to consider our attitudes from the point of view of those who suffer by them, and by the practices that follow from them. If we can make this unaccustomed mental switch we may discover a pattern in our attitudes and practices that operates so as consistently to benefit the same group - usually the group to which we ourselves belong - at the expense of another group (Singer, 1990, p. iv).

In short, oppression is not necessarily constituted by the deliberate intention of the oppressor (the dominant) and the unconscious acceptance

of the oppressed (the subordinate) at an individual level. An examination of oppression should emphasize how the oppressive system operates in society (Huey-li Li, 1993, p. 285).

In today's society oppression is predominantly viewed as relating only to humans. Paulo Freire articulates how people can accept oppressive 'cultural givens', and explains that oppressed people "have been destroyed precisely because their situation has reduced them to things" (1970, p. 55). If we acknowledge that nonhuman animals are 'used' in our society, we may see that they too have been reduced to things: things to wear, things to eat, things to capture, enslave, and manipulate. In this sense, most humans consider most animals to be *means*, rather than *ends in themselves*. Conversely, when animals are considered subjects, instead of objects, these kinds of human *uses* of other animals are seen as human *abuses* of other animals.

To begin applying concepts that we are accustomed to using only in relation to people (e.g., oppression, rights) to other animals, it may be helpful to recall how the definition of 'person' has changed over time. For example, when the U.S. Declaration of Independence was written "only white, male property holders were deemed adequately [rationally] endowed to be included in the category of personhood" (Donovan, 1990, p. 354), and thus, entitled to rights. Writing this thesis as a woman and a person reminds me of my own recognition of how truly recent it has been that women in my own country have been entitled to do things like vote, run for public office, enter various professions, or simply obtain their own credit cards without the signature of a husband or father. A

detailed discussion of this socially constructed concept and its relation to animals is found in the essay, Persons and Non-Persons, by Mary Midgley (1985).

A different, yet similar, concept that I have often heard used in introducing animal rights is referred to by Peter Singer as *the sphere of moral concern*. Most often, however, I have heard speakers refer to it using Einstein's term, *the circle of compassion*. Briefly, the story of the circle of compassion is an historical overview of the evolving conception of who is and who is not entitled to ethical consideration in our society. In its beginnings, the circle was exclusively occupied by rich, white males; over time it has evolved to begin including others, such as people who are poor, women, enslaved, imprisoned, labelled mentally ill, and of other ethnicity or sexual orientation. Many animal rights advocates have urged that humans must bring other animals into this circle.

Humans have proposed many reasons to justify separating ourselves from the rest of nature, and in particular, excluding other animals from our sphere of moral concern. For the most part, these so-called reasons have been various characteristics or abilities which have been claimed to be exclusive to humans. Descartes' assertion that nonhuman animals are nothing more than machines continues to underlie much of the dominant view of these other beings. For example, the feature article of the November 1995 issue of the vivisection-based magazine Lab Animal, concerns assessment of the *possible* pain of nonhuman animals. In this article, the author, Craig W. Stevens, asserts that pain is a conscious experience, and as such, humans are scientifically unable to detect or quantify it in other animals. Contrary to the dualism of this view, Bruce Max Feldmann (1995) observes that we humans:

have considered ourselves unique or special as the tool-using and language-using animal. We have seen ourselves as unique or special as the only animal who acts out of purpose and intention, versus other animals who (it was argued) lack consciousness, mentation, and conceptual ability, and thus can't act with purpose or intention. All of these claimed distinctions between ourselves and other animals have subsequently been disproved and discredited by scientists and philosophers (p. 4).

Anthropomorphism is a term which I frequently encountered during my education in science and it refers to the process whereby human characteristics are inaccurately, it is said, ascribed to other entities. An animal rights philosophy rejects the dominant definition of what are exclusively human characteristics. Philosopher and animal rights advocate Tom Regan uses the phrase "mute, powerless creatures" (1985, p. 25) in reference to the other animals humans oppress. Although these animals do not speak human language and are unable to mount an animal rights movement for themselves, I believe that labelling them mute or powerless is anthropocentric and inappropriate. For example, while it is true that the human ability to communicate is unique and impressive in many ways, the abilities of other animals to communicate are also unique and impressive in many ways. While there are similarities, nonhuman animals' ways of communicating (and being) are also quite different from the human animal's, and are most often underestimated, devalued, or ignored.

In recent decades, more and more humans have begun to study the ways of other animals (e.g., aquatic mammals, elephants, great apes). What has been learned demonstrates how we are just now scraping the surface in regards to understanding other animals' intelligence, memory, and abilities to communicate, feel emotions, or live purposeful, social lives. As accessible examples of works regarding this growing area of inquiry, I recommend Animal Thinking (1984), by Donald R. Griffin, as well as the two more recent publications, When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals (1995), by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy, and The Great Ape Project (1993), edited by Paola Cavalieri and Peter Singer.

This kind of evidence will hopefully help convince dominant humans that the human/animal species barrier requires examination - and dismantling! The fact remains, however, that we do not need evidence from studies to tell us what we can already know with our own eyes and ears. I do not always have to hear it in human language or wait until science provides evidence, to know that another being is in pain or distress. Nonhuman animals are communicating, for example, when they cry out, struggle to escape, or exhibit signs of psychological stress from extreme or prolonged confinement, such as self-mutilation and continual pacing or swaying back and forth. In the words of Josephine Donovan, "we should not kill, eat, torture, and exploit animals because they do not want to be so treated, and we know that. If we listen, we can hear them" (1990, p. 375).

Relying on Singer's theory of animal liberation, Feldmann (1995) states that, to say nonhuman animals have rights means that they are entitled to, "not equal treatment

but equal consideration of relevant needs, essential interests, and inherent capacities. Chief amongst these are: staying alive, being free of pain and suffering and, fulfilling biological potentials” (p. 3). Of course, equal consideration of analogous needs, interests, and capacities can lead to any number of ‘acceptable’ outcomes, depending on the situation and who is doing the considering and deciding what is acceptable. While the term animal rights has become a familiar one in today’s society, it can mean many things, as different animal rights philosophies vary in their explanations of why other animals deserve equal consideration. Thus, from different explanations, or ‘criteria’, come different answers to questions, such as ‘Are *all* animals equal *all* of the time?’, or, to borrow from George Orwell, ‘are some more equal than others?’.

Josephine Donovan (1990) observes that “contemporary animal rights theory includes two major theoretical approaches, one based on natural rights theory and the other on utilitarianism” (p. 353). The Case for Animal Rights, by Tom Regan (1983), is a detailed philosophical argument which is considered to be the central work for the natural rights theory approach (Donovan, 1990). In reference to it, Finsen and Finsen wrote: “No doubt the philosophical difficulty of the book accounts for the fact that it is not as widely referred to by activists as is Singer’s book, even though the conclusions Regan draws are much more in accord with many activists’ views than those of Singer” (1994, p. 193). In it, Regan basically refutes Kant’s assertion that only rational beings exist as ends in themselves, have absolute worth, and are entitled to rights. According to Regan, a being has inherent value and exists as an end if he or she has a subjective



consciousness, a complex mental awareness that he defines as the criterion for being a subject of a life.

In making his case, Regan relies on the example of adult mammals. This is done, not because he considers them to be the only other animals possessing the criterion, but because this group offers the strongest evidence of it. In this view, “*all* who have inherent value have it *equally*, whether they be human animals or not” (1985, p. 23). While Regan does not specify which animals beyond adult mammals possess the criterion, he does argue, for example, for the abolition of animal agriculture, hunting, and vivisection, and insists that it is unacceptable, under any circumstances, to compromise the rights of one individual with inherent value for the sake of any another.

The utilitarian approach, on the other hand, has been developed primarily by Singer (1975, 1990). From this position, any creature that has the capacity for suffering is considered sentient, and thus, an end in him/herself who is entitled to equal consideration of his or her interests in remaining unharmed. Unlike Regan’s intelligence-based criterion, many may consider the ability to feel pain to be more easily applied to a greater number of species. So which species does Singer consider covered by his reasoning? Rod Preece and Lorna Chamberlain point out how the answer to this question changed between the first and second editions of Animal Liberation. “In 1975 he concluded that drawing a line between a shrimp [which is an arthropod] and an oyster [a mollusk] is as good a place as any to make a determination of sentience. By 1990 he had somewhat changed his mind” (Preece & Chamberlain, 1993, p. 267). In the second

edition, Singer states that conversations with R.I. Sikora changed his mind about mollusks:

while one cannot with any confidence say that these creatures do feel pain, so one can equally have little confidence in saying that they do not feel pain. Moreover, if they do feel pain, a meal of oysters or mussels would inflict pain on a considerable number of creatures. Since it is so easy to avoid eating them, I now think it better to do so (1990, p. 174).

Another difference between the theories of Regan and Singer is that, whereas the former is rigid and absolute in its application, the latter allows for a certain degree of flexibility. The goal of equal consideration in a utilitarian philosophy is to determine the action that will result in the greatest balance of 'good' results over 'bad' results. Thus, while Singer also opposes forms of animal exploitation, such as vivisection, animal agriculture, and hunting, he does concede that in certain circumstances the greater good may outweigh the individual interests of an animal (which, of course, includes the human animal).

While the rationalist theories Regan and Singer propose to justify ethical treatment of other animals do differ, it is important to emphasize that their applications are generally far more similar than they are dissimilar. Despite the use of different reasoning, both authors argue, in essence, that humans need to make the same basic concrete changes in our relationships with other animals. While both are considered part of the animal rights movement, the notion of rights in relation to each theory differs. Based in traditional natural rights theory, which privileges rationalism and individualism

(Donovan, 1990, p. 355), Regan directly focuses on the perception of other animals' intrinsic value and rights as central to changing how humans treat them. Singer, on the other hand, directly focuses his analysis on the dominant human ideology and the forms of exploitation that follow from it. In this sense, Singer actually focuses on animal liberation, rather than rights.

### **(B) Animal Rights and Environmentalism, Feminism and Ecofeminism**

Many in the animal rights movement consider the term animal rights to be problematic at best (e.g., Livingston, 1994; Midgley, 1983), and, in fact, reject the term altogether. "As many people have already suggested, its various uses have diverged too far to be usefully reunited" (Midgley, 1983, p. 63). Rights can be discussed in a general and often vague moral context, or translated into a potentially more specific political or legal context, and objections to applications of the term abound. For example, while some maintain that the origin of the concept of rights is irrelevant to its application (e.g., Feldmann, 1995, p. 3), others view it differently. Environmental activist and ethicist John A. Livingston contends that, "rights are willingly conveyed by or forcibly extracted from those who hold power. In spite of the legal scholars and philosophers, there is no such animal as a 'natural right'" (1994, p. 164). From this perspective, then, rights are socially constructed by humans, and to apply the concept to nonhuman animals is to inappropriately attempt to bring them into our homocentric, hierarchical system of power. This inappropriateness is highlighted, according to Livingston, by attempts to apply the notion of rights to the rest of nature.

At this point, I turn to the area of environmental ethics known as deep ecology (e.g., see The Animal Rights / Environmental Ethics Debate: The Environmental Perspective, Hargrove, ed., 1992). Deep ecologists, such as J. Baird Callicott (1992), for example, reject the homocentrism they see as inherent in moral extensionism and challenge such systems that are based in terms of individuals and rights. They argue that, instead of thinking “of individuals as separate from the ecological systems of which they are a part,” it is necessary to shift our ethics from talk of rights and justice to a recognition of “the interconnectedness of all living and even nonliving systems” (Finsen & Finsen, 1994, p. 240).

The primary ethical priority of deep ecologists is the health and diversity of whole ecosystems. While they agree with animal liberationists that humans should stop dominating other animals, they disagree that this should be done on the basis of extending our standards to them. Deep ecologists argue that humans should stop dominating the living *and* nonliving realms of nature, and accept and abide by the laws of ecology. To do so would entail, in part, accepting that individual death is necessary and desirable towards the greater good of the ecosystem. Not surprisingly, most deep ecologists do not consider valuing whole ecosystems as compatible with animal liberation (Finsen & Finsen, 1994), and from the different approaches come numerous conflicts of application.

Other objections to the orientation of contemporary animal rights theory are seen in the writings of many feminists. For example, Josephine Donovan (1990) and Erin McKenna (1994) criticize the priority placed on reason over emotion. As Donovan

observes, “women animal rights theorists seem, indeed, to have developed more of a sense of emotional bonding with animals as the basis for their theory than is evident in the male literature” (1990, p. 351). To describe the perspective this objection concerns, I turn to the work of Singer as an example. In choosing this example, I wish to point out that analogous statements can be found throughout the works of Regan (e.g., 1983, p. xii; 1985, pp. 23-25).

In the preface to the first edition of Animal Liberation, Singer makes his emphasis on rationalism explicit: “The portrayal of those who protest against cruelty to animals as sentimental, emotional ‘animal lovers’ has had the effect of excluding the entire issue of our treatment of nonhumans from serious political and moral discussion” (1990, p. iii). He insists that he is not an ‘animal lover’, and that he wishes to “appeal to basic moral principles which we all accept”, the application of which “is demanded by reason, not emotion” (1990, p. iii).

In Singer’s words, he bases his argument for animal liberation:

on an appeal to reason rather than emotion or sentiment...not because I am unaware of the importance of kind feelings and sentiments of respect toward other creatures, but because reason is more universal and more compelling in its appeal. Greatly as I admire those who have eliminated speciesism from their lives purely because their sympathetic concern for others reaches out to all sentient creatures, I do not think that an appeal to sympathy and good-heartedness alone will convince most people of the wrongness of speciesism. Even where other human beings are concerned,

people are surprisingly adept at limiting their sympathies to those of their own nation or race. Almost everyone, however, is at least nominally prepared to listen to reason (1990, p. 243).

At the same time, however, Singer does not entirely reject or ignore emotion.

Referring to the chapters in which he details some of the practices which result from a speciesist attitude, he writes that:

there are passages that will arouse some emotions. These will, I hope, be emotions of anger and outrage, coupled with a determination to do something about the practices described. Nowhere in this book, however, do I appeal to the reader's emotions where they cannot be supported by reason. When there are unpleasant things to be described it would be dishonest to try to describe them in some neutral way that hid their real unpleasantness (1990, p. iii).

Thus, although Singer does give a limited place to emotion in his book, he does so rather begrudgingly and with, what appears to be, a kind of disclaimer. A further explanation of his prioritization of reason over emotion is offered in an article he wrote in response to McKenna's critique (1994). In this response, Singer (1994) states that:

the passages [Erin McKenna] quotes at the beginning of her essay now strike me as showing a one-sided emphasis on rational argument, with an excessive belittling of the significance of emotions. To that extent, I agree with much of what she says. Nevertheless, in writing Animal Liberation I had grounds for taking my stance upon a basis of reason

rather than emotion, and it may be helpful to see why I approached the issue in that way (p. 36).

Where the two authors primarily diverge, then, is on the question of the possibility and desirability of achieving an impartial, objective (i.e., universal) position. Feminists argue that attention must be paid to the subjective and particular.

From this objection to the dualistic, masculinist bias of the major theories of the current animal rights movement arises a concern about the view of the individual. It has been suggested that the predominant notions of rights and justice emphasize the self-interest of autonomous individuals to the exclusion of a recognition of connectedness (McKenna, 1994). Further, the dualism inherent in the reason/emotion split is, ironically, the very tool which has made the objectification of nonhuman animals possible in our society (McKenna, 1994; Donovan, 1990).

Erin McKenna, for example, challenges the perspective of the individual in Singer's work, and proposes a different view based on socialist feminist and radical feminist theories. Moving to this perspective, the focus shifts "from rights talk to issues of responsibility and care" (1994, p. 28). She also recognizes the dangers involved in accepting either of these approaches on their own, and proposes that:

there is a fruitful combination of Singer's argument with these feminist approaches that will help us see the deep nature of our connectedness to nonhuman animals and make us realize that the eating of meat is really a form of cannibalism (1994, p. 28).

Thus, McKenna does not suggest that we abandon Singer's argument - indeed, she states that we need it - but rather, that we should build upon it. To achieve lasting change in how we treat other animals, then, we must act according to what we think *and* feel to be right, incorporating our emotional selves and becoming "integrated individuals in an integrated world" (1994, p. 34).

Toward this aim, Carol J. Adams (1994) points to the feminist theories about "different voices" (Gilligan, 1982), "maternal thinking" (Ruddick, 1990), and connectional selves (Keller, 1986) as offering "the grounds for exploring the meaning of our connection to the other animals and how we act morally upon these connections or lack of them" (p. 139). The recently published book entitled Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals (Donovan & Adams, eds., 1996) is a collection of articles that is intended as a first step toward establishing caring as the basis for a new approach to animal advocacy theory. The nature of the critiques discussed so far indicate how "contemporary animal-defence theory has been deeply dependent on the dominant philosophical traditions that feminism seeks to expose" (Adams, 1994, p. 138). However, most feminists do not share the perception of human use of other animals as abuse and interconnected with patriarchy. As Adams (1994) summarily observes:

Unfortunately, the tendency for feminists to dismiss the defence of animals because of the contaminated notion of 'rights' means that animals themselves become absent referents. The virtue of animal-rights theory is that it recognizes individual animals and argues against their instrumentality. In light of feminist critiques of rights language, the task



becomes one of searching for language that can just as effectively say that each individual animal's life matters, that people should see their treatment of animals as ethical issues (p. 139).

Works such as Marjorie Spiegel's, The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery (1988), and Adams', The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory (1990), illuminate the parallels between forms of human exploitation of other animals and of other humans. Considering the way in which nonhuman animals are predominantly viewed in our society, it is not surprising that many object to such 'comparisons'. The opening paragraph of Spiegel's book addresses this issue: "Comparing speciesism with racism? At first glance, many people might feel that it is insulting to compare the suffering of non-human animals to that of humans. In fact in our society, comparison to an animal has come to be a slur" (1988, p. 15). She proceeds to outline the historical contexts within which comparison to other animals has been considered an insult, noting other cultures which contrarily have considered such comparisons to be an honour. Spiegel suggests that "comparing the suffering of animals to that of blacks (or any other oppressed group) is offensive only to the speciesist: one who has embraced the false notions of what animals are like" (1988, p. 26-27).

The common purpose of works such as these two involves more than simply drawing analogies or making comparisons between different forms or contexts of oppression. In other words, it is more than simply saying, for example, speciesism is *like* racism. Ultimately, the purpose is to expose the interdependent nature of different forms and the common ground from which they arise. As Marjorie Spiegel (1988) states:

[A]ny oppression helps to prop up other forms of oppression. This is why it is vital to link oppressions in our minds, to look for the common, shared aspects, and fight against them as one, rather than prioritizing victims' suffering... For when we prioritize we are in effect becoming one with the oppressor (p. 26).

Similarly, this goal is discussed in another work by Adams, entitled Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defence of Animals (1994). Included in this book as an appendix is a descriptive passage by and about a group which provides an informative example of this goal in the feminist context and an introduction to the area known as ecofeminism:

Feminists for Animal Rights (FAR) is dedicated to ending all forms of abuse against women and animals. Because exploitation of women and animals derives from the same patriarchal mentality, FAR attempts to expose the connections between sexism and speciesism whenever and wherever we can. We feel that the common denominator in the lives of women and animals is violence - either real or threatened - and we work in nonviolent ways to change that.

FAR attempts to raise the consciousness of the feminist community, the animal-rights community and the general public about the connections between the objectification, exploitation, and abuse of women and animals in patriarchal society. As ecofeminists, we are concerned about cultural and racial injustice and the devaluation and

destruction of nature and the earth. We view patriarchy as a system of hierarchical domination, a system that works for the powerful and willing against the powerless and unwilling (p. 206).

Underlying this kind of perspective is a rejection of models of identity and oppression that account for social dimensions, such as gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, and social class, in an additive, rather than interlocking manner. Additive models of identity focus on the sum of distinct 'parts,' rather than on the intersectional experience, the particular. Additive models of oppression emphasize quantification and categorization "in conjunction with the belief that either/or categories must be ranked" (Patricia Hill Collins, 1991, p. 225). Rationalization for a logic of domination occurs by assigning to differences meanings of inferiority and superiority (Karen J. Warren, 1990), forming the basis for a hierarchical system.

When we shift from this dichotomous mode of 'either/or' thinking to a recognition of the 'both/and' intersectional experience, we move from a view of systems of oppression as distinct to one in which such systems are "part of one overarching structure of domination" (Hill Collins, 1991, p. 222). The inclusive view of interlocking systems of oppression highlights how privilege and oppression co-exist (Adams, 1994), and how "all groups possess varying amounts of penalty and privilege in one historically created system" (Hill Collins, 1991, p. 225). Thus, we must each acknowledge our own place in this single system where we may be oppressed, and/or may benefit from the oppression of others, and/or may be oppressors ourselves.

Ecofeminist theory is based on a recognition of the relationship between the abuse of nature and the inequitable distribution of wealth and power (Adams, 1994). Viewing social domination as interdependent with the domination of nature, ecofeminists insist that “no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature” (Gaard, 1993, p. 1). Having evolved from, and incorporating ideas from, a wide array of fields of inquiry and activist movements, ecofeminism calls for an end to the domination of women, nonhuman animals, nature, and indeed, all forms of oppression. This being said, it is important to clarify that, as Adams (1994) articulates:

Ecofeminism does not presuppose or posit a unitary voice of women. Its theory-making and activism is global in perspective and authorship. We are not talking about a unity with other women that would erase differences among us, nor enable us to flatten the various experiences that arise from these differences. We are talking about solidarity against an “othering” that motivates and justifies oppression. In recognizing the interlocking systems of oppression and its othering discourse, one sees that, as Alice Walker argues, “we are one lesson”. Then our understanding of any individual experience of oppression finds its appropriate framework (p. 81).

### **(C) Putting the Issue of Animal Rights On Human ‘Agendas’**

In all their diversity, theories in defence of other animals attempt to demonstrate that the way other animals are generally viewed in our society, and the things that we

directly and indirectly do to them, are ethical issues that must be recognized as such; in addition, from this recognition, our attitudes, values, lifestyles, and actions must be changed accordingly. In this regard, the dramatic and unprecedented growth of the animal rights movement, and the changes brought about through the efforts of its members, attest to the significance of the progress made. Despite the astoundingly, horrifically massive scope of the changes that still need to occur, there is room for optimism; as so many others continue to join in the journey, we are picking up speed toward a world of peace, compassion, and justice for all.

The importance to the women's movement of consciousness-raising and recognition that the personal is political is shared in the animal rights movement. In our society, the view of other animals as objects for our appropriate or necessary 'use' is deeply entrenched. Humans use other animals in an astonishingly large number of ways, some of which are more apparent, or direct than others. For example, whereas we can readily see some body parts of other animals consumed as food or worn as clothing, we cannot so readily see the 'animal ingredients' in many common items, such as cosmetics, or household or personal care products (PETA, 1995).

In addition, these kinds of common items are not generally associated with the animals who were made to suffer and were killed in the name of product-testing. In our society, the realities of slaughterhouses and the myriad variety of research, education, and product-testing laboratories (e.g., Ingrid Newkirk, 1992) are effectively distanced and hidden from most human eyes. With the technological advancements of recent decades, the human domination of other animals has reached unprecedented levels of

misery and invasiveness, seen for example, in factory farming (e.g., Jim Mason & Peter Singer, 1980; Singer, 1990) and genetic engineering (e.g., Peter Wheale & Ruth McNally, 1990).

Even in the contexts where the animal connection is most apparent, however, it often goes unrecognized. We humans are amazingly adept at rationalizing and masking our uses of other animals - authors similarly have commented on “culturally sanctioned ignorance,” “the strength of our cultural conditioning” (Robbins, 1992, p. 104-105), and “conditioned ethical blindness” (Barnes, 1985, p. 160). Language plays an important role in concealing the animal connections and maintaining the status quo, and a useful example of this is found in Adams’ discussion of ‘meat’ as a false mass term:

Because of the reign of “meat” as a mass term, it is not often while eating “meat” that one thinks: “I am now interacting with an animal.” We do not see our own personal “meat”-eating as contact with animals because it has been renamed as contact with food. But what is on the plate in front of us is *not* devoid of specificity. It is the dead flesh of what was once a living, feeling being. The crucial point here is that we make *someone* who is a unique being and therefore not the appropriate referent of a mass term into *something* that is the appropriate referent of a mass term. We do so by removing any associations that might make it difficult to accept the activity of rendering a unique individual into a consumable thing. Not wanting to be aware of this activity, we accept this disassociation, this distancing device of the mass term “meat” (Adams, 1993, p. 202).

Analysing our language and deconstructing meanings of its use can expose the underlying, often common, oppressive roots of this language and its effects, thus, opening the door for change. For instance, consider how very derogatory and oppressive it is to humans and animals for a man/woman to call another man/woman a snake, weasel, jackass, cow, pig, chick, bitch, or dog (to name only a few!). Discussions of these issues of language are found, for example, in Adams' (1990) book, The Sexual Politics of Meat, and Joan Dunayer's (1995) essay, "Sexist Words, Speciesist Roots".

In general, the animal rights movement seeks to raise humans' awareness of the lives and deaths of other animals as subjects, and our treatment of them as a form of oppression. To do so is to reject the current discursive boundaries that place our use of other animals in the natural or personal realm and to recognize the issue as a political one (Adams, 1993), thus "making visible the invisible" (Adams, 1994, p. 139) and putting the issue on the public agenda. Reading the following words of Adams (1994), I consider the issue in regard to the community of the MA program of which I am a part:

I believe conversations about issues associated with the defence of animals can occur; I do not think they can be imposed from outside but they grow from a common base of working together on issues that arise from within the community. They must grow organically from the ground where we recognize our common commitments to justice (p. 78-79).

In the various courses I took in the community psychology program, the issues of the inequitable distribution of wealth and power, its social consequences, and strategies for change were emphasized. Students were allowed various degrees of input in

choosing the specific topics to be included on different course agendas. Voicing my preferences in negotiations of this sort, I typically advocated for the inclusion of peace and environmental issues. I did so, not because I considered these issues to be more important than others (e.g., racism, sexism, ageism, ableism), but rather, because of a concern that all our efforts to study and end forms of oppression are taking place on a planet that we have put in great jeopardy and, therefore, the ultimate success of these efforts is inextricably tied to the urgent necessity of healing and protecting our planet.

During course-agenda negotiations, however, I did not advocate for the inclusion of the animal rights issue. While my perspectives and actions regarding other animals had been changing for several years, I was not yet at the point where I considered myself a member of the animal rights movement, and I took the courses in my first year of the program, primarily keeping ‘the animal issue’ to myself. At that time, I accepted the prevalent societal discursive boundaries which place the issue in the realm of the personal, and only raised it rarely, in the form of informal comments. As this thesis testifies, much has changed for me since that time.

As I look back over all that I have learned about animal rights, particularly during the last two years, I am struck by so many connections I was not previously aware of. For example, while I did tend towards an inclusive view of various forms of oppression, I was virtually oblivious to the way so many problems I was concerned about relate to or are directly caused by the human oppression of other animals. For instance, I learned a long time ago that problems of world hunger and environmental destruction should not be primarily attributed, as they so often are, to overpopulation in the so-called Third



World. Blaming the Majority World in this way helps shield those of us who live in so-called developed countries (i.e., the Minority World) from the enormity of the role that our lifestyles and horrendously disproportionate consumption of energy and resources play in the causation and maintenance of such problems.

While this view illuminates many of the lifestyle changes that we must make toward ending these global problems, it also leaves many others, including possibly the most influential one, hidden in darkness. Although an ethical concern for nonhuman animals motivated me to begin switching to a plant-based diet many years ago, it is only after formally inquiring into the issue of animal rights during the last year and a half that I have learned how astonishingly much a flesh-based diet contributes to these global problems. There are many sources that elaborate on the numerous, complex, destructive effects of animal agriculture, including those effects on human violence (e.g., Kenneth White & Kenneth Shapiro, 1994) and health. For the purposes of this discussion, however, the following passage from Harriet Schleifer's (1985) essay, Images of Death and Life: Food Animal Production and the Vegetarian Option, will suffice as an illustrative example:

Ecologically the production of animal products is wasteful and inefficient. According to Keith Akers' A Vegetarian Sourcebook, energy and water requirements are between ten and 1,000 times greater than they would be for an equal amount of plant food. Consequently, most soil erosion (90 per cent), consumptive use of water (80 per cent) and

deforestation (70 per cent) is the result of livestock agriculture. It is also responsible for most of our water pollution.

Meat consumption in Western countries is a primary cause of hunger, both at home and in the Third World. Only 42 per cent of an animal's original weight becomes meat. ...Although the unfair distribution which characterizes international trade makes it an unlikely dream, it is also a fact that if everyone in the developed world became a vegetarian, it would be possible to give four tons of edible grain to every starving person (p. 68).

In other sources, points such as these may be made in different forms or present slightly differing figures; for example, "Ten hectares of land will support 61 people on a diet of soya beans, 24 on a diet of wheat, but only 2 on a diet of beef" (New Internationalist, 1991, No. 215, p. 16). However, any such differences are effectually irrelevant because the evidence presented in these sources all support the same strong, overall trend. It is worth reiterating here that my choice in this discussion of the effects of an animal-based diet is only one example of how the human oppression of other animals is harmful not only to the other animals, but also to ourselves and the rest of nature. Even more importantly, I should point out that the harm to humans and the environment which is caused by oppression of other animals should only be considered as an additional reason to stop exploiting other animals. Otherwise, the ideology of human superiority, in which our oppressive practices are rooted, remains unchallenged and unchanged.

The kind of connection discussed in the three preceding paragraphs (i.e., the links between an animal-based diet and problems of environmental degradation, world hunger, human health and violence), as well as the other kinds discussed elsewhere in this literature review (e.g., the common aspects of various forms of oppression), demonstrate how excluding the animal rights issue from our consideration, or agendas, can cause us to miss important 'pieces of puzzles' we may already be working on. A major aim of my discussion thus far has been to provide an introduction to some key ideas in the area commonly referred to as animal rights. This introduction has been necessary, as there is a great deal of ignorance and misinformation about animal rights in our society, and I cannot assume that people who may read the thesis will have prior knowledge of the area. Having done so provides a basis from which I can turn to what remains missing - the voices of the participants in this project and attention to their experiences of the process of discovering and implementing ideas of animal rights.

## METHOD

### Overview

The purpose of this project which, aside from ultimately attempting to put the issue of animal rights on more peoples' agendas, is to explore the process of 'finding' animal rights, of changing ideas, actions, and relationships involving nonhuman animals. I explored this process through the documentation and analysis of in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews by and with members of an animal rights group. Given

the diversity and scope of the animal rights movement, these interviews were intended to provide a variety of descriptive examples of this process of change, and to the extent possible, identify areas of importance, similarity, or difference among the participants' stories. While the content of each interview was primarily governed by the experiences and perspectives of the participant involved, the following interrelated topics were covered: 1) the participants' past and present relationships with nonhuman animals; 2) how the participants' evolving relationships with nonhuman animals influenced their relationships with humans and other aspects of their lives (e.g., interests and activities); and 3) how participants foresee their future relationships with other animals (e.g., few or many changes; general and/or specific plans, goals, hopes, best guesses). The word relationship, as mentioned in these topics, is broadly defined, referring to actions, thoughts, and emotions. In addition to documenting some examples of the ways in which people view the issue of animal rights, come to participate in the movement, and experience the process of change, this project is intended to identify some of the positive and negative aspects of these experiences and any factors, events, people, or circumstances that may have helped or hindered the initiation and continuation of the process of change.

### Participants

Excluding myself, the participants in this project are six members of an informal, local-level animal rights group in southwestern Ontario. One of these people participated in a pilot, or, test interview, and the other five each participated in an

interview that I qualitatively analysed for presentation in the findings section. In addition to their participation in interviews, all six participants served as members of a Research Advisory Committee (RAC). As coresearchers, participants have been involved in guiding this project from the initial task of choosing and defining a subject within the area of animal rights.

As this project was not intended to produce findings that are based on a representative sample and can be generalized to the larger population of the animal rights movement, participants were selected purposefully (e.g., Patton, 1990, pp. 169-183). Thus, the findings of this project may be transferable to similar contexts. The intention was to involve a group of participants that exhibited considerable diversity (that is, in relation to that of the entire animal rights group) regarding certain dimensions of interest. Dimensions identified as relevant to this project were: age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and length of involvement in animal rights. The goal was not to attempt to select the combination of participants that would reflect the absolute maximum variation possible. On the contrary, the participants and I were interested in approximations (e.g., length of involvement in animal rights could be sufficiently identified as a couple of years or several decades) and in simply presenting a considerable range of examples.

Formation of the RAC began in November 1994, when I made two formal calls for RAC members, introducing myself, some relevant aspects of my background, and my intention to do a thesis project on animal rights. The first call occurred as part of a 'regular,' open group meeting, held at the usual location. The second one occurred at a

special meeting that was called for me by, and held at the home of, the group's primary contact person. This second call was attended by interested individuals identified through the first meeting and by several other individuals who were not in attendance at the first meeting, and who were known, trusted, and selected by the group's primary contact person. RAC membership was on a voluntary and flexible basis. After some initial changes in the size and composition of the committee, it evolved to a stable group of six people. As the project was defined, all RAC members agreed to be interview participants as well. Involving participants from a single animal rights group in this way was beneficial in regard to the following: attending to ethical issues; the importance to participants of trust; offering equal opportunity and the potential for organizational benefits; and maximizing opportunities for communication and sharing between participants, as well as for utilization of project findings.

As a result of discussions with and among participants, the RAC and I agreed that the identities of participants would be kept confidential, and that each would be referred to in the thesis by an assumed first name of his or her choosing. As part of this agreement, participants insisted that I explain in the thesis document that everyone feels positively and strongly about her or his identity as an animal rights advocate. In other words, they want it to be made clear that they feel "proud of," or "good about" their beliefs and efforts regarding other animals and that consideration of several other factors led to the decision to protect anonymity. In no particular order, then, I will briefly outline these other factors, which are: 1) a concern about the privacy of interview participants and their comfort to discuss the interview topics (e.g., personal experiences,

relationships, feelings); 2) a concern about potential conflicts regarding the privacy of other individuals who might be referred to in the stories told by participants; and 3) a concern that the potential exists for a variety of ‘negative consequences’ to occur if participants’ identities are not kept confidential (e.g., anti-animal rights backlash, conflicts with individuals, employers, etc.).

In addition to their own experiences, participants are aware of various forms of animal rights opposition through their knowledge of the experiences of others. Since these experiences and this knowledge have influenced all participants in some way, it is important to provide here some idea of what the opposition can be like. Despite the fact that animal advocates come from all walks of life (e.g., see Appendix A), they are often stereotyped (e.g., see Appendix B). Advocates are frequently labelled fanatics or terrorists, and are said to be ‘anti-science’ and against any human contact with other animals. We are sometimes accused of being ‘anti-human’, and compared to Nazis (Kalechofsky, 1996). Because of their beliefs, advocates are sometimes discriminated against, and two examples of this involving psychology students are included in Appendix C. Alan Bowd and Kenneth Shapiro (1993) describe how the psychological establishment has responded to growing concerns about the use of animals in research and education by adopting a defensive posture and trivializing the concerns of animal protectionists. Groups have been formed for the specific purpose of opposing animals rights. One such group is the Hamilton-based Putting People First, and the following quote referring to animal rights is taken from a video they produced in 1996, entitled

“Just The Facts”: “Our traditional lifestyle and basic freedoms are in jeopardy. Now is the time to stop this insidious cancer of our society before it’s too late.”

Among the many aspects of the identities of the various participants are student, mother, grandmother, wife, partner, brother, sister, and organizer. None of the participants is of a visible ethnic minority, three have some form of post-secondary education, and one is retired. Regarding the ages of the interview participants, two are in their twenties, and the remaining three, in their thirties, forties, and fifties. Participants are or have been employed at a variety of part-time and full-time jobs, and the group represents a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

As part of my methodological approach, I now describe some relevant aspects of my background and the subjective perspective from which I act as primary researcher and author of this project. Like the other participants, I have experienced my own process of changing relationships with other animals and have become an advocate on their behalf. My beliefs and social change efforts extend beyond the defence of other animals, in accordance with an ecofeminist perspective.

Shortly after earning one undergraduate degree in biology and starting a second one in psychology, I made an ethically-based decision to become, what I called at the time, vegetarian; I stopped eating animals, except for those that I categorized as “seafood.” Also during my time as an undergraduate student, I chose to study, perform, and participate in a wide variety of dissections and experiments involving animals. I pursued these activities, which were usually of a highly invasive nature, willingly and with great curiosity, in the contexts of fulfilling course requirements and, intermittently



throughout much of my second degree, in the pursuit of additional experience as a volunteer research assistant. Toward the end of my second degree I decided, for a number of reasons, to look for a different field to pursue graduate work in.

Several years later I was enrolled in this community psychology program, awaiting a reply on the application I had made for ethical approval of my thesis proposal, which concerned the experiences of psychiatric survivors and had recently been approved by my thesis committee. During this time, I encountered a major turning point in my life when I happened to meet and get to know some members of an animal rights group. I began considering some of the ideas of animal rights and my own experiences, and within a relatively short period of time, realized that this area, more than any other, was what I wanted to focus my efforts on. As I had not yet begun the work phase of my proposed thesis project, and believed that I had ample time available, I decided to begin the whole thesis process over again, finding a new thesis committee and a new project.

In the roughly two years since that time my relationships with other animals have changed considerably, and I have become more educated about and involved in animal rights issues and the movement. Some manifestations of this on-going change are of the personal realm (e.g., eliminating all animals from my diet; greatly reducing and working toward the elimination of animal products from my diet; switching to brands of personal and household products that are not tested on animals and do not contain ingredients derived from animals), and others are more public or out-reach oriented in nature (e.g., giving talks and interviews; speaking out, including via the media; participating in various efforts of animal rights groups, including public protests and projects geared

toward raising awareness and effecting systems-level change). I have attended local events, such as talks and symposia, as well as regional and international conferences. Throughout this process of becoming an advocate for other animals, I have enjoyed meeting many other animal advocates, including some known authors and activists, and have developed many valued friendships, including those with the participants of this project.

#### General Method and Procedure

Working from a social constructionist perspective, this thesis project is a form of naturalistic inquiry (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985), using qualitative methods of interviewing and data analysis. I conducted the interviews in general accordance with the principles presented in Basic Attending Skills (Ivey, Gluckstern, & Bradford Ivey, 1982), and I used a general interview guide (e.g., Patton, 1990), which is included as Appendix D. As the subject of the interviews suggested an oral life-history format (Reinharz, 1992, pp. 126-144), I analysed the interviews using narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988; Vance, 1995). The trustworthiness of the data collected and the findings presented was maximized by triangulation - in this case, the combination of: prolonged engagement with the setting; documenting the research process in journals; an interview that was in-depth, tape-recorded, and transcribed verbatim; preparation for the interview by each participant through recalling and reflecting on his or her experiences in relation to the topics outlined in the interview guide; and checks on the data and analyses by the participants and the project advisor.

The following passage concerning qualitative methods and collaborative research with mutual-help groups (Powell & Cameron, 1991) is relevant to this project involving an animal rights group:

[S]elf-help leaders are more comfortable with qualitative methods because they regard them as better suited to the complexity of the self-help processes. They feel that qualitative research methods require the researcher to develop an 'ear' for experiential phenomena and there is less danger that the researchers will impose their own structures on them. Qualitative methods also lend themselves better to describing changes over time, and to dealing with exceptions and subtly nuanced differences both within and across various groups (p. 799).

Finally, this project was carried out in accordance with an orientation that incorporates some of the principles of participatory action research (PAR). According to Mark Chesler (1991),

“subjects” individual and collective involvement in the design, conduct, and utilization of research, and scientists’ involvement in action to improve group functioning, are among the hallmarks of PAR. Such an approach is most consistent with self-help characteristics and ideology: highly participative membership, aprofessional leadership, localist and grass-roots orientation, and respect for experience-based knowledge (p. 757).

This description of self-help characteristics and ideology has much in common with the present context. In this project, participants have been involved, to varying degrees, in the design, conduct, and planning for utilization of the research. My involvement in action, however, is focused on the previously stated goals of the project and any ways in which the findings might be used - not on improving group functioning. I emphasize this, because the animal rights group involved did not ask to have their functioning improved. While I do not deny the possibility that the group could benefit in some way as a result of the participation of some of its members in this project, I merely wish to clarify that I do not claim 'group improvement' as my purpose, and that, if this did occur to any degree, it would be the result of the combined undertaking and contributions by myself and all other participants.

As described previously, this project began with the formation of the RAC. I have documented the RAC meetings to date in a journal (e.g., topics covered, date, attendance), and, in another journal, I recorded other kinds of information, including: 1) information relating to my own learning; and 2) my notes, ideas, and reflections in the process of planning and carrying out the project. To safeguard the results of our work, I stored multiple copies of information (e.g., drafts of the proposal and thesis, transcripts) that had been entered into my computer, in a secure location in my home; some journal information remains available only in hand-written format. Methods of communicating and updating between myself and other participants occurred in this project through: 1) telephone calls, 2) written mailings, 3) informal discussion in the contexts of other group-related interactions, and 4) formal discussion in the context of RAC meetings.

Documents that contained confidential information, such as transcripts, were delivered by hand to participants.

RAC meetings were held as necessary during the various stages of this project. As it was never possible to assemble all participants at once, I attended multiple meetings each time one was necessary, with smaller numbers of participants in attendance, and attempted to update each group on the proceedings of the other(s). Recognizing the variation in the interests and abilities of participants to commit time and energy to this project, I emphasized that any efforts they could make, and all kinds of input - brief or lengthy, general or specific, written or verbal, positive or negative - were valuable. Our goal was to strive for consensus, as opposed to “majority rule.” Reaching consensus can be difficult, but did not present any great problems in this project. In situations of conflict, priority was always given to the interest of preserving anonymity. We attempted to avoid “imposing” consensus by considering all ideas and respecting minority opinions (Dimock, 1970).

After the various consultations with the participants and my primary advisor, I wrote a first draft of the proposal and submitted copies of it to the members of the WLU Thesis Committee and the RAC for their approval. Feedback concerning this draft was received in written and verbal forms, and the appropriate modifications were made to produce a second draft, a copy of which was delivered to each participant. During this early phase of the project, I encouraged individuals to begin thinking about their stories and suggested that they might find it helpful to make notes as part of this preparation. Following approval of the proposal, I wrote and submitted an application for ethical

review of the project according to the requirements of the WLU Psychology Department. After this application was approved, I consulted with the participants as to how their preparation for their interviews was proceeding. All participants spent time recalling and reflecting on their experiences, and for some, whose stories went back many years, or who had never before given the matter much thought, these preparation efforts were extensive, sometimes including discussions with other people who were aware of or had been a part of their past experiences. With one exception, each participant brought several pages of prepared notes to the interview.

Each of the six interviews consisted of three segments, which I will call pre-interview, interview, and post-interview. Including all but the pilot, or test interview, the interview process ranged from approximately three to five hours in duration and occurred over a single session. The test interview was conducted first, taking significantly more time than the other interviews, and occurring over three separate sessions. This was followed by the five interviews that were to be analysed as part of the findings section. All interviews were tape-recorded and occurred at the participant's own home, in an environment that was as quiet and free of distractions as possible.

The pre-interview segment began with time spent simply visiting, discussing matters unrelated to the project, and generally settling in. We then moved on to discussing and preparing for the interview. I encouraged participants to feel free to ask questions at any time. Despite the fact that all participants were familiar with the primary consent form (see Appendix E) through their activities as RAC members, all aspects of the form were read and discussed during this segment. In particular,

participants were reminded of: 1) the limit to confidentiality imposed by the necessity of having someone - in this case, my advisor - read the transcripts, in order to perform a review, or, check of my analysis of the interviews; and 2) that only those quotations from their interviews that they have been presented with in writing and approved for release will appear in the thesis document.

We reviewed the consent form for quotation approval (see Appendix F). Then I reminded participants that the interview process was to be non-judgemental and that everything they had to say was important. We discussed the participant's comfort with tape-recording the interview, and I pointed out how different the language styles of written and transcribed works are, in order to prepare anyone who had never seen spoken words printed verbatim. Finally, I told participants that they might occasionally see me making notes during the interview. I explained that these would be to remind myself of things that I wanted to ask the participant to clarify or elaborate on, or that I, personally, wanted to discuss or share with them.

The second segment, consisting of the formal interview, began after the participant signed the primary consent form. Interviews were conversational in style and, though semi-structured to a degree, relatively open-ended. I let the participants guide the interviews as much as possible, and tried to focus on being there for the participants stories, as opposed to engaging in a reciprocal process of sharing. Each interview varied in regard to how much I was required to guide it (e.g., asking questions or suggesting topics for discussion). My role in directing the interviews ranged from extreme in one case to almost non-existent in another; in all other cases, it was minimal to moderate. I

endeavoured to transcribe each interview before proceeding to conduct the next, in order to deliver the transcript to the corresponding participant as soon as possible after the interview. Doing so was also helpful to me in becoming familiar with the participants' stories. The post-interview segment followed the formal interview and included the opportunity for me to share my own comments or experiences relating to what I was told by the participant. Also during this segment, the participants and I discussed our experiences of the interview, how we thought it went, and spent time generally winding down and visiting.

### Data Analysis

Participants reviewed their own transcripts, and made additions, deletions, and/or clarifications to the content as necessary. This review process served to maximize the accuracy of the data and the comfort levels of the participants with regard to issues of privacy and confidentiality. Each participant received a copy of his or her reviewed and modified transcript, and I used these modified versions for data analysis. I analysed the reviewed transcripts using narrative analysis, with the intent of producing the following two parts: 1) summarized life histories, outlining the major steps in some stories of change; and 2) identified areas of importance, similarity, or difference among all participants' stories.

An initial step in my analysis was to print special versions of the five transcripts that had large right margins, and I carefully re-read their content, writing descriptive notes in the margins. Through the experiences of the interviews, their prompt



transcription, reviewing, reflecting, and making these notes, I became very familiar with each of the five stories. I edited irrelevant information from the transcripts (e.g., interruptions; some of my own comments; brief ‘asides’ or off-topic conversations), and did some regrouping of sections according to subject and temporal order, calling the resulting documents interview summaries.

I considered the content of each interview by looking at substories, both individually, and as they related to each other forming one overarching life story. I compared and contrasted the stories, identifying various aspects of them, and defined and redefined emerging patterns and themes. Based on the emergent findings, I chose how many and which participants’ stories to present as personal narratives, what to report in the thesis, and what to omit due to constraints on time and thesis length. My decisions were made considering my own judgement, as well as my estimation of what the judgements of the participants themselves would have been. I organized and refined what was chosen, and wrote the findings section, attempting to accurately, meaningfully, and inclusively report the findings, while also maintaining participant anonymity. In protecting anonymity, certain aspects or details of the participants’ stories were left unreported or changed to a form that was congruent with the original meaning, but more general in nature.

Participants reviewed the first draft of the findings section and gave me their feedback, including suggestions for change. In particular, I asked participants to comment on the accuracy and relevance of the findings in relation to their own experience, and how well they thought I protected anonymity. What I have heard from

participants so far, including from the two whose stories appear as personal narratives, has been overwhelmingly positive, and only a small number of very minor changes were suggested and made. An additional check on the findings was performed by my primary advisor, who was given copies of the interview summaries prior to receiving the thesis.

Throughout the course of the project, I took note of comments made by participants regarding their experiences of participation in this project. In addition, I made a special effort to inquire into the matter toward the end of the project. The participants and I have identified several possible ways to communicate the findings. The information that will appear in the final thesis document (e.g., research findings, participant-approved quotations, the design and process of the project) could be used in any or all of the following ways: 1) the submission of articles to academic journals, animal-related or other publications; 2) distribution to the public through group activities; 3) distribution to other animal-related groups; and 4) in talks or presentations.

## FINDINGS

### Personal Narratives

Due to limitations on time and length of this thesis, I present only two of the five participants' stories in the form of a personal narrative. I attempted to choose two stories that would illustrate some of the diversity found among participants relating to, for example, the length of time a person has been involved with animal rights issues, areas of experience and changes undergone. Given the great breadth and interconnectedness of

the interview subject and the fact that each person's story is comprised of many substories, it was difficult to decide what to select from the transcripts to include in the two personal narratives. Unfortunately, many diverse and rich experiences had to be excessively summarized, generalized, or left unreported, so the resulting narratives are brief outlines of some of the most relevant aspects of the participants' stories, excluding the periods of childhood and adolescence and focusing on the process of changing relationships with other animals and acting on their behalf.

Findings drawn from all five participants' stories are presented in the following community narrative section. Finally, I present some of the participants' experiences of participation in this project, as well as some of my experiences as primary researcher.

### **Olivia**

For a long time Olivia had wanted to make a connection with women and a connection with children. She began volunteering with two organizations, one focusing on children and the other on young women. Although she had many friends who were women, she couldn't fully find the connection with women that she was searching for - the opportunity for reciprocal sharing concerning various issues she felt very deeply about. Because of her knowledge of incidents of men's violence against women, she was afraid to enroll in a post-secondary women's studies course. She took the course despite her fear, but found it to be a great disappointment as there was virtually nothing in its content that was new to her. She wanted to join a women's group, but was prevented by

her fear of violence. She had never considered joining any type of animal-related group, nor was she even aware that there was an animal rights group in the city.

One day Olivia went to the circus with a friend and her friend's young son, and this, she believes, was the starting point for a major process of change. Olivia could not remember ever having been to a circus before. When her friend said that she had free tickets and invited her to go, Olivia considered it for a while and finally decided to go and check it out. She says she went just to see what it would be like, not looking for anything awful really and not even expecting there to be that many animals. They arrived at the location of the circus, but before going in, saw several elephants in a small tent outside and went over for a closer look. Olivia was so struck by the sight of these elephants - standing beside each other in this little tent, in chains, on the pavement, in the city - that she couldn't stop looking at them and stood there for the longest time, staring at them. She felt sad. Eventually her friend said they were going to go in to see the circus and Olivia went with them. The show began, the "performers" came out, and among the first were tigers, frothing at the mouth in the extreme heat. Olivia saw a man poke some of the tigers with some sort of poker, moving them out of the way and clearing away their faeces. Not long after, the horses came out, and Olivia's allergies became such a problem that she had to get up and leave before the show was over.

Olivia thought that what she had seen was gross and disgusting. She talked about it with her friend, who agreed with her. Beyond that she didn't give the matter much thought, except to wonder why there had not been anyone out at the circus doing something about it (e.g., protesting). Not long after her experience of the circus she went

on a trip to visit family, and the place she went to was one where she could feel a much stronger connection with the rest of nature. It was also the place where she had her most amazing interaction with an animal so far. She had been feeling an urge to do something with and for animals, and coincidentally, happened to hear that volunteers were needed to help in the effort to save a dying whale. She signed up to help and went back several times to be in the water with this whale, doing things like holding him up and monitoring his blows. Holding him, feeling his heart beat, and getting to know him, Olivia sensed his sentience; she says it's hard to explain, but it's almost like he knew her. Ironically, she felt, the experience was at once both amazing and sad. In the end the whale died, and Olivia wondered if they had done the most compassionate thing that they could have for him. She also spent some time questioning the motivations of herself and others who were collecting research data while trying to keep him alive.

About a year after going to the circus, Olivia got a telephone call from someone trying to sell tickets to an upcoming circus. Her response was powerful and immediate: "No way! It was awful, it was horrible, I'd never go again!". The anger she felt and the suddenness of it took her by surprise. She thought back to her circus experience of a year ago, wondering why there hadn't been anyone there speaking out; surely, she thought, there must be others in the city who feel as I do about this. She was determined to do something about it right away, so she telephoned a few different places in the city and discovered that a local animal rights group did exist. She got in touch with someone from the group and was happily surprised to learn that, although she had not seen anyone on the particular day she was at the circus, people had been out protesting.

Having previously thought that there really was not much she could do, she decided to attend a group meeting to simply talk to somebody about the circus issue and to find others who shared her feelings about it and who would attempt to raise awareness of it in others. Although she went to the meeting with very few expectations about what the people there would be like, she was a little apprehensive that they might be offended by her or judge her because, for example, she was only interested in doing something about the circus issue and, among other things, she ate meat. Not wanting to draw attention to herself or disrespect anyone at the meeting, she did check to make sure she wasn't wearing any leather before she went. During the meeting her apprehensions were eased, as she realized that the people there were all going through their own different stages (e.g., some had been vegetarian for years, whereas others were just starting to become vegetarian).

She went on to become selectively involved with the group, beginning work on the circus issue right away and feeling really excited about it. She was still a little uncomfortable at first as she became aware of all the other issues that the group dealt with that she didn't know a lot about. She stated:

I felt like maybe some of the people in the group might have been thinking, you know, "why won't she come out to *this*?", or whatever; then I saw other people were focusing on different areas, and I knew that they realized I was going through changes ... [the organizer] would just say "would you like to come out to this?", and if I said "no" she'd say "ok",

and she'd start talking about something else, you know, so then it made me more comfortable.

Since that time Olivia has learned a lot about other animal-related issues, the lives of other animals, and the groups that exist to defend them primarily by listening to other people in the group, reading books, and perusing the Internet. As a result of her increasing awareness and changing perspective she began making changes in her lifestyle, a gradual process that continues today. For example, she began to exclude exploitive items, such as leather, from her wardrobe. For the first time in her life she began to call and write letters to companies, asking specific questions about product ingredients and testing procedures.

The changes she has made in her diet have been among the most rewarding for her. Right from childhood, Olivia never enjoyed eating meat and ate little of it; it was not because she had given much thought to the suffering or animals that were behind it, but rather, because eating it generally turned her stomach and sometimes made her gag. She believed it was necessary that she force herself to eat it, and often thought that there must be something wrong with her. Her change began when she started reading books, learning about slaughterhouses, how pigs and cows are killed, and making connections, such as the one between eating a flesh-based diet and world hunger. "Then driving by", she says,

and seeing cows out in the pasture and thinking about, you know, *really* starting to think about their lives ... I knew before that they were animals and that I liked them, that they were like my dogs ... they had a spirit and

their own aliveness ... and so now I guess, that sort of explains it there, if you put a piece of cow flesh in front of me that would be like eating my dog, which in turn would be eating my brother or sister, because my dogs were my brother and sister; so [with a laugh] it's pretty deep, I guess, when you get into that.

Step-by-step, Olivia stopped eating various animals and has arrived at a point where she can say "if it can look me in the face I won't eat it". Also, more recently, she has been eating fewer and fewer animal products. The change in her diet has been liberating. No longer does she have to force herself to eat. She says,

I know what I'm eating, I can enjoy it, I eat so much healthier now, I eat so many different things ... now I know there's nothing *wrong* with me anymore ... it's wonderful not eating meat and not feeling like I have to now ... becoming involved with [the group] I feel there's other people that sort of give me a little bit of power to not have to do it, to go somewhere [to eat with other people] and I can sit and not have it.

Olivia says that another very important, positive aspect of this and other changes she has made is the increased control she has gained over her own body and life.

The most recent major influence on Olivia's development was discovering ecofeminism through her participation in this thesis project. "I'm really excited about this ecofeminism," she stated:

It's like this whole new thing, you know, there's so much information and so many people talking and I'm saying "yes!" ... like when I took the



women's studies course, it was like "I've been through this a thousand times" ... I thought "is this all?, where else can I find this?", and I found it through [the group] and through you doing your essay and helping ... I got all this information that I was looking for, I just didn't know where to find it ... it's quite a relief.

In ecofeminist literature, she says she has found "people talking about things that I've always felt that I haven't heard anybody else say, or new things that I hadn't thought about, and *connections* ... helping me connect why I'm feeling this way and somebody else connecting it with something else ... connection is a big word for me lately, but it really... it's *really* quite amazing".

Finding ecofeminism has given Olivia a new understanding of her experiences and the path she has taken:

Now it's so clear why I'm involved in animal issues ... I didn't see it before, I didn't connect my issues or my feelings about women with animals ... I wanted to get involved with women but for some reason I went to animals, and *now* it all makes sense, but it's weird how I went that way; ... Most animals are afraid of us, I think ... I mean everything is afraid of whatever's dominant, which happens to be the white male in our society, so *everything*, not just animals, everything is afraid; so I think I can associate with the animal being afraid of me because I'm afraid of, you know, the next step up ... The way animals are treated, the way women are treated - it's disgusting and it's connected and I never thought

about it, but it's *so connected!* ... I mean, yeah, you can pinpoint maybe one thing and say 'take a look at this', but then you have to look at everything; ... when I went in to talk about circuses I didn't think I was going to all of a sudden change what I was saying, what I was eating, what I was wearing, how I saw things, how I saw other people; I didn't expect that; but it was just a gradual change, it just happened and it seemed natural and it just went.

Regarding her future, Olivia plans to continue educating herself and suspects that, as with the circus, something will simply snap for her one day, and she will find herself comfortable, ready to get active with the group on some other issue, possibly fur. She says that it's neat learning about it all and it's enough for her right now. She adds, however, that "it's also hard because while I'm going through these changes animals are suffering - and I should be doing something - or *more!*".

"I've gone through so many changes in the last couple of years, I don't know what I'm gonna be doing, you know, next month! [laughs] so I'm sort of excited; I'm more excited now, and other people I know are excited with what I'm doing too so, obviously I'm excited and it's rubbing off ... and [with a laugh] I'm not usually one who gets very excited about things!"

## **Ginny**

Ginny always knew that she wanted to work with animals, but was not quite sure how she was going to make a career out of it. As a high school student, she chose to

study subjects that she thought would help her toward this goal, including biology and psychology, and was fascinated by the many animal experiments she studied. She never really thought about the individual animals, nor was she ever encouraged to do so; rather, her learning was in terms of the facts of the experiment, the results, and what it all meant. As an undergraduate she chose to study zoology and agriculture, in part, because she always thought that science should be applied for the betterment of society and not done just for pure science. Although she was uncomfortable about it, she did perform dissection as part of the academic requirements. She continued her studies in a fashion of learning the facts and figures and churning them out, never really thinking about the animals involved. She knew she did not want to be killing for science, so when there were projects she had to choose and carry out herself, she chose the least manipulative and invasive ones that she could.

While an undergraduate student, Ginny had a boyfriend who was also a student and who was a considerable influence on her. He had been raised on a farm and was a very ethical person, someone who was really able to think issues through for himself, and his influence prompted Ginny to start thinking for herself. One day the two of them spent their last bit of money on a steak and took it home all excited about having a special dinner. In the end they found that they really didn't enjoy the steak and thought, for all that money that was spent, and for that animal having to die, what did they really get out of it? At the time - roughly 20 years ago - they knew very few people who were vegetarian, and knowledge of the associated health benefits was relatively non-existent. Aversion to the taste of meat was not an issue for Ginny; in fact, she had grown up as a

great fan of meat, bacon being a particular favourite. Even so, after eating this steak Ginny and her boyfriend just knew that there was something wrong with it all, that it wasn't ethical and just didn't seem right. So without understanding all the 'ins and outs' of vegetarianism, they both became vegetarian, and, except for a short lapse later in her life (which will be described later in this narrative), Ginny has been vegetarian ever since.

After completing her undergraduate degree, she applied for several jobs that she thought would involve working with animals. Within a very short period of time, she was interviewed for and accepted a job at a university. Her job was working on an experiment which was designed to study apraxia and aphasia. (The former refers to an "inability to carry out purposeful movements in the absence of paralysis or paresis", and the latter, to a "defect or loss of power of expression by speech, writing, or signs or of comprehending spoken or written language due to injury or disease of the brain"; Kolb & Whishaw, 1985, p. 750.) Among other things, her duties included training rats and monkeys to perform certain complex motor tasks, both before and after having specific parts of their brains surgically removed. One of Ginny's parents had been aphasic after experiencing a very serious accident a few years previous, and Ginny took the job without thoroughly thinking it through, but believing that: if the research was being done, it must be necessary; it was bound to help people like her parent; and she would do whatever she could to ensure that the animals were comfortable and had as good a life as possible.

The monkeys who were used in the research were kept in tiny little cages and Ginny found this quite upsetting. She decided to buy some toys for them to play with, but was told by her supervisor that this was not allowed as it would interfere with the experiment. She soon realized that there was virtually nothing she could do to improve the lot of these monkeys, and it really bothered her that they were seen purely as research tools, their individual characters not considered. She trained the animals to perform the complex motor tasks and, right from the start, was amazed at how quickly they learned. Ginny was so amazed, in fact, that she just couldn't believe that they were so incredibly intelligent and such fast learners, and she began to wonder if she might have been unwittingly biasing the experiment. She discussed the matter with her supervisor who confirmed for her that, yes, the animals really were that bright. Ginny began thinking that if the animals were so intelligent, then surely they shouldn't be so deprived of normal behaviours, and maybe they shouldn't even be used for this research in the first place.

Ginny helped with the brain surgeries that were performed on the animals she worked with. She said:

they would remove parts of the brain and take the skull, I mean it's pretty gruesome when you think about it ... you literally just suck with a tube bits of the brain out, quite specific bits and sometimes, you know, you would do it a bit wrong and then the monkey would be totally disabled after the experiment, and this little life that you knew before that was totally normal and wonderful and could perform tasks beautifully, and they're so

dexterous and they really have *incredible* movement ... and then they'd have these surgeries and they'd just be totally destroyed and they couldn't move ... [these surgeries] are soul destroying.

There was one room in the lab which Ginny never went into, and that was the room where the animals were "sacrificed," or, killed. She knew how it was done, and it was something she never participated in or even let herself watch because she knew she could not bear to have that memory engrained on her. It was a real blow to her when her rats were killed because she had grown close to many of them. She had hoped to be able to take some of them to keep at home and save their lives after the experiment, but was unable to do so because the experiment required that their brains be removed, histologically prepared, and examined.

It did not take very long for Ginny to realize that the research was purely academic, just one question leading to another and never really being applied, never filtering down to people like her parent, people out there with problems. She could no longer see how the killing of these animals could be justified. Being totally open about the fact that she was disturbed by it, she would have long discussions on the matter with her supervisor. It was her supervisor's opinion that science is science and, as science, it was worth it, but Ginny just could not justify it; it was one thing, science being science, but it was another thing actually using these animals to such a great extent. She remembers that, at one point, there was an animal rights demonstration outside the lab. The demonstrators were blocking the front door of the building so when it came time to leave, Ginny and her co-workers were ushered out the back door. Ginny did not disagree

with the demonstrators being there. On the contrary, she thought, “They should be doing this ... I should go right around the front and join them.” Even though, in a way, she was glad that they were there, a number of factors prevented her from joining them. She worked in the lab, felt certain loyalties to her boss, had a great social life at the university, and thought that the people she worked with were wonderful - not mean or evil, but compassionate people just like herself. With these factors, and the fact that her job included duties which did not involve animals directly, she was somewhat able to justify continuing her employment there.

Ginny had grown very fond of “her” monkeys, and a few years after she had started working in the lab, the time came for them to be killed. She knew that there was no way that she could let herself be involved in the procedure, but thought that, because they were her monkeys, she probably would have to be. It was also approaching the time when papers based on the research would be published. Ginny knew that whatever career she was going to pursue in the future, she did not want it to be based on that work and did not want her name associated with that kind of research. She decided it was definitely time to leave and quit her job. She wanted to make use of her science degree somehow, while also gearing her career away from killing and using animals, so she became a graduate student in environmental technology. Right away she began learning about concepts, such as culling wildlife and sustainable harvests, and thought “you just can’t get away from it!”. Knowing that she could not be controlling or killing animals in the name of resource management, and feeling like she had to “get away from all this animal stuff,” she focused her thesis project on plants rather than animals.

After finishing her graduate degree, Ginny travelled to visit a friend whom she had known since her teens and who was now a pig farmer. The two of them were swept up in a ‘whirlwind romance’ and were married within a very short time. Living in a new place with no job, friends, or contacts, Ginny helped her husband run the farm. Similar to her experience getting involved in animal research, she thought that pig farming was a part of society, something that had to happen and, as such, she could at least try to ensure that the pigs were well looked after and as happy as possible. Caught up in the excitement of her relationship, she basically tried to block “the pig side of it all” out of her mind and got excited about all the other aspects of her life on the farm, such as the beauty of the land, the wonderful trees and the space to grow her own vegetables. In the beginning of her married life, she thought that, because her husband was a pig farmer, and because she would be associating with his friends who were also farmers, she should be eating meat. She thought it would be ok and started eating it again, but felt so bad, so guilty doing it, that she returned to vegetarianism after about a month. Aware of the health benefits of a vegetarian diet, her husband also stopped eating animals.

Living and working on this intensive pig farm, Ginny’s awareness grew, and she realized that the ‘old Macdonald’s farm’ with its happy farm animals did not exist. She stated:

[A]ll these facts and figures that I’d learned about in agriculture for my degree suddenly became reality; ... farrowing crates and gestation periods ... all these concepts that I learned in university without really even thinking about, suddenly here were these animals, this is what it really



was all about; ... [For example], farrowing crates and dry sow crates - in most farms a pig, *a sow*, will spend all her life in a dry sow crate which is a crate she cannot turn around in, all she can do is get up and sit down; it's as bad as a veal crate, but nobody seems to make such a big deal of these; so they go from this dry sow crate, and as soon as they give birth they go into a farrowing crate; so basically, the whole of their life they're in these crates, I mean they're as confined as anything; the only time they ever get out of the crate is to actually be put with a boar.

In time, Ginny learned everything there was to know about pig farming and found pig barns to be horrendous places. With so many pigs crammed into small spaces, the ammonia levels were very high, and the minute a person stepped into the barn her or his hair and clothing would become saturated with the smell of it. She says the suffering that she saw was beyond belief.

Castrations done without anaesthetic, which are just totally routine ... pigs just squealing in terror and agony, and every now and then one would go wrong and their innards would fall out and you'd have to shove them back in and stitch them up and ... just horrendous hearing the screaming, and ... little pigs having their tails cut off, I mean that's routine ... these beautiful little creatures, this beautiful wonder of birth, and as soon as they're born they're injected, and their teeth are cut, and their tails are cut ... seeing pigs slowly die from disease or injury ... and then again, watching the pigs having to be shipped to slaughter, these pigs being shoved on to transport

trucks and screaming, squealing - the memories of that barn, it's hard to describe; I mean, as somebody who loved animals, it was quite horrendous; and I could really *feel* for each pig, and I could feel all the suffering that was going on in each mother that had to be separated from her babies.

Eventually Ginny realized that she "couldn't get into this pig farming thing", and began working at temporary jobs off the farm. She says she can never forget one particular incident that happened as she was about to leave for work one day. Her husband called her to help him in the barn:

Apparently a big sow had died for some reason or other, I mean it was a fairly common occurrence ... it was way back in the back of the barn, this was like a 600-pound animal we're talking about here, you know, a *huge* thing, you don't get them out very easily; so we had to tie a chain around its legs, tie a chain at one end and then take the chain out through the barn and you had a tractor outside, and the tractor had to pull this pig through the barn ... I was sitting on the tractor pulling on the chain and the legs just came right off this pig; and I, I just, I mean horrendous, this *could* have been a live pig; it wasn't, it was dead, *she* was dead, but it could have been alive ... live downed animals are dragged all the time to slaughterhouses ... I mean it was bad enough seeing that happen to a dead pig; that could have been a live pig, and even if the legs hadn't been ripped off, those legs could have been broken, or whatever; we got the pig

out of there and the dead stock people came to pick up, and I went to work and all throughout the day I couldn't stop thinking of this image of these legs just coming off this pig, and I could smell the ammonia in my hair, and I thought ... there's something very *wrong* with a society that has to do stuff like this.

Although what would follow for them was far from wonderful, Ginny found it was a wonderful, beautiful, fascinating experience to watch pigs being born. On one occasion, as she and her husband were walking away from a mother and her newly born litter, screaming was heard, and they rushed back to find that one of the piglets had been laid on by her mother. Ginny's husband picked up the dead piglet, blew into her mouth, and brought her back to life! She had been partially paralysed on one side, and Ginny, immediately having a soft spot for this little pig, gave her special care and attention every day. The pig eventually recovered and grew up and, although Ginny would have loved to have saved them all, she especially felt that she could not let this one be slaughtered, and told her husband that she would take it as a pet. This was to be the first of many animals Ginny rescued while living on the farm. As time went on she would get attached to individual pigs, and on birthdays and at Christmas her husband would always let her choose one to keep and rescue. Her rescues helped her to justify all the horror and suffering that went on at the farm; she thought that it would have gone on whether she was there or not, and, at least if she was there, she could take a few animals and rescue them. In addition to her pigs, she rescued chickens, buying them from a market and taking them home, where they had the full run of the barn's hayloft which she and her

husband had set up for the purpose. Ginny was able to pay for the animals' food with money she was earning at her jobs off the farm.

About a year and a half after Ginny began living on the farm, a turning point came in her life. One morning she was in the house when her husband rushed in, saying he had discovered a fire had started in the barn. They called the volunteer firefighters and ran out to the barn, Ginny still in her dressing gown. The first thing she did was to check on the animals in the hayloft and, finding no fire there, went to check on the pigs in one half of the lower floor of the barn. "The fire was totally consuming everything down there", she says, "it was just horrendous; ... it was just smoke and fire everywhere and, I must admit it was ... peace, the animals were at peace; it was like they were already numbed; they were just standing in their pens like almost ghostly; and there was fire and stuff falling all over the place ...". Seeing this, Ginny went to the other half of the barn, which is where she and her husband were when the fire engines started to arrive.

Starting with the pet pigs, Ginny and her husband had been trying to rescue the animals, and they called out to the firefighters outside. Ginny says:

I was running - with all this fire and smoke and absolute chaos - running outside, and the firemen were laughing; I was dressed in my dressing gown, maybe it looked funny, I don't know, but I just ran out and they were laughing, and I said "*Help, for god's sake, help us!*"; and he said "Oh come on, you'll get far more money if you let the insurance pay for them; just leave them in there and let the insurance deal with it; so we're

not gonna help you rescue them because we know you're gonna be better off if you just leave them where they are;" ... all we could get out before the fire just totally took everything [was] four tiny little piglets and [three of the pet pigs], and the rest all burned and that was mainly because nobody would help us get these animals out.

"I was totally crushed by this," Ginny says:

I was an emotional wreck for months after this fire; ... I think it just really hit home to me how society sees these animals - they're just money! ... and it really did make me think, the fact that these people could *stand there*; obviously they're not bad people, you know, these are volunteer firefighters, they're not bad people, they're not evil people, this is just how society has made them see these animals, and they were laughing because we tried to save animals' lives; now I think that was probably the sledgehammer; after all these years of seeing all these animals suffering and kind of always trying to justify it for society, one way or another, this was the final straw; it made me think "no, that's wrong;" I mean, if they can't put that aside for these animals that are in *desperate* need, you know, there's something very very wrong here.

After the devastating fire, Ginny did not want to live on a pig farm again. She tried to convince her husband not to rebuild, but, with the conditions of the insurance coverage, he decided that it had to be done. They rebuilt according to federal specifications and ended up with an even more intensive operation with more highly

controlled environments than they had before. Ginny helped her husband build the new pig barns on two conditions. The first was that she wouldn't work in them anymore, and the second was that they would build an extra barn to house rescued animals only. She got a full-time job in an area which did not involve animals. This job enabled her to support the rescued animals herself and to be financially independent from the pig farm. In this way, Ginny was able to justify staying on the farm. As she earned more money, she was able to continue rescuing animals and making improvements on their housing, even building another barn. Her rescues went on to include goats, ex-race horses, sheep, chickens, geese, and ducks. Through the rehabilitation and daily care of her rescued animals, Ginny learned an incredible amount, not just about animal care, but also about the animals themselves and how to interact with them. It was an enriching and very *real* experience for her, unlike her learning on such matters in school with textbooks.

By chance one day, Ginny arrived at a major turning point in her life when she was in a bookstore and noticed a book with an interesting cover. It was written by Peter Singer and called Animal Liberation, and, out of curiosity, Ginny decided to buy it and see what it was all about. She says:

This is really what changed my life, from not really understanding *why* I was rescuing animals, *what* this was all about; I bought this book and read it and everything fell into place; I suddenly realized all these confused feelings I had had about animals and how society treats them and, you know, maybe we could be helping them, but we also have to be making them suffer... This book just made it all clear for me, and I realized we

didn't have to do this, that there was a different way out there to look at animals ... If I thought about it it's how I had thought all along, but society had always told me I had to think a different way, or whatever job I was doing, I had to think a different way and I couldn't allow these true feelings to come through. But suddenly I realized that this is what I believed and this just made sense of everything.

Ginny kept thinking about animal rights and what she had read in Singer's book, and was curious to know what sort of things animal rights groups did. She knew of a local group and began sitting in on their meetings and listening to different speakers. She says "I found myself totally sympathizing with all the points of view, and the more I learned, the more speakers I went to listen to, the more I just realized that this was so right! I mean, this *allowed me* to give those animals the feelings that I'd always wanted to be able to give them ..." Before going to her first meeting, Ginny thought that the animal rights people might be aggressive, "trying to ram stuff down everybody's throats and that sort of thing." What she found were very compassionate, gentle, dedicated, intelligent, and caring people - far from aggressive. Had the people turned out to be as she had expected, she probably would not have gone to any more meetings. Finding what she did, however, she felt even more drawn to animal rights.

Ginny went on to get more involved in animal rights, spend more time getting to know some of the people in the movement, and visit a sanctuary for rescued animals. She was very inspired by some of the people she met, found she had some experiences in common with others, and began reflecting on her experiences as far back as childhood,

putting things together and making sense of everything. Despite concerns she had that the animal rights people would judge her as being “bad,” she never hid the fact that she was married to a pig farmer and living on the farm. What she experienced, however, was understanding, the total opposite of what she had expected, and she grew to be very comfortable with the animal rights people she met. At the same time, she was feeling guilty about living on the pig farm and, as a result, felt she could not let herself get too involved with the group. Understanding the issues and perspectives from both sides, she felt torn between wanting to get more involved in animal rights and other conflicting aspects of her life, such as her loyalties to her husband and her friendships with other farmers. She felt stuck in the middle, like she was being pulled in two different directions, not fitting in anywhere, and confused about how her life was going to proceed.

Eventually the conflict became too much for Ginny and she left the farm. While there were other issues involved in the breakdown of her marriage, the pig farming situation did play a significant role. The main reason she had not left the farm earlier than she did was the problem of what to do with all her rescued animals. It took some time after leaving, but a new place to live was found for every single animal, and everything worked out amazingly well. Now Ginny felt that she could expel all animal exploitation from her life and be the person she knew she wanted to be. She began working out her life, free to determine what she believed, what she was comfortable with. Previously vegetarian, she stopped using animal products, becoming vegan. She read everything she could find on animal rights, animal rights philosophy, and



philosophy in general. She spent a significant amount of time at a sanctuary for rescued animals and continued caring for the animals whom she had previously rescued and placed in new homes. Where before she had felt guilt, now she felt more confident and really good about herself. She was at peace with herself and the other animals and became a very different person. Others noticed the positive change in her too. For Ginny, life suddenly all fit into place.

Without property and unable to continue rescuing animals, Ginny decided to try helping animals by getting more involved with an animal rights group. The group she had previously been involved with was no longer in existence, but a new local group had formed. She joined this group and has been a member ever since. While she is in support of all that the group does, she has always preferred to work individually, as opposed to in a group setting. Thus, Ginny helps the group in her own way, being involved on a selective basis. She believes she's doing a positive thing just by trying to make her own life come together and work without including animal exploitation, and that this way of teaching by example is the best way to help other people see that this kind of life may be the way to go. She continues to educate herself and help animals in a variety of individual ways, writing letters, for example.

In retrospect, Ginny feels lucky to have known so many animals who have touched her in so many ways and given her the opportunity to live life to the fullest. She cannot imagine a life devoid of animal contact. Open to listening to her animal encounters, individual animals have often been catalysts for her decisions, facilitators in her progression of change. One such example occurred relatively recently when she

worked with dedication and passion to find a home for an animal in need. Rescuing and getting to know this individual helped her to work through many of her feelings, reconfirmed her commitment to animals, and was the ‘jolt’ she needed to shape her intended future work with animals. Believing that it is important to specialize in a particular area in order to best make a difference, she has come to realize that the farm animal issue is the one that means the most to her and is also the one in which she is best-suited to work. She has since found a full-time job rehabilitating and caring for rescued animals.

Attributed to Elizabeth Seton, the saying “Live simply that others may simply live” is one that Ginny has often contemplated. With its multiple meanings, she believes it sums up her life’s philosophy. For example, she says, “it could refer to vegetarianism (i.e., eating a ‘simpler’ diet, further down the food chain), or to environmental ethics, or to a life not dependent on materialism for gratification; this brief saying will always be important, and a guide for me.”

### Community Narratives

#### **(A) Changing Relationships With Other Animals**

##### **(i) Participants’ Earliest Influences and Relationships**

None of the participants grew up in a family environment that might be characterized as one of animal rights. Family members generally accepted certain categories of animals (e.g., pets versus food animals), and traditional ideas about what was necessary, appropriate, or, “the natural order of things” (e.g., to eat animals, or to

use them for research, clothing, and other purposes). At the same time, most of the family environments did include some degree of caring about animals. Most often the parent that primarily exhibited and encouraged a caring attitude toward certain animals was the mother, and in one case, this influence came equally from mother and father.

Some parents considered themselves to be “animal lovers” and would do things, such as take in stray cats or dogs, or stop if they came upon an injured animal and do what they could to help. Ginny’s mother even bought non-domesticated birds who were being held for sale in cages and set them free. The parents of another participant, Sarah, taught her that it was wrong to do harmful, unnecessary things such as, pick a wildflower only to toss it away a moment later, or stomp on ants who were simply going about their lives and doing her no harm. Among the participants’ parents were those who did not believe or could not bear to think that animals used for food or in research suffered, as well as others who didn’t think or care to consider the issue.

The family environment of one participant, Mary, stands in contrast to all of the others. Mary felt like the “odd ball out,” being the only one in her family who cared about animals. It was not the case that her family members hated animals or meant to be particularly cruel to them. Rather, they thought that, for example, “it’s just a cat,” or “just a dog,” and people certainly came first. As someone who loved interacting with and caring for animals, Mary was in a difficult position, feeling like she did not have any allies, or anyone she could go to.

All of the participants grew up with pets, or, companion animals. While the most frequently reported of these companion animals were dogs and cats, some of the others

were budgies, hamsters, guinea fowl, a rooster, and a white rat. For all of the participants and a variable number of their family members, the relationships with companion animals were very close and enriching ones, friendships with animals who were viewed and treated as members of the family. An exceptional example that illustrates the depth of this kind of relationship is seen in the case of a dog who lived with Olivia's family. The dog was severely kicked by a man and, as a result, eventually required expensive surgery and intensive post-surgical care. Although there were financial difficulties in her family, Olivia and her mother would not euthanise the dog. The surgery was performed, the dog brought home, and Olivia's mother quit her job and stayed home in order to provide the round-the-clock care which was needed to restore the dog to health. Olivia helped with her part-time job earnings, among other things, and they all eventually made it through the very difficult time.

At the other end of the spectrum are the experiences of Mary, the participant who felt like "the odd ball out" in her family. Whereas Mary's relationships with companion animals were deep and enriching, similar to those of the other participants, her family members had different perspectives. For example, when a cat who lived with the family was blamed as the probable cause of a family member's health problem, Mary's parents had the cat killed despite her protestations and grief. A second such example involves Mary's pet white rat, whom she kept in the garage and rushed home to play with after every day at school. Mary's mother had always thought that the rat was a horrible thing and wanted to get rid of it. And so, when Mary was at school one day, a relative came

over to the house and, as a favour to the family, killed the rat by throwing it against the garage wall.

Some other participants also experienced traumatic incidents in their childhoods which involved companion animals. Many of these experiences involved the illness, injury, or death of a companion animal. Dealing with the resulting grief was sometimes made more difficult for participants by the insensitivity of others who were of the opinion that “it’s *just* an animal.” Other traumatic incidents include the witnessing of intentional and sometimes extreme acts of cruelty by humans to free-roaming animals. One such act was committed at the edge of a pond by two young boys, one of whom was the brother of the participant who witnessed the act. The boys inserted the end of a stick into the mouth of a frog, and proceeded to swing the stick around and around in circles, laughing and screaming, until finally flinging the frog off the stick.

Finally, the experience of another participant is similar to these others in that it was also disturbing, and it is different because of its temporal and systems-level natures. This participant lived in a distant country during most of her childhood years, and, unlike Western countries where so much of the suffering that goes on is hidden behind closed doors, this country was a place where the suffering of humans and other animals was extremely visible. The markets there were full of sights that most North American children never see. In the streets, human adults and children, some physically challenged, begged in desperate need, and various kinds of other animals wandered - diseased, emaciated, and dying.

All of the participants made efforts in their youths, independent of their parents, to defend or otherwise help animals. In the case of the participant who grew up in another country, the idea of helping other animals was even the focus of childhood play. While she lived in this distant country she did not have a television and was not interested in playing with dolls or other such toys. What she did do for her play was to save up whatever money she would get and use it to buy small stuffed animals, including zebras, goats, horses, and cows. She spent countless hours playing with these stuffed animals, hiding with them behind furniture and moving them around the house, always pretending to rescue them from some danger, such as an earthquake, or from humans who intended to harm them. Another thing she did during her time in this country was get someone to drive her around the streets. When she saw someone being kind to an animal, she would hop out of the car and thank the person for her or his kindness. Similarly, she would stop if she saw someone being cruel to an animal, and tell the person that what he or she was doing was cruel and should not be done. Documenting all these acts of kindness or cruelty, she made a little booklet, which she named and has kept ever since.

Another participant who made efforts to help other animals in her youth grew up in a time when there was no humane society and only one dogcatcher in the city where she lived. In addition, there was no television, and she enjoyed spending time in the woods by a river, looking for turtles, frogs, and insects, and sneaking up on them to watch what they were doing. One way in which she used to help animals was to obtain armfuls of bones from the local butcher and go down the street, handing them out to the

many stray dogs in her neighbourhood. As a final example, the only male participant, Rob, faced some unique circumstances while growing up. As a boy, Rob was expected to “play fight” with other boys, something he did not want to do, but, under peer pressure, did anyway. He also found that other boys tended to get really nasty to animals at times, and in these instances, Rob would stick up for the animals, getting angry and arguing with the boys over their cruelty. In his home environment, Rob spoke up on behalf of the dog who lived with the family, and who was often hit by Rob’s stepfather. When Rob objected, his stepfather explained that the dog had to “learn his lesson,” so Rob tried to convince his stepfather not to hit the dog, and that they could find ways to get the dog to behave that were not so cruel.

A variety of other experiences and circumstances influenced the participants’ earliest relationships with other animals and also may have played a role in their future development. For example, one participant, whose family moved frequently during her childhood, lived for a time in a less urban setting and consequently felt closer and more drawn to other animals and the rest of nature. In retrospect, she believes that moving so often helped her to develop an important ability to adapt to new surroundings, people, and beliefs, and to deal with problems more easily. Another participant similarly experienced frequent moves as a child and, as a result, did not make close friendships with other children and was unable to have any long-term relationships with companion animals. In the family of one participant the children were strongly discouraged from expressing their emotions. In another, the children were generally treated as “nonpersons,” whose opinions did not count, and who were often told that they should be

“seen and not heard.” Another participant spent several years in a very strict boarding school, an experience which she believes greatly helped her to be able to empathize with any being whose life is totally controlled or dictated.

Finally, the families of two of the participants include a parent who would speak out on issues she or he considered important. One participant’s mother, for example, was involved with feminist groups and spoke out in a number of ways, including protesting. Another participant’s father was always telling people not to smoke, that it was bad for their health, and that they should always drive with their headlights on for greater safety. He was promoting these ideas at a time when smoking was considered perfectly acceptable, and virtually no one drove with their headlights on during the day. He persisted, however, despite the people who would not believe or did not want to hear what he had to say about smoking and despite the people who would flash their headlights, honk their horns, or yell at him for driving with his headlights on during the day.

#### **(ii) The Process of Change**

Since humans exist as part of the community of life on this planet, we live every day in relationship. Thus, human relationships with other animals, whether directly considered or not, exist continually as we live out each day. By our thoughts, feelings, and actions, we constantly define these relationships and change them to varying extents. In this way, then, the process of changing relationships with other animals has occurred throughout the participants’ lives. At the same time, most participants identified a specific experience or point in their lives from which a new phase of change followed.



These “starting points,” for want of a better term, are different in many ways, but all eventually led to increased awareness and more compassionate and just relationships with other animals. Olivia, for example, believes that her starting point was her experience attending the circus. For Sarah, it occurred when she attempted to ease her increasingly guilty conscience by sending money to animal protection groups. The starting point for another participant, Rob, occurred when he began having discussions about animal rights issues with some of his friends who were involved in animal rights.

The starting point occurred at a different time of life for each participant, but all fell within a broad period of time that I will call early adulthood. While there are some basic similarities, the process of change and progression from the earliest relationships to being an advocate for other animals was unique to each participant. No one had a sudden, total conversion experience, whereby a single revelation in the heart and/or mind led to the “overnight” elimination of all forms of animal exploitation from her or his life. On the contrary, all participants progressed in a series of steps or plateaus, considering the different forms of animal exploitation and unravelling the layers of oppression in stages. Participants’ “initial” areas of concern varied (e.g., one was animals used in entertainment, whereas another was animals used in research), as did the order of their progression through other forms of animal exploitation. Some addressed various forms of exploitation more gradually, with a greater number of steps, over a longer period of time. Others, particularly the younger participants, progressed over a shorter period of time, with relatively fewer, more broadly encompassing steps. The number and nature of catalysts or turning points also varied among participants, and some suggested that the

differences in the participants' rates of progression might be partially attributed to the dramatic growth and increase in the public's awareness of the animal rights movement in recent decades.

While the progression of change among participants was diverse, the direction of that change was generally consistent. For example, regarding the use of animals for food, some participants stopped eating animals that walk, and then later on, animals that fly, and animals that swim, whereas some other participants stopped eating most animals all at once. Eventually, all participants also either greatly reduced the animal products in their diets or eliminated them altogether (i.e., became vegan). A backward step in this progression was taken by some participants in the form of a "relapse" after going vegetarian. For these participants, the return to eating animals lasted several years, one month, or just a single meal, but in all cases, their consciences bothered them so much that, sooner or later, they resumed their vegetarian diets for good.

Elements common to the process of change for all participants include: gaining awareness, seeking out and learning new information, reflecting on experience, changing perspectives, and various "moments of clarity" when something makes sense or is seen in a new light. One participant explained that "you click into a new way of seeing things." Most participants wondered how they never saw before what now seems so obvious to them. According to another participant, once aware, there is no turning back. For everyone, the process of change is an on-going one that becomes an integral part of life, and, in reference to their beliefs, participants variously stated that it is a lifestyle, a reverence for life, and an ethical or moral code to live by. Working through their

thoughts and feelings, identifying and transforming their relationships with other animals, participants experienced various conflicts and difficulties, including internal conflicts, ethical dilemmas, practical problems of change, conflicts in relationships in the home, workplace, or involving friends or animal rights opposition. Although none of the participants ever felt negatively about the direction their lives were moving in, a significant amount of time passed before each participant was able to begin to generally define, understand, and celebrate his or her identity as an advocate for other animals.

In conjunction with thoughts and feelings, participants' identities have been and continue to be shaped by the ways they choose to act in relation to other animals. For example, all participants have changed their own relationships with other animals through changes in areas, such as diet, clothing, personal and household products, and entertainment or leisure activities. Most participants make efforts to help animals they encounter who need food, medical attention, or shelter. When insects, mice, or other creatures are a problem in the home, they are likely to be humanely captured and released outside, rather than killed. In addition to working on their own relationships with other animals, participants act in defence of animals by attempting to convince other humans to change their relationships with animals. Such efforts may occur in a more "personal" context (e.g., attending a group meeting and otherwise becoming educated on animal-related issues; helping with a group project; speaking up as situations arise in daily life; writing letters to companies, or government officials), or a more "public" context (e.g., writing letters or articles for publication in newspapers or magazines; doing outreach work at an information table; protesting; speaking out on

radio or television; giving talks at schools, conferences, or to other groups; organizing a project, event, or group).

While all participants act in defence of other animals by working on their own lives and by encouraging other humans to do the same, they diverge in their approaches to the latter. Some participants prefer to raise awareness primarily through working on their own relationships and living by example, and waiting for others in their lives to come to them about animal-related issues, rather than bringing things up uninvited. Generally, these participants feel that this approach is the most effective, as well as the one that is best-suited to him or her. While all participants have engaged in both personal and public kinds of efforts to encourage change in other humans, the great majority of these efforts have fallen within the personal context. There are a variety of factors contributing to this tendency, some of which are: a desire to avoid conflict and confrontation, a desire to maintain privacy, being at a relatively early stage in the progression of change and feeling the need for further change and self-education, and other commitments or circumstances in a participant's life.

One participant stands out as unique because of the enormous amount of time she spends working in both personal and public ways to raise awareness and encourage change in other humans' relationships with nonhuman animals. She believes that there is too much at stake to settle for anything less than drastic social change and constantly acts on and creates opportunities for speaking out and reaching others. She believes that she has a duty to help others see how animals are oppressed, and for her, this feels like "a calling." She explains: "I guess that's why I have no qualms about 'harassing' people as

I do constantly ... I certainly don't feel that I am infringing on anyone's rights. I am fighting for the rights of the oppressed. Our rights end where they infringe on the rights of others." Whatever the ways in which a participant chooses to act to promote the well-being of other animals may be, the experience of realizing and becoming comfortable with one's identity as an animal advocate, of finding one's own niche, is enriching and liberating.

Finally, a great range of facilitators and inhibitors of the process of change were reported by participants, and the following is a brief sampling of some of these. Aside from the more obvious aspect of living in a society that is largely based on animal exploitation, some of the initial barriers to change were, interestingly, having little knowledge of what animal rights or the people involved were all about, and being aware of an "animal rights stigma," or having preconceived ideas relating to certain negative stereotypes about animal rights and the people involved. Another initial barrier was an unwillingness to look into animal rights issues because it was too disturbing or upsetting to consider or witness the suffering involved. Challenges to working for change include, the perception of a stereotype or awareness of a stigma associated with being an activist, and a desire to avoid "being marked out" and experiencing the controversy or backlash associated with speaking out.

Among the many facilitators of change identified are coming to know an animal and having a pivotal experience involving animals (e.g., Olivia and the whale, the circus; Ginny and the monkeys, the fire in the pig barn). All participants gained awareness and were influenced as a result of what they learned about some of the specific circumstances

of the lives of the animals humans variously exploit. In addition to direct participation or experience, this learning occurred through “secondary” sources, such as printed material, video, film, and other people. One such example is a turning point experienced by one participant who attended a screening of a film about the lives of many “food animals,” which was organized by a local animal rights group. Directly following the screening she went home, gave away all the meat that was in her freezer, and adopted an almost exclusively vegetarian diet. Connecting with other animal advocates through daily life, animal protection groups, events, or conferences also facilitated change for participants. Whether in the case of a friend, author, speaker or otherwise known activist, participants variously reported being encouraged, inspired and/or enlightened by the dedication, knowledge and/or experience of another. Participants receive moral support from other animal advocates and benefit from having someone to share and discuss with, and to ask information or advice of concerning a particular situation or problem of change.

Generally, the more aware a participant became, the more evidence of suffering he or she could see in the course of daily life. For many, a resulting sadness was eventually partially replaced by anger that, in turn, was motivating and sustaining. Participants reported that dealing with so much violence and misery, such depressing issues and the animal rights opposition can take a lot out of one. Some feel that one cannot continue doing great amounts of advocacy work (i.e., not including the lifestyle changes, of course, which persist) without getting burned out sooner or later. For example, when things occasionally become too much for one participant, she feels the need to take “a step back” or a break from her efforts for a while. Another example is

seen in the story of a participant who, in previous years was extremely active as an advocate for animals, but is now at a stage in her life when her advocacy work assumes a less prominent role.

As awareness and a desire to avoid animal exploitation increase, making choices in life can become somewhat more complicated and time consuming, particularly during the “initial” periods of change. All participants noted that in the time since they became involved with animal rights issues, cruelty-free choices have become much more prevalent (e.g., personal and household products that are not tested on animals, as well as those which are also free of ingredients derived from animals; choices on the menus in most restaurants; items in common grocery and drug stores). This increase in options has made life easier for participants and provides encouragement through knowing that there are so many other people creating a demand for compassionate choices. Participants are especially encouraged by the instances when they are able to make a difference in an animal’s life, to help another human to gain awareness and make a difference, and to learn of the successes of others working for change. For all participants, the alleviation of suffering is its own reward.

### **(iii) Effects of Change on Relationships With Other Humans**

The impact of becoming an animal advocate on relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and others varied widely among participants. For one participant it was difficult to think of any resulting problems in relationships. On the contrary, she reported that one important relationship was enhanced as her influence helped her partner to examine and make sense of his own thoughts, feelings, and experiences

relating to animals. Others had problems that were overcome, as in the case of one participant whose parents were strongly opposed to her raising her children as vegetarians. Fortunately, her husband had become vegetarian at the same time she had, and her parents eventually changed their minds and became vegetarian as well. She found it to be especially rewarding to have someone very close to her make such changes in his or her life. In addition, despite some initial worries, she found that growing up vegetarian did not have a negative impact on her children's social lives, but rather, a very positive one.

Some participants have made compromises in the face of conflict, as seen, for example, in the relationship of one participant and her husband. When she stopped eating most animals approximately sixteen years ago, he did not. As the one who did the cooking in the home, she stopped including animals in their meals, with the exception of chicken on rare occasion. If her husband wants to have hamburger, bacon, pork chops, and so on, he goes out of the home to get it, and she believes that, given the situation, this is about the best that can be done. In other situations of conflict, some participants have been able to resolve it or find ways to cope with it. In other cases, participants continue to search for solutions. For example, several participants reported having ethical conflicts with aspects of their jobs. Some responses include actively looking for a new job, academic training for a new job, and accepting that it is necessary to "just live with the situation" for a time.

In some cases, differences in relationships exist, but are not addressed or rarely talked about. One participant reported that, as a result of her change in recent years,



some friends have become “a little distant.” In many instances, participants noted that friends and/or family members, whose initial reactions to the participant’s change were either neutral or negative, “came around” eventually. Among the participants were several experiences of people asking to borrow vegetarian cookbooks and of efforts to prepare meals or choose gifts for participants that respected their beliefs. Some people would make efforts, such as bringing up animal-related topics in conversation with a participant. Some friends and/or family members appeared to some participants to be trying to please them or gain their approval, and two participants commented that some people seemed to “brag” to them on occasion (e.g., about how little meat he or she has eaten recently).

#### **(iv) Effects of Change on Other Interests and Activities**

Perhaps the most notable effects of the participants’ changes on other areas of interest and activity are the expansion of pre-existing interests and the development of new ones. Such areas of interest include: nutrition; the environment; alternative health care; social justice (e.g., feminism, ageism, racism); other cultures and philosophies; politics; and business and corporations. One of the most common such experiences among participants is becoming vegetarian for ethical reasons, and then later learning (or learning more) about other benefits of vegetarianism, such as those to human health and the environment. After becoming vegetarian, most participants became more interested and educated in the areas nutrition and environmentalism. Many connections between different areas were made, resulting in different perspectives and new levels of

understanding (e.g., connecting feminism and animal rights, or animal rights and environmentalism).

One participant explained her concern regarding nonhuman animals and other interconnected areas in the following way:

As far back as I can recall, I've been concerned with the "underdog" - people in society that seem to be kept down by the powers that be. As I grew older I realized that, while I was going to kindergarten in the '40's, Jewish children were suffering in another part of the world at the same time. People of colour who are oppressed have also been of concern to me and my feelings have caused some disagreement with friends over the years. Myself and some other artists have sponsored a number of children over the years in third world countries. Sometimes I've drawn attention to their plight through my paintings. I worked for a few years looking after elderly women in their homes, which was very enjoyable, but also made me realize how helpless and vulnerable they can be. I feel we all should stand up for human animals and others who can't help themselves.

For one participant it seems that her beliefs about human and animal relationships affect almost everything in her life in some way. She hardly has any other interests or activities because she spends all her time on her animal advocacy work. Participants commonly attempt to choose activities or areas of interest that minimally conflict with their beliefs regarding other animals. Some incorporate their advocacy work in other activities, such as the participant mentioned above who is an artist and who occasionally

works a message about other animals and/or how we humans treat them into her paintings. Conversely, another participant plays in a band which does not include any songs relating to animal rights because it's not something everyone in the band agrees on.

### **(B) Participants' Experiences of Participation in This Project**

All participants agreed that it was a positive experience to think back over their lives, remembering and reflecting on their relationships with animals, attempting to understand how they arrived at where they are today. Some participants had never before made a concerted effort to consider the matter, whereas two others had given it a great deal of thought throughout much of their lives, questioning and looking for explanations. One of these two continues to find it difficult to understand how she believed what she did for so long and accept how long it took her to change. Through preparing for and participating in an interview, some people remembered things they had forgotten about and/or identified things that had not previously been considered relevant to their animal relationships or process of change. All participants shared their experiences with me openly and enthusiastically and expressed a great interest in hearing about those of others. Everyone reported being comfortable with the interview process, something many suggested was largely due to knowing and trusting me outside of this project. Some participants felt that their stories were not particularly outstanding, or interesting. All hoped that what they had to offer would be helpful to me and to making a thesis on animal rights become a reality.

Through participation in this project, participants have learned something about the academic process in the context of this master's thesis, and some were introduced to

ideas from written works and authors that they had not previously been aware of. One participant found that reviewing the literature review summarized, clarified, and elaborated on her various thoughts and feelings about animals. In addition, she commented that she especially appreciated the attention given to the process of obtaining informed consent and the flexible, respectful, non-judgemental, participatory approach of this project. Participants found that making the effort to recall one's own past and the progress made, both personally and by the combined efforts of others, can be encouraging and enrich one's perspective on the present. Participants variously reported that such reflection reminds them not to give up hope that people can change and to be more patient, understanding, and less judgemental concerning others they wish would change. To one degree or another, participation encouraged some to increase their efforts toward ending the remaining forms of animal exploitation in their lives (e.g., becoming vegan, being more vigilant about the products purchased or consumed, writing more letters). Some participants gave their transcripts to someone close to them to read; in one case, it was to a partner who shares many of the participant's beliefs, and in another, it was to a mother to help her understand the participant's chosen path.

### **(C) My Experiences as Primary Researcher of This Project**

Writing for this thesis was challenging for several reasons. As the area of animal rights encompasses a very broad range of issues and perspectives, constructing the literature review was a daunting task. Similarly, the participants' stories of changing relationships with other animals were diverse and complex, and it was difficult to decide what to include in the findings section and how to present it. Frequently, I questioned the

appropriateness of writing about the experiences of other people's lives and thought that it might be better to have each participant write about his or her own life. Following a participatory approach to this project was beneficial in terms of the ethical aspects of process (i.e., regarding the relationships among myself and the other participants) and in terms of outcome (i.e., resulting in a more successful project, maximizing the accuracy, richness, and inclusiveness of the findings). Aside from its time-consuming nature, following this approach presented relatively few difficulties. One notable exception, was the challenge of working with both an academic committee and a participant advisory committee, and I did my best to make the project relevant and satisfactory to both audiences.

Defining my role as student, primary researcher, friend, and animal advocate was a challenging and on-going task in carrying out this project. As a student, for example, I have learned about various interview structures, interview skills and how to 'use' them (e.g., self-disclosure) and research techniques (e.g., identifying the "gatekeeper," keeping a journal of the research process). As the participants and I have relationships outside of this project, situations often arose in which what I thought would be academically expected of me seemed impersonal or inappropriate. I frequently had to balance what I judged to be the best decision or action in a given situation against what I thought would be academically acceptable. Such conflicts made it difficult to decide matters, such as what kind of information to record in my research journal, what kind of language should be used, and how much is "appropriate" for me to comment or share of my own story as the participants share theirs with me. During the interviews instances often arose when I

was inclined to comment or share of my own experiences (e.g., regarding similar experiences, or simply to reciprocate with a friend and fellow animal advocate who is telling me his or her story and who is interested to hear the stories of others); generally, however, I restrained myself from doing so until after the end of each interview.

Participating in these interviews was an extremely exciting and enjoyable aspect of this project for me. What I learned of the participants' experiences was fascinating, inspiring, and sometimes sad. As a result of the rules of confidentiality agreed upon for this project, I was largely unable to discuss what I was told by a participant in his or her interview with anyone else, without first obtaining the participant's specific consent. As participants shared their experiences with me, many striking differences and similarities between their stories became apparent. Because of the rules of confidentiality, however, I was largely unable to share the 'experiences of one participant with another or 'connect' certain participants. The rules were also problematic at times when I would have liked to talk to someone about interesting, uplifting, or troubling aspects of what I learned in the interviews. Finally, a challenge of writing the findings section was attempting to report the participants' diverse experiences in a way that was representative and contextual and that maintained participant anonymity without becoming too general or vague.

## DISCUSSION

Findings show that undertaking a formal effort to recall and examine one's path of changing animal relationships can result in many benefits. Thus, this undertaking

might be suggested as a helpful exercise for other animal advocates. In researching the literature associated with the defence of nonhuman animals, I found little that was similar to this project. By far, the most relevant work that I found is a study by Kenneth Shapiro (1994), entitled “The Caring Sleuth: Portrait of an Animal Rights Activist”. Shapiro’s study differs significantly from this thesis project, in that it gives only brief attention to the personal process of change and focuses primarily on the experience of being an animal rights activist and a discussion of related issues. In addition, the method employed in his study is one that highlights “the common constitutive or defining features” (p. 129), whereas in this project the goal is more broadly to compare and contrast experiences. Shapiro bases his analysis on pre-existing data, unlike this project, which engaged a group of individuals in a process of participation, reflection, and sharing. The sources of his data were: 1) fourteen autobiographies of leaders of the movement, published between 1986 and 1991 in *Between the Species: A Journal of Ethics*; and 2) surveys completed by 21 grassroots activists at an animal rights conference in 1991, most of whom devoted a minimum of 30 hours per week to their movement activities. In my project the group of participants involved was less homogenous (e.g., regarding the length and depth of involvement in the movement) and of smaller size, and the primary method was in-depth interviews conducted in a participatory manner.

In regard to the literature that relates to community psychology, this thesis deals with the subjects of oppression and the empowerment of individuals toward the alleviation of oppression in a different context. Hopefully, this work will help to expand

the concept of oppression, raise awareness of the interconnectedness of its different forms, and influence people's ideas about the meanings of community and respect for diversity. I find many aspects of two studies of personal empowerment to be particularly applicable to the subject of this project. In one study (Kieffer, 1984), involving emerging citizen leaders from a variety of grassroots organizations, a central aspect of the process of change was praxis, referring to "the circular relationship of experience and reflection through which actions evoke new understandings, which then provoke new and more effective actions (p. 26)." The comments of one participant in Kieffer's study are illustrative: "It's like the more I see, the more I want to stay in it ... The more I learn, the more I want to struggle ... All these little things just keep pushing you into more" (p. 26). Another common aspect of the experiences of participants in Kieffer's and my studies is described by the following quote:

In becoming empowered, individuals are not merely acquiring new practical skills; they are reconstructing and reorienting deeply engrained personal systems of social relations. Moreover, they confront these tasks in an environment which historically has enforced their political repression, and which continues its active and implicit attempts at subversion of constructive change. It is completely unrealistic to presume that the cumulative effects of domination can be reversed in any other than a long-term frame of reference (Kieffer, 1984, p. 27).

A second study of the personal process of empowerment (Lord, 1991), which also has great relevance to this thesis project, focused on the experiences of people with



different challenges, including mental health, physical, and developmental. Congruent with the process of change focused on in my project, the process of empowerment described in Lord's study was found to be ongoing and unique to each individual, varying by the rate of change, the most positively influential elements, and the way each person interacted with his or her social world. Elements of the empowerment process common to all participants included people supports, resource supports, gaining awareness, and participation. Through other people, participants found moral support, mentors, role models, and were connected to resources. Most participants gained awareness of possible selves and alternatives prior to increased participation, while for others, this occurred during participation.

As I worked on this thesis project, listening to the participants' stories and transcribing their interviews, I soon realized that, given the parameters of this thesis, the original plan of writing a personal narrative for myself and each of the participants was far too ambitious. Consequently, I did not include my own story, and I wrote only two participants' stories as personal narratives, and did so in a less comprehensive and detailed manner than I had originally planned. Nevertheless, I cannot say that there is much I would do differently if I "had it to do all over again," because it has been a successful learning experience. As a result, I am left with a great deal of preparation and groundwork that would enable me to write all the narratives in the manner originally planned. If I were to do another project, however, I might consider a similar participatory study of changing animal relationships focusing on the experience of young people. Today, more than ever, young people are becoming aware of animal rights issues

and joining the movement. A young person may face unique challenges and situations (e.g., associated with living with parents, or attending elementary or secondary school), and might benefit from participating in or reading about such a study. The project could follow a comprehensive, holistic approach, or focus exclusively on identifying facilitators and inhibitors of change.

Regarding the findings of this thesis project, several future efforts are planned. The first of these will be to arrange one or more gatherings involving myself and the other participants, in order to share what we wish of our stories and experiences with one another. Another plan involving the participants and myself, is to meet to explore the possibility of putting together a book of personal narratives based on our stories and to discuss other possible uses of the findings of this thesis project. The specifics of such a book would be collaboratively determined, and all participants have expressed initial interest in it. Finally, I will meet with my advisor, Richard Walsh-Bowers, to discuss the possibility of working together on an article, which would be based on this thesis and submitted for publication to an academic journal.

Appendix ASome Examples of Animal Advocacy Groups

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM)  
5100 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 404, Washington, DC 20016  
Tel: (202) 686-2210; Fax: (202) 686-2216;  
Internet World Wide Web: <http://www.sai.com/pcrm/>

Engineers and Scientists for Animal Rights (ESAR)  
P.O. Box 1119, Kyle, TX 78640  
Tel/Fax: (512) 268-2502; Email: [ESAR01@aol.com](mailto:ESAR01@aol.com)

Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PSYeta)  
P.O. Box 1297, Washington Grove, MD 20880-1297  
Tel/Fax: (301) 963-4751; Email: [kshapiro@capaccess.org](mailto:kshapiro@capaccess.org);  
Internet World Wide Web: <http://www.envirolink.org/arrs/psyeta/index.html>

Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR)  
P.O. Box 208, Davis, CA 95617-0208  
Tel: (916) 759-8106

The Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF)  
1363 Lincoln Ave., San Rafael, CA 94901

Actors and Others for Animals (AOA)  
11523 Burbank Boulevard, N. Hollywood, CA 91601  
Tel: (818) 755-6045; Fax: (818) 755-6048; Email: [AOA@a-service.com](mailto:AOA@a-service.com)

Jews for Animal Rights  
255 Humphrey St., Marblehead, MA 01945  
Fax: (617) 639-0772

Native/Animal Brotherhood  
106-90 Carden St., Guelph, Ontario N1H 3A3  
Tel: (519) 821-8554

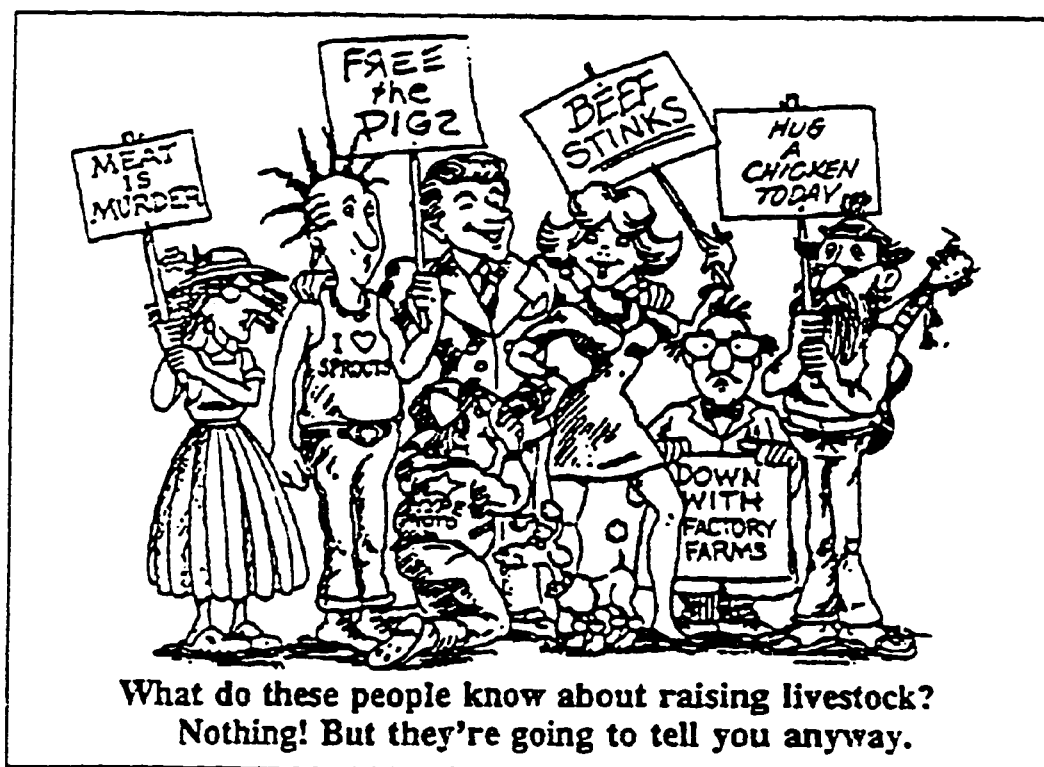
Feminists for Animal Rights (FAR)  
National and Editorial Office: P.O. Box 16425, Chapel Hill, NC 27516  
Tel: (919) 286-7333; Email: [finla001@mc.duke.edu](mailto:finla001@mc.duke.edu)  
Internet World Wide Web: <http://www.envirolink.org/arrs/far/>

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)****International Headquarters: 501 Front Street, Norfolk, VA 23510****Tel: (757) 622-PETA; Fax: (757) 622-0457;****Internet World Wide Web: <http://envirolink.org/arrs/peta>****Canadian Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1051, Fort Erie, ON L2A 6K7****Animal Alliance of Canada****221 Broadview Ave., Suite 101, Toronto, ON M4M 2G3****Tel: (416) 462-9541; Fax: (416) 462-9647; Email: [aac@inforamp.net](mailto:aac@inforamp.net)****Internet World Wide Web: <http://www.inforamp.net/~aac>**

Appendix B

Excerpt from Animal Trax, Winter 1996, Volume 4, Issue 1, p. 17

Publication of Waterloo-Wellington Alliance for Animals



Do you look like this?! The above illustration appears on literature distributed by the Ontario Farm Animal Council (OFAC). According to their literature, "OFAC is a non-profit educational organization which represents Ontario's livestock and poultry farmers..."

### Appendix C

Excerpt from PSYeta Newsletter, February 1996, p.1

Newsletter of Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

#### **1. DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS FOR THEIR RIGHTS VIEWS**

In their important analysis, Gluck and Kubacki (1991, *Ethics and Behavior*) describe how one response to the current debate over the use of animals in research is the adoption by biomedical and psychology researchers of a “strategic defensive posture.” These researchers talk as if they were in a “state of siege.” Regrettably, the following accounts of the recent experiences of two psychology students illustrate that the effects of this posture extend beyond rhetoric.

The first involves a student who applied to a Ph.D. program in biological psychology at an Oklahoma university. At the time of her application she had earned a masters in psychology, worked full-time in a lab doing health-care research, and taught at a local junior college. Her academic career had been stellar (a 4.0 average) and she had published research papers. She was recommended to the graduate program by her boss, the head of the lab which was closely affiliated with the graduate program. After an interview with the director of the program, she was accepted with full funding (\$1300/month) and told she had been a “shoe-in.” Delighted with the offer, she gave up an offer from another doctoral program and her part-time teaching position.

Shortly thereafter, she was notified by the director that she would be further interviewed, merely as a formality. However, this “formality” lasted 6 hours, with different members of the faculty interviewing her sequentially in pairs. The ordeal centered around concern about her affiliation with animal rights groups and whether she might be an “infiltrator.” It appears that as an undergraduate she had been the winner of a research/essay contest sponsored by PSYeta and that currently she was involved in a vegetarian group. Her study had demonstrated that people shown photographs of animals in invasive experiments subsequently viewed animal research less favorably than a group shown pictures of animals in non-invasive experimental situations. It was also intimated that she had stolen some animal research data.

As a result of the interview, her fiscal support was withdrawn. The student decided to refuse admission to the program because of the financial issue, but, more importantly, because she felt she could not risk committing herself to a situation where hostility and suspicion of her was so great.

The second account has a more positive outcome, although the theme is the same. An undergraduate psychology major, enrolled in an upper level course in experimental psychology, requested an alternative lab exercise. In her formal request to the departmental committee, she indicated that her personal code of ethics prevented her from participating in a lab in which rats are deprived of food and water. Her offer to do an alternative lab involving software or another project was rejected and she was informed that she could not graduate without meeting the lab requirement. In discussion with her, her instructor indicated that she should not be in psychology and should change

majors. Following letters to the dean from her and from PSYeta in her behalf, she was given the right to do an alternative lab with the stipulation that she provide the alternative and find an instructor to supervise her. She was able to do this by enlisting a psychologist at a campus 200 miles from her own.



Appendix D

Page 1 of 4

GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

This interview guide consists of three broad topics, or subject areas. Discussion of the first two of these will comprise the vast majority of the interview. Because of the complex, interrelated nature of the subjects identified in topics 1 and 2, participants will be asked to tell me their “stories” by addressing these two topics together (i.e., as one big, open-ended question). After this has been done, topic 3 will be discussed.

---

**Part 1 - Welcome and Introduction**

This part includes:

- discussion and signing of informed consent form;
- review of the agenda for the interview; and
- encouragement for the participant to ask any questions she or he might have, or for any clarification desired, or to discuss any comments or concerns about the interview.

---

**Part 2 - Interview**TOPIC 1

Tell me about your relationships with nonhuman animals over your life, focusing on how they have changed, bringing you to the point where you are today, an advocate for nonhuman animals and member of an animal rights group.

For our purposes, relationship is broadly defined, referring to:

***what you do*** - your actions involving nonhuman animals;

in other words, all the kinds of things you do or don't do involving them directly, or indirectly, alive or dead, intact or parts of their bodies

***what you feel*** - your emotions

***what you think*** - your opinions, beliefs, values, and desires

## TOPIC 2

How has your process of changing relationships with nonhuman animals influenced:

***your relationships with humans?*** - e.g., family, friends, coworkers, "professionals," media, the community, and/or society in general

***other aspects of your life?*** - e.g., interests or activities

In telling your story:

- start with your childhood and tell me about the nonhuman animal relationships you were raised with;
- continue to tell me your story of your evolving relationships with nonhuman animals from this point of your youth up to the present time, including the effects of this evolution on your relationships with humans and other aspects of your life, and following roughly chronological order;

- in keeping with the relatively limited scope of this thesis project, I am *not* asking you for specific dates or for an extremely detailed, comprehensive chronicle of your life history regarding your relationships with other animals. On the contrary, I *am* asking you for more of an outline, or sketch, focusing on the “steps” in your process of change; and
  - if you find it difficult to answer the one, big, open-ended question encompassed by topics 1 and 2, I will suggest that you start by thinking about the kinds of things you did as a child that involved nonhuman animals (whether or not you were aware at the time that these actions involved nonhuman animals), and what you thought and how you felt about those actions. This approach could be used as you proceed to tell me the rest of your story by considering your subsequent continued, expanded, and/or changed actions. In other words, *you could use your actions involving nonhuman animals as a framework for thinking about your story* by relating to these actions the other areas of the interview (i.e., thoughts, emotions, effects on human relationships and other aspects of your life).
-

TOPIC 3

By discussing the above topics, you have told me about your story as it has occurred up to the present, your journey which has led to (perhaps among other things) your identity as an advocate for nonhuman animals. What are your plans and/or expectations regarding how your story will continue in the future (e.g., regarding possible further changes, general and/or specific plans, goals, hopes, and/or best guesses)?

---

**Part 3 - Closure and Thanks**

This part includes:

- discussion of the participant's interview experience (i.e., thoughts and feelings about "how the interview went"); and
  - review of what the participant can expect to happen next (e.g., when I will transcribe the interview; when I expect to deliver the transcript of the participant's interview to him or her for review; when the participant will return the reviewed transcript to me).
-

Appendix E

Page 1 of 4

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RE: Participation in An Interview

I, \_\_\_\_\_,

(please print name)

agree to be an interview participant in the Community Psychology MA thesis project which is being conducted by Wilfrid Laurier University graduate student Angela Kathleen Raithby, with Professor Richard Walsh-Bowers as advisor.

In addition, I certify that:

(1) *I have been given the opportunities to*

- read the proposal for this project
- discuss the proposal with Angela
- offer positive and negative feedback on the proposal
- have any questions about the project sufficiently answered

(2) *the general and specific purposes of this study have been discussed with me*

- in general, to further the defence of nonhuman animals
- in terms of the specific project proposed, to investigate and document a range of examples of the process and experience of becoming and being an advocate for nonhuman animals, including the rewards and challenges, and the facilitators and barriers of this animal rights journey

**(3) *the intended content, or, subject matter of the interview has been discussed with me***

- the participant's past and present relationships with nonhuman animals, where relationship is broadly-defined, referring to actions, thoughts, and emotions
- how the participant's evolving relationships with nonhuman animals influenced her or his relationships with humans and other aspects of his or her life (e.g., interests and activities)
- how the participant foresees her or his animal rights journey continuing in the future (e.g., few or many changes; general and/or specific plans, goals, hopes, best guesses)

**(4) *the requirements of being an interview participant have been discussed with me***

- give tape-recorded interview of approximately one and a half to two hours duration
- receive interview transcript within a few days of interview and review transcript/give feedback within two weeks
- review results of data analysis/give feedback
- review quotations for possible approval and use in the thesis
- give feedback regarding your experience of the research project
- review two drafts of the thesis (project to be completed by August/September 1996)
- participate in developing and implementing action plan for use of project findings

(Note: the last two "requirements" can be optional.)

***(5) the possible uses of the information, or, findings of this project which appear in the final thesis document have been discussed with me***

- the submission of articles to newspapers, academic journals, animal rights and welfare publications, or other publications (e.g., environmental, feminist)
- the distribution of articles to the public through some of our group activities
- discussion in the form of presentations, workshops, etc.
- the production of a video which could be played during presentations, group activities, or on local community programming channels, and which could also be distributed to other animal rights and welfare groups

***(6) the following points regarding the limits of confidentiality have been discussed with me***

- my real name, as well as the real names of all the other interview participants (except Angela), will not be released to anyone
- the audio tape and transcript of my interview will be kept confidential, with the sole exception that my (anonymous) transcript may be seen by the project advisor, Professor Richard Walsh-Bowers, during the course of a check on data analysis; after the thesis has been completed, the audio tape of my interview will be erased, and Angela will keep her copies of my interview transcript and consent forms on file and confidential

- any information to be included in the thesis which is specific to my interview must be submitted to me for my approval/consent before it can appear in the thesis, or be used in any way; a consent form(s) will be required for the use of any quote(s), and the requirements that I review and approve my interview transcript and summarized life history means that I will have control over my privacy and confidentiality (e.g., in terms of the release of potentially identifying information, such as place of employment)

*(7) I understand that my participation in this project is entirely voluntary.*

This means that I am free to, without penalty of any kind, refuse to participate in this project, decline to answer any question, and withdraw from the project at any time.

**If I have any questions, comments, or concerns during this project**

**I can contact Angela at ( \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ ).**

---

Primary researcher

---

Date

---

Participant

---

Date

Researcher's / Participant's Copy



Appendix F

Page \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RE: Release of Direct Quotations

I, \_\_\_\_\_,

(please print name)

(1) *certify that the quote(s) listed below were made by me* in the course of the Community Psychology MA thesis project of Wilfrid Laurier University graduate student, Angela Kathleen Raithby, which is entitled, “A Qualitative, Participatory Study of the Process of Becoming an Advocate for Nonhuman Animals;”

(2) *give permission for this/these quote(s) to be used*, as written below, by Angela Kathleen Raithby in writing the final thesis document; and

(3) *certify that I give this permission freely*, without coercion, and on the understanding that this/these quote(s) will be used in accordance with the conditions of my previously signed consent form regarding my participation in an interview for this thesis project (e.g., my name will be kept confidential).

Quotes:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's / Participant's Copy

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