

Conceptualizing the multispecies triad: Toward a multispecies intersectionality

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Feminist and multispecies anthropologies have decentered those most visible to appreciate the perspectives of those othered in society—but also to better understand society at large. This article goes beyond decentering the human toward decentering another analytical focus: the species dyad. Building on previous work on gender–species intersectionality and multispecies ethnography, as well as drawing on a set of five ethnographic and multispecies fieldwork studies involving gendered relations between humans, cattle, and horses on three continents, this article offers a conceptualization of the *multispecies triad* by outlining a *multispecies intersectionality* theory. This entails acknowledging the intersectionality of five sets of relations: (1) species as a power relation beyond biology; (2) intersecting power relations of humans (such as gender and ethnicity as well as local categories); (3) humans' organization of nonhumans into intraspecies categories (by for example sex, breed, age as well as local categories); (4) nonhumans' own intraspecies power relations; and (5) nonhumans' relations to intraspecies groups of other species (including human subgroups). By situating a multispecies triad in this multispecies intersectionality, the article shows how relations of power intersect within and across species with consequences for individuals and groups of all species involved. Multispecies intersectionality can thus be of interest even to scholars primarily interested in humans.

Keywords feminist ethnography, intersectionality, multispecies ethnography, multispecies triad

Introduction

Feminist anthropology has done great work in decentering those who have been most visible, in order to understand the perspectives of those othered in society—but also to better understand society at large. As multispecies ethnography has gained traction over the past decade, the call for decentering the human to better understand multispecies culture has sounded again and again, and various responses have provided insightful and rich accounts on interspecies interactions and relations (Govindrajan 2018; Hartigan 2020; Livingston and Puar 2011; Maurstad, Davis, and Cowles 2013). Recently, Helen Wadham (2021) called for “further empirical research that places those nonhuman actors themselves and their points-of-view at the center, perhaps via advances in visual ethnography, multispecies ethnography, or ethology” (122). Continuing the feminist and multispecies ethnography discussions, this article heeds that call by conceptualizing the *multispecies triad* and outlining a *multispecies intersectionality* theory.

Early feminist anthropologists showed how gender and class (Freeman 1998) also together with race (Brodkin 1989) intersect and co-constitute relations between humans. Intersectionality, as articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and Patricia Hill Collins (1990, 2004), has become a familiar analytical tool to analyze overlapping systems of oppression. Intersectionality is useful to show how different dimensions of social relationships and categories of power such as gender, class, and race are interconnected with and shape each other (McCall 2005). Building on this tradition, and drawing explicitly on Chandra Mohanty's (1988) scholarship problematizing the notion of women as a unified oppressed group, I work to further unsettle the notion of species and to trouble the conception of any species groups, such as horses or cattle, as unified oppressed groups. In doing so, this conceptual article disrupts analytical frameworks that focus on intersections of human power relations but keep species categories for other species intact. I draw on multispecies ethnography on three continents, as well as the work of other scholars, and go beyond the decentering of the human toward decentering another analytical focus: the species dyad. After a short discussion of my methodology and materials, I introduce the multispecies triad, outline a multispecies intersectionality theory, and offer some concluding remarks.

Methodology and Materials

This article developed as a conceptual piece in the aftermath of my fifth ethnographic fieldwork study focusing on gender and species relations between humans, cattle, and, in three cases, horses. The themes presented here fascinated me because my latest field experiences provided stark contrasts to some of the other human-horse-cattle relations that I had analyzed elsewhere in the world. Although I have often used gender and intersectionality theory to understand relations between humans, horses, and cattle in the past, the conventional focus on species dyads and the established intersectionality of human relations seemed insufficient to make sense of it all. I draw here on analysis and longitudinal reflections on my ethnographic fieldwork on working cattle ranches, farms, and cattle posts in Canada, Botswana, Sweden, and the United States, as well as from Western-themed equine sports and tourism in the United States and Sweden that include cattle. I also draw in important ways on the work of other scholars.

In Canada, I spent six weeks in 2009 working with a cowboy crew on one of the larger working cattle ranches in British Columbia, collecting data for my master's thesis in anthropology. I undertook a nine-month ethnographic fieldwork study during 2012-2013 in Botswana among the women and cattle of the Kalahari as part of my PhD in rural development. In Sweden, I conducted fieldwork in two different postdoctoral projects: one on the social interspecies relations of breeding Swedish Mountain Cattle and one focusing on the human-horse-cattle triad of Western-themed sport, tourism, and agriculture. These last two ethnographic fieldwork projects took place over eighteen months in 2016-2017 and seven months in 2019, respectively, and were both characterized by shorter and repeated visits to the different field settings, between which I returned to my own home. In the United States, I also focused on the human-horse-cattle triad of Western-themed sport, tourism, and agriculture as part of the same project as my previous Swedish fieldwork. But in the United States, I spent one year (from August 2019 to August 2020) on one and the same working cattle ranch in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, living and working with the mother and daughter who owned, managed, and were the only humans working every day on the ranch. Around two days a week, I rode with the hired all-male cowboy crew of a much larger ranch nearby, but I drove back to my home ranch in the evenings to eat and sleep.

Throughout my ethnographic fieldwork, I have relied on field notes from participant observation (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011), and semi-structured interviews (Bernard 2011). During the last two sets of fieldwork in my ongoing project, I also used video (Fijn 2007), drawing (Causey 2017), and ethnographic poetry (Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor 2010) as part of data collection, to capture that which tends to slip through ordinary written sentences. Increasingly, I have relied on a multispecies ethnography approach to attend to the “richness of everyday lives with other creatures and for asking the right questions, in other words, those which highlight rather than suppress alternative voices” (Hamilton and Taylor 2017, 15). My reflections stem from experiences with, as Radhika Govindrajana (2018) puts it, “*actual, real* animals, both singular and collective” (21, emphasis in original). Detailed descriptions of methodologies and methods for each of these projects are provided elsewhere (Petitt 2013, 2016, 2021; Petitt and Eriksson 2022); here, I mainly want to note that the theorizing that follows stems from reflecting across all these empirical fields as well as drawing on the work of other scholars.

The Multispecies Triad

In this section, I introduce the need for a multispecies triad, then consider how this postbinary approach is useful to anthropologists and other multispecies scholars, and finally show how a triadic approach decenters the human and underlines the notion of species as a power relation relevant for intersectional analysis of multispecies worlds.

From Dyadic Species Relations toward the Multispecies Triad

Since the early days of the field of human-animal studies, and through the recent surge of multispecies ethnography, the species dyad has figured as an empirical and analytical norm in research on relations between humans and other species (Hovorka 2019; Shapiro 2020). The growing field of equestrian social science relies, in fruitful ways, on binary analysis of human-horse encounters (see for example Birke and Brandt 2009; Swart 2021). Alice Hovorka (2019) points out that animal geographers rarely talk about more than one nonhuman animal at a time, and although multispecies ethnographers may include more than two species, typically there is either a clear hierarchy in the afforded analytical importance of the species involved, or the notion of species relations is not clearly evoked. Important work such as Govindrajana’s (2018) thoughtful book on animal intimacies traces stories of humans together with goats, cows, monkeys, pigs, and bears, whilst centering species dyads that include humans. Thus, while fascinating research that includes more than two species is ample, there is room for further centering of multiple species other than human in such accounts. A multispecies triad (or quad and so on) approach underscores the multiple ways that these species relations are entangled.

Investigations of such entanglements are already underway and Felix Remter’s (2021) essay on humans, bees, and varroa mites, does some of this work, for example, portraying how individuals of multiple species come together to form networks of care. The essay shows the need to go beyond the species dyad to understand the notion of care in this context, and I hope that a conceptualization of the multispecies triad will support such endeavors by highlighting intersecting species relations. One approach that could be developed further is a focus on a *trialogue* (see Petitt 2021) between individuals of different species in interaction, where the triologue cannot be reduced to multiple dialogues. In a study of intraspecies human relations, and notably mother-father-child constellations, Monica Hedenbro (2006) shows how a triadic perspective and a focus on the “rhythm of triadic interaction” is essential to understand family processes (39). Here, the

triad cannot be reduced to multiple dyads. I suggest conceptualizing the more-than-dyadic species relation with a focus on the triadic interactions and relations while putting notions of species to work throughout the analysis. Thus, I propose a move beyond the dyad and toward conceptually engaging the multispecies triad.

A Postbinary Approach to Species in Multispecies Ethnography

On the working cattle ranches in Colorado where I conducted fieldwork, horses were expected to learn to carry a human on their backs and to recognize tactile signals of communication. Cattle, on the other hand, were expected to learn to yield space to humans and horses by recognizing embodied communication from a distance. These variations in communication with horses and cattle shaped not only the humans' direct interaction with the horses and cattle but also the entire multispecies ranch culture and the lives of both cattle and horses. Moreover, looking at the wider relations within which these interactions occur, we see that horses, cattle, and humans are all integral to the encounters of any of these individuals. Humans' ideas of horses and cattle are here constructed together in a settler colonial frame of species relations. Further, where and for how long the cattle graze in the mountains depends on how horses and humans work together. The work that horses do together with humans is entirely dependent on human-cattle relations as well as the actions initiated by cattle themselves. The multispecies triad thus moves the focus from the species dyad to the species triad in ways not only reducible to multiple dyads. Centering a multispecies triad makes it more likely that contrasting characteristics of different species dyads will become visible, and it is likely to reveal species-specific premises informing humans' interaction with others. Rather than just adding a third species and stirring, to use an old saying from gender debates, the triadic approach highlights how species relations intersect to mutually shape each other.

Thinking through the multispecies triad underscores how relations between nonhuman species shift when they engage in relations with humans (Petitt 2013, 79). Relations between horses and cattle are influenced by their relations to humans and how they perform species in relation to each other differ when humans are present. Humans relate to cattle differently when atop a horse. Horses interact with cattle in very different ways when carrying a human as they then negotiate space, or engage in *civil inattention* (by turning away their gaze, see Hartigan 2021) according to human-initiated activities. Trained, and sometimes untrained, cowhorses also relate to humans differently when simultaneously engaging cattle, such as taking specific initiative beyond human instructions, in ways that they do not when cattle are not present. Cattle relate differently to horses in the pasture and when they are ridden by humans and also relate to humans differently depending on whether the humans are by themselves or with a horse. Thus, humans, horses, and cattle all perform species differently in relation to each other, depending on the species combination engaged in interaction. They engage in rhythms of triadic interaction (Hedenbro 2006), as it were.

Importantly, they do this as an outcome of a mutual and continuous *zoocialization*, a multispecies socialization where individuals and groups of different species learn to become together through performing species in particular ways (Petitt and Brandt-Off 2022). Thus, broadening the gaze to explore multispecies relations beyond the dyad allows us to understand both the various dyads involved as well as the triad as a whole. It also underlines the need for seeing species as a power relation beyond the biological and, as Hovorka (2019) calls for, further explore species-based power relations.

Whereas the concept of species is in one sense drawn from biological categories based on genetic attributes, species relations are power relations performed by individuals and groups, solidified into

social structures and species categories. As Arnold Arluke and Clinton Sanders (1996) put it, “Being an animal in modern societies is maybe less a matter of biology than it is an issue of human culture and consciousness” (9). Beyond this human culture and consciousness, multispecies culture also shapes the nonhuman performances of species. Scholarly work has increasingly acknowledged the agency of nonhuman individuals in such processes by, for example, outlining ways of “donkeying” or “performing” donkey (Geiger and Hovorka 2015) and “doing” cattle (Petitt and Eriksson 2022). When moving across the landscape together, horses, cattle, and humans become together, to follow Donna Haraway (2008), learn together, and become socialized into species-specific roles and relations through multispecies processes of zocialization (Petitt and Brandt-Off 2022). I thus here see species relations as the process by which individuals are categorized into different groups based on presumed important genetic and biological traits and behavior, which are then operationalized into embodied performances and interactions and solidified into societal structures. These structures—and the reproduction of the interactions and relations they invite—create social species categories such as humans, horses, and cattle through interaction.

The multispecies triad decenters the human in the examination of species power relations, acknowledging that individuals of other species than human can be central to how an individual of a certain species performs. We can thus discuss, for example, horse-nonhorse relations rather than human-nonhuman relations (Petitt 2021). Importantly, yet beyond the scope of this article, animal species relations are also dependent on relations to plants, weather, technology, as well as wider ecologies and environments.

In my own research, I have seen how horses engage and communicate with humans, cattle, and other horses in species-specific ways. Through zocialization, working cowhorses in Colorado learn, for example, that they are allowed by humans who ride them to bite cattle. One horse who I rode often, would bite cows, calves, and bulls alike when we approached together to move a herd of cattle. He did not, however, bite other horses when humans were around, although he sometimes would when no humans were nearby. Nor did he, or any other adult horse on the ranch, bite humans. This is in accordance with the findings of Anita Maurstad, Dona Davis, and Sarah Cowles (2013), showing how horses in both Sweden and the United States communicated with humans in different ways than they did with other horses. Through zocialization horses learn to perform species and by acting differently towards individuals of different species, horses engage in and reproduce species power relations, albeit in locally specific ways. A multispecies triad thus takes us beyond a linear approach of multispecies power hierarchies and complements concepts such as Arluke and Sanders’s (1996) *sociozoological scale* with a dynamic view of power and agency, where species power relations are multilayered and shaped both by overarching structures and by the character of the particular situation at hand.

Further, power relations between horses and cattle are intelligible through notions of species performance even when humans are not around; all the bulls pastured with the horses on my Colorado home ranch were repeatedly chased away from hay during feeding by any of the horses. This not only indicates how species relations are relevant for horses and cattle—it also suggests that we need to look at horses’ interactions with different species if we want to learn more about horse-nonhorse relations in general or horse-human relations in particular.

Engaging the multispecies triad thus entails keeping more than two species in focus, but it does not simply add another species to the mix; it requires relating, contrasting, comparing, and triangulating data on relations and interactions between three different species at the same time. It involves more than simply including three species in a study or article. It requires seeing species

as an important social relation shaped by and in contrast to multiple species relations, allowing the species dyad to be troubled by another, equally important species relation. Moreover, and perhaps especially relevant to ethnographers who continuously engage in complex matrices of relations, omitting a postbinary species perspective simply risks missing out on relevant aspects of interspecies relations. Of course, one can easily slide from the triad into the quad, and so on, but it is the move away from the dyad that is significant here, together with the notion that these species relations intersect rather than line up in an additive manner. Importantly, the concept of species remains a pertinent power relation to investigate, as I discuss just below, even as we trouble, as I do further down, the notion of species through a multispecies intersectionality.

Species in Intersectionality Frameworks for Human Power Relations

Seeing power relations as intersectional, as briefly explained in the introduction, was first invoked to understand how intrahuman power relations engage each other and intersect to cocreate each other (Brodkin 1989; Collins 1990, 2004; Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Freeman 1998; McCall 2005). In this framework, gender can only be understood by how it also intersects with, for example, race and class. Species, as discussed above, is one dimension of social relationships and is also—particularly in a societal structure of domestication—a relation of power. Scholars such as Maneesha Deckha (2008) and Kim TallBear (2018, 2019) draw on species, and above all the human-nonhuman divide, as strongly shaping relations of race and indigeneity. Species as invoked by, among others, Helen Wadham (2021) in relation to horses and by Kenneth Shapiro (2020) more broadly, is an analytical category akin to gender or class from which we can launch an analysis of power. This significant move has afforded species much deserved attention. Taking species seriously as a driver of social construction and difference, we need to acknowledge it as being a category that itself also emerges out of power dynamics at the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and class (Petitt and Hovorka 2020, 147).

Taking gender to be “the structure of social relations that centers on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes” (Connell 2021, 12), gender becomes salient even for individuals of species other than humans, for both the way that humans organize species such as horses or cattle and the way that horses and cattle organize and relate among themselves (as discussed in the next section). However, the question of nonhuman experiences of gender beyond that lies outside the scope of this article, and I here refer to gender as structures and relations affecting individuals of different species, rather than as experiences of identity.

A multispecies triad approach with a focus on more than two species relations can help us see how human power relations such as gender, ethnicity, or race intersect with species. Hovorka (2015) notes that intersectionality encourages “analytical sophistication regarding how certain human social groups are connected with certain nonhuman social groups and the implications of this pairing for all” (6). Through her work on gender-species intersectionality of humans, cattle, and chickens in Botswana, for example, we learn that cattle and men are privileged while women and chicken are othered (Hovorka 2012). The analytic focus on two nonhuman species explains socio-agricultural relations we would not otherwise understand. This can be understood as an abstract multispecies triad in which the humans, cattle, and chickens involved are in a symbolic (or abstract) triad, although they do not all encounter each other as a triad in practice. Hence, a multispecies triad approach can be useful as an analytical tool even when the three species do not physically meet. Such abstract

triads (or quads, and so on) can help us explore the species-specific and gendered premises that shape our multispecies worlds.

In my own research, studying the same group of men interacting with cattle and horses on a Canadian cowboy crew revealed multiple cowboy masculinities, some of which were primarily performed in relation to the horses and some in relation to the cattle (Petitt 2013). Here, a binary species focus would allow only a partial understanding of gender-species relations on the ranch, whereas the triad—though I did not call it that at the time—allowed for a fuller exploration, since particular species relations engage differently in human power relations such as gender. Centering more than two species thus allows us to become aware of humans' species-specific premises in relation to, for example, gender in an intersectional framework.

Importantly, when studying how the notion of species intersects with human power relations such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class, it is also crucial to acknowledge any local categorizations and relations that might be at play. Kim TallBear (2018, 2019), for example, discusses Indigenous notions of gender and sexuality drawing on David Shorter's work on the *moreakame* of the Yoeme to demonstrate how Indigenous categories do not always map onto settler-colonial categories. In another example from my own research, local human intraspecies categories beyond gender, ethnicity, race, and class turned out to be pertinent in Botswana, where women's relations to cattle were shaped by categories of milkers, farmers' wives, and those distant from cattle (Petitt 2016). Although these three local categories mapped onto the intersection of gender and six different articulations of ethnicity, the three local categories were important in understanding women's relations to cattle and what it meant when those relations changed.

Whereas groups of nonhuman species such as cattle or horses not seldom remain a fixed category in analysis, the human category is more often explored in some of its complex forms of intersecting power relations. However, since a triadic approach requires carefully situating nonhumans in relation to different species, as previously discussed, it highlights that there are also different ways of performing species—both when it comes to humans' framing of animals and how horses or cattle, for example, themselves perform differently in relation to individuals of different species. Although accounts of nonhumans often offer some detail on the particular individuals involved, we need a systematic and analytical engagement of different cattle and horse positionalities as well as a conceptualization of how these positionalities shape interactions beyond relevant species relations. To further conceptualize the multispecies triad, we need to unsettle the notion of species and thoroughly situate members of all species involved. It is time, I believe, to move toward a multispecies intersectionality.

Engaging the Triad through Multispecies Intersectionality

In this section, I outline a multispecies intersectionality theory that goes beyond intersecting species relations, taking into account the intersecting relations of individuals in all species involved—not just the human. It thus goes beyond both (1) species relations and (2) the way that species relations intersect with human power relations (both discussed above), and, as discussed below, takes into account (3) how humans organize nonhumans according to intraspecies categories, (4) nonhumans' own intraspecies relations, and, finally, (5) how nonhumans make intraspecies distinctions between individuals of other species. Building on the notion of species as a relation of power and how it intersects with gender and other human power relations (as discussed in the previous section), I will first go ahead and unsettle the notion of species as a unified group by drawing

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explicitly on Mohanty's (1988) work. I then develop the theory further within three subsections and conclude by drawing together these five sets of intersecting relations into a framework of a multispecies intersectionality.

Unsettling the Notion of Species as a Unified Oppressed Group

Striving toward an increasingly equal starting field of analysis, a multispecies intersectionality breaks down each species category into intersecting social and power relations with the same rigorous detail that we break down the category *human* in intersectional analysis. Mirroring Mohanty (1988) in examining political implications of analytical strategies and principles, I suggest that a multispecies intersectionality furthers the work of acknowledging the subjectivity of individuals of other species and works against reproducing their object status as a unified oppressed group. Mohanty argues against

"the assumption of women as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location or contradictions, [that] implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy (as male dominance—men as a correspondingly coherent group) which can be applied universally and cross-culturally" (1988, 64).

A similar argument can be forwarded when it comes to species categories, where the experiences of horses and cattle—or even mares or cows—differ across time, place, and social context. Indeed, while sex is, for all species, a category rooted in importance afforded to certain biological attributes, *mare*, is no more a simple biological category than is that of *woman*—indeed Sandra Swart (2021) argues, rephrasing Simone de Beauvoir, that one is not born, but rather becomes, a mare. Thus, diverse subjectivities, performativities, and contextual factors of cows or mares exist in different local multispecies cultures.

Equal attention to performativities, subjectivities, and positionalities of humans and individuals of other species does not imply symmetrical power relations between species. Moreover, there is often an asymmetry in the intersecting power relations that are most salient in shaping individuals' experiences and possibilities between species. For example, while human gender and ethnicity were two of the most pertinent relations intersecting to form local categories shaping what it meant for women to own cattle in Botswana, as discussed above, human class relations together with species were crucial to understand the different realities of the cattle that those women owned, since class determined access to grazing land, fences and markets (Petitt and Hovorka 2020).

A multispecies intersectionality not only furthers a sensitivity to realities shaped by human racial, ethnic, and gendered relations of power but also pays attention to how they are shaped by nonhuman sex, breed, age, and other local and social relations of importance. Moreover, the failure to recognize this diversity risks oversimplifying not only the analysis of multispecies cultures and their dynamics but also their consequences for the realities of othered human groups. A multispecies intersectionality can thus be useful for feminist and multispecies ethnographers regardless of which nexus of power relations they study. In the following subsections, I outline three sets of relations that, together with species relations and intersecting human power relations discussed above, make up a first formulation of a multispecies intersectionality.

Humans' Organization of Nonhumans into Intraspecies Categories

As much as the intersecting relations of gender and race partly shape what it means to be a woman, the sex or breed of a horse is likely to equally shape their experience within human structures (see

Derry 2003; Swart 2021). Practices of gendering the bodies of cattle equally shape the structures of social bovine relations that center reproduction, bringing reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes (Connell 2021, 12); thus, as Hovorka (2015) points out, dairy cows can be assumed to have differentiated experiences based on their gendered attributes and roles.

The connection between animal breed and human categories of power has been noted for different species (see, for example, Derry [2003] for cattle and horses; Hovorka [2012, 2015] for chickens; Petitt and Hovorka [2020] for cattle; Swart [2021] for horses; and Weaver [2021] for dogs). Within-breed variations are also great, and Hovorka (2019) points out that scholarship has shown that individuals and intraspecies social groups lead different lives and have vastly varied experiences depending on their positionality in relation to other animals and humans. On the cattle ranches of Colorado, cows, bulls, heifers, and steer calves had different opportunities and faced particular challenges as a result of humans sorting them into these categories. Taking into account both the subjectivity of the mares and cows as well as the way they are organized by local humans, nuancing the categories of mares and cows becomes important. The Black Angus cows whom I moved from horseback on the mountain range in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado lived different lives and performed cow differently than the Swedish Mountain Cows whom I hand milked in a Swedish countryside backyard.

Because categories for intersecting social and power relations among nonhuman species are not as established as those used for intersectional analysis of human relations, local categories and emic distinctions will be crucial, in addition to investigating overarching categories such as breed, sex, or age. In her account of human-cow relations in the Central Himalayas, Radhika Govindrajan (2018) shows how humans' distinctions between *pahari* cows, seen to embody ritual power due to their particular embodied histories and historically situated social relations, and other types of cows had an impact on cows' relations to and interactions with humans (66-80). Further, in a study on cattle breeding and sales in Colombia, Marisol de la Cadena and Santiago de Martínez Medina (2020) identified local categories that proved difficult to directly translate to other languages such as English. Whereas *breed* in English could be translated as *raza* in Spanish, more important categories in their study were *res*, which refers to an ordinary bovine, and *ejemplar*, referring to an exceptional or prized bovine. Depending on how humans categorized individual cows and bulls, their life trajectory and thus relations and interactions with humans differed greatly. A multispecies intersectional analysis of cattle in Colombia might thus need to engage these local categories—rather than privileging the English word *breed* or only the term *raza*—together with, for example, bovine sex and age.

In the Omoro culture of Ethiopia, humans categorize horses as either *baataa* or *farrda mia* rather than by breed (Baynes-Rock and Teressa 2021). *Baataa* refers to horses who can be ridden by anyone and are also used for carrying goods, while *farrda mia* are horses considered prestigious and “normally only ridden by men, although women sometimes are permitted to ride them” (Baynes-Rock and Teressa 2021, 5). However, all *farrda mia* are male, and thus born of *baataa* mares, so humans make categorizations based on the horse's physical expression, intelligence, temperament, and emotional connectedness with his owner, rather than on genetics. The owner of a *farrda mia* is also always male and the ownership linked to personal prestige. Masculine identities are here tied up with a man's relation to his horse, showing how horses' and humans' experiences are shaped by the intersection of human gender and ethnicity with horse sex and local categorizations of horses.

Moreover, as with the category of *pahari* cows in the Central Himalayas (Govindrajan 2018), categories can range across species. The particular embodied histories and historically situated

social relations that placed certain cows as pahari also placed some humans and goats, though not others, as pahari. In Colorado, working cowhorses are paired with working cowboys and afford a certain prestige as a result. In Botswana, it was *herd boys*, lacking the status of symbolic masculinity of the cowboy, who were paired with horses engaged in cattle work and neither were held in symbolically high regard in society. In these accounts, humans are clearly playing an active role in creating categories of nonhumans in ways that are at least sometimes shaped by intrahuman intersectionalities. By building on this work that carefully situates nonhuman individuals, continuing to pay attention to multispecies webs of relations, and joining the move from all-encompassing species distinctions to distinctions of intraspecies social groups, multispecies intersectionality takes into account both inter- and intraspecies intersectionalities of different species. This is in line with Pär Segerdahl's (2007) finding that what is considered "natural" behavior for a particular species is partly individual and dependent on local multispecies cultures. With an analytical framework of multispecies intersectionality, we are equipped to look deeper into Haraway's (1991) situated and embodied knowledges and the experiences of, for example, mares and cows around the world. A cowhorse in Sweden engaged in cutting competition - where human-horse teams 'cut' a bovine individual from the herd - certainly meets the multispecies triad differently than a working cowhorse in Colorado.

Maurstad, Davis, and Cowles (2013) detail horse riders' accounts of individual and varied subjectivities of their horses. However, even when humans see their horses as subjects, they still sometimes act out of generic ideas about what kind of animal a horse is (Birke 2008). A multispecies intersectionality could support continued work with detailing varied horse subjectivities and further facilitate a continued exploration of how positionalities at specific intersections of, for example, breed, sex, and age together with human gender, race, and class shape experiences and possibilities for an individual or group of individuals of a particular species.

Recognizing Nonhuman Categorization and Power Relations within Their Own Species

A multispecies intersectionality framework includes, importantly, how individuals of different species organize themselves into social groups. Lynda Birke and Kirrilly Thompson (2017) underscore how each horse is an individual with particular experiences, expectations, and subjectivity. This approach requires innovative ethnographic methodologies, such as John Hartigan's (2020) work on horses. By working with ethologists to learn how to use ethograms in combination with his own training in ethnographic methods, Hartigan explores the intraspecies relations of horses and then shows how these relations are upset when herded into confinement by humans. Importantly, Hartigan's ethnographic observations challenge some of the traditional ethological understandings of stallions and mares, underscoring the value of ethnography beyond the human and showing how horses themselves make intraspecies distinctions among their own species.

Nonhuman animal culture has been increasingly investigated (see Whiten 2021 for a recent review), and interdisciplinary efforts with ethologist increasingly encouraged (Hartigan 2021; Wadham 2021). Natasha Fijn's (2011) etho-ethnography of Mongolian humans and their herds of horses, cattle, sheep, and goats show the importance of taking intraspecies sociality seriously as a mode of understanding a wider multispecies context. In my own fieldwork in Colorado, power plays between individual horses were common, as one gelding on my home ranch constantly chased away a newly introduced gelding from his favourite mare. Further, friendships between heifers and cows were often obvious enough that they were put in the same pasture when the herd were

divided up into smaller groups for summer grazing in the mountains. In this way, intraspecies power relations are shaped by nonhuman categorization of individuals and groups. However, some of these intraspecies relations are also shaped by interactions with individuals and groups of other species.

Nonhumans' Distinctions of Individuals of Other Species into Intraspecies Groups

Nonhuman individuals also make distinctions between intraspecies groups of other species. Through his research on bonobo-human communication, Segerdahl discusses how the way that bonobos engage humans is shaped by more than the fact that they are humans (Segerdahl 2014, 142). He shows how the bonobos treat regulars and visitors differently and also expect different knowledge of appropriate behavior in return. In my own work engaging with multispecies triads on different cattle ranches, I have met horses who bite adult cattle but not calves. For the most prestigious of the farrda mia horses of Ethiopia, discussed above, their status depends on their continued performance as such by not allowing anyone but their owner to saddle them. The horses' actions based on distinguishing between their owner and other humans is thus crucial in this process. Rather than a static grouping process, the choice of which category an individual horse belongs to is "mutually decided between owner and horse during the course of the horse's development" (Baynes-Rock and Teresa 2021, 5). Thus, these horses make intrahuman distinctions relevant for the performance of human masculine identities of prestige.

Categorizations of cattle, horses, or humans made by nonhumans might differ from and intersect with the commonly analyzed categories of human power relations, to shape multispecies power relations and interactions. We need to stay aware, of course, that even when analyzing categories created by nonhumans, it is still us humans who look for, recognize, define, and validate such categories in our research. Taking such categories and relations seriously—and taking into account what nonhumans themselves are working toward in their relations with individuals of their own and other species—could still help us better understand multispecies cultures more broadly. We can develop a better understanding of these relations by further acknowledging the agency of nonhuman individuals in creating relations and making their own systems to distinguish between members of other species than their own. By seeing, in line with Wadham (2021), such nonhuman agency and categorization as embedded within relations of sociopolitical contexts, we more fully grasp their effect on how individuals situated differently in a multispecies intersectionality act and experience the world.

Drawing Together the Multispecies Intersectionality of the Multispecies Triad

Exploring a multispecies triad shaped by a multispecies intersectionality entails grappling with dynamic understandings of subordination and a notion of power and agency beyond the binary. Mohanty, again, teaches us that it is problematic to use the term *women* "as a group, as a stable category of analysis, [because] it assumes an ahistorical, universal unity between women based on a generalized notion of their subordination" (1988, 72). Rather than allowing power to be automatically defined in binary terms—between those who have it and those who do not—she argues that we need to be culturally and historically specific in our analysis. Likewise, we cannot a priori assume that all cattle and all horses—or even all cows or all mares—are similarly subordinated. Rather, we need to continue to investigate the specificities of mares' and cows' relations to others within and across multispecies cultures, histories, and ecologies.

In this section, I have discussed humans' intraspecies categories of nonhumans, nonhumans' intraspecies categories of their own species, and nonhumans' intraspecies categories of other

species. I have shown how these sets of relations intersect with intersecting human power relations and notions of species introduced in the previous section. These five sets of relations intersect to shape social and power relations, experiences, challenges, and opportunities for all individuals and groups involved in multispecies cultures. Notably, species as a power relation remains salient for individuals of different species even as it is unsettled by intraspecies distinctions. A multispecies intersectionality acknowledges that “human and nonhuman agencies at the micro level intersect with wider relations of place and power” (Wadham 2021, 122), recognizing nonhumans’ agency not only when they engage in resistance toward human structures or directions.

Following Wadham’s line of inquiry, extending Sherry Ortner’s (2001) notion of *valued projects* to multiple species might be useful to further acknowledge the subjectivities of for example horses and cattle themselves as well as their intentional actions. Ortner (2001, 2006) holds that people—always within historically specific sociocultural contexts that contain certain constraints, limitations, and opportunities—strive to pursue projects that they value. While the possibilities for carrying out valued projects and activities are defined by the sociohistorical context, each individual has some degree of freedom to choose and work toward such valued projects. Understanding women’s actions as the pursuit of their own valued projects rather than interpreting them as resistance to oppressive structures highlights women’s desires and needs that are shaped by the structures in their own lives, including the inequalities they face. A multispecies intersectionality encourages a similar focus on nonhuman projects.

Feminist and multispecies ethnographers, as well as others who write about interactions and relations between humans and other animals, often situate their nonhuman subjects carefully and take into account the particular experiences of individual horses and cattle, with relatively detailed analyses of sociopolitical and sociohistorical contexts that shape their experience. A multispecies intersectionality is not meant as a dismissal of the careful work done by scholars in this regard but as a tool to further develop such analysis. It builds on early work by, amongst others, Crenshaw (1989, 1991), Collins (1990, 2004), and Mohanty (1988), as well as a range of more recent research across disciplines that focuses on multispecies relations and increasingly acknowledges and recognizes the varied experiences and subjectivities within a species group other than human. Multispecies ethnography and feminist theories and methodologies are coming together with a surge in attention to nonhuman animals in the social sciences. This multispecies intersectionality theory contributes to this work as a conceptual framework that encourages investigations of how such experiences and subjectivities come into being not only through the intersection of species relations and human intersectional relations but also through relations within, across, and between multiple species. Acknowledging this multispecies intersectionality underscores the important ways that intraspecies categories and relations of nonhuman species intersect with human intraspecies categories and relations, facilitating future examinations of multispecies triads around the world. Formulating these multilayered ideas into a theoretical framework could also eventually facilitate recognizing a body of work with similar analytical interests.

Concluding Reflections

In conclusion, this article aims to contribute to discussions within feminist and multispecies ethnographies and to answer calls to place nonhuman actors at the center of analysis by offering a conceptualization of the multispecies triad and outlining a multispecies intersectionality theory. With a multispecies triad approach, whether the three species physically meet or not, we can

further explore multispecies relations in a nonbinary way that decenters the human in both data collection and analysis. A multispecies intersectionality approach can show how a triad is gendered or otherwise shaped by human power relations, human categories of nonhuman species, and intraspecies groups, as well as by nonhumans' categorization of species and intraspecies groups, including their own and humans.

The multispecies intersectionality theory put forth here has shown the importance of acknowledging the intersectionality of five sets of relations: (1) species as a power relation beyond biology; (2) intersecting power relations of humans; (3) humans' organization of nonhumans into intraspecies categories; (4) nonhumans' own intraspecies power relations; and (5) how nonhumans make intraspecies distinctions between individuals of other species. This should be seen as a dynamic set of relations that can be built upon and shaped by other scholars. For example, plants, viruses, technologies, and ecologies could take a more central role for some and the multispecies triad could easily be extended to a quad and so on. Some triads might not even include humans.

Importantly, these intraspecies categories and power relations shape relations with individuals and groups of other species and are themselves entangled in intersecting power relations and categories within their own species. Relations of power thus intersect within and across species, with consequences for individuals and groups of all species involved. In this way, species and intraspecies relations such as breed, sex, and local multispecies cultures shape human relations such as gender, class, ethnicity, and race. A multispecies intersectionality could thus be of interest even to those scholars more interested in human relations within multispecies cultures. Finally, I hope that the concept of multispecies triads and this multispecies intersectionality theory will support the exploration and conceptualization of intersecting nonhuman categories of power relations. I also hope that other scholars find it useful to develop the approach and to adapt and shape it to suit the analytical, empirical, and ethical requirements of their particular contexts and aspirations.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that they have no conflict of interest in publishing this article.

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