



# The Animal Rights Movement in Theory and Practice: A Review of the Sociological Literature

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## Abstract

Traditionally, philosophers have had most to say about the ethics of our treatment of non-human animals (hereafter animals); it is only in recent years that social scientists have engaged with issues concerning humans and other animals. However, in the sociological literature and more generally in the emerging field of Human–Animal Studies (HAS), evidence of interest in the animal protection movement is slight. This review of Eliasian theory, Marxist realism, feminism, ecofeminism, and social constructionist theory – along with key activist approaches to animal activism and advocacy – indicates the theoretical richness of the topic that is nonetheless empirically poor. The animal protection movement is referred to here simply as the animal movement or where appropriate, as one of its three strands – animal welfare, animal liberation and animal rights. The article concludes with a discussion of how social movement theory (the ‘why’) and practice (the ‘how’) might be enhanced by social movement scholars working in collaboration with animal activists.

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## Introduction

A number of writers including Tovey (2003), Hobson–West (2007), and Irvine (2008) have recently drawn attention to the rare appearance of human–animal topics in social science texts. Work in the field of Human–Animal Studies (HAS) has mainly been confined to specialist journals and more recently to edited anthologies of previously published articles (Arluke and Sanders 2009; Flynn 2008; Wilkie and Inglis 2007). Of these tomes, the Arluke and Sanders collection pays the most attention to the sociology of the animal movement (four papers from a total of 35). That none of these papers is devoted exclusively to the sociology of the animal movement is a reflection of the literature more generally as few sociologists have focused on the movement’s broad agenda or its grievances. For example, the seminal campaigns of the animal movement against the (ab)use of animals in animal experimentation, intensive farming, and in a variety of entertainments and sports are rarely examined by social scientists. Notable exceptions include Beirne (1995, 1999, 2007) and Cazaux (1999) in criminology; Noske (1989) in anthropology; Garner (1993, 1998, 2006, 2010) in political science; and Jasper and his colleagues (Jasper 1999, 2004; Jasper and Nelkin 1992; Jasper and Poulsen 1995), Agnew (1998), Einwohner (2002), Nibert (2002), Munro (2005), and Cherry (2010) in sociology. As suggested in the section which follows, the study of animal protectionism as a new social movement (NSM) is potentially rich in the range of theories and perspectives available to scholars.

## Some perspectives on the animal movement

According to Barnes (1995) unlike the older, class-based European movements that sought large-scale societal transformations, NSMs – he mentions gay rights and green

issues including animal rights – focused on ‘the piecemeal defence of particular threatened groups or lifestyles’. The animal movement is perceived by some social scientists as a political movement (Garner 1993; Wolfe 1993) and by others as a social and moral movement (Jasper and Nelkin 1992; Richards 1990). As a NSM it is sometimes linked to the environmental movement (Eckersley 1992) and eco-pax movements (Pakulski 1991).

‘The ecopax movements in the West’, write Crook, Pakulski, and Waters, ‘attract civil rights campaigners, feminist supporters, animal liberationists and a host of other groups’ (1992, 153). Agnew (1998), Nibert (2002, 2003), and Szybel (2007) assert that the animal movement represents a rejection of oppressive structures of domination including the notorious trio of classism, racism, sexism, and especially speciesism; the latter, given its unfamiliarity to most people, has not attracted anything like the trio’s vast network of scholarly commentators.

Sutherland and Nash (1994) describe animal rights as a new environmental cosmology while Eder (1990) includes vegetarianism and animal rights as movements against modernity; meanwhile, Tester (1991) dismisses these movements as puritanical cults and Wolfe (1993), a strong critic of animal rights, nominates ecological and animal rights issues as the fastest-growing political movements in the West and the most threatening to humanist values.

These disparate views indicate the absence of any clear consensus on what makes the animal movement tick. Crook et al., however, suggest a possible clue when they assert that what is ‘new’ about NSMs, is ‘their *specific orientations* combined with international *mass media exposure*’ (1992, 148). In the case of the animal movement these orientations include unique moral concerns, namely the rights of animals; self-organization such as do-it-yourself activism; and importantly, the use of drama and spectacle often involving scandalizing images intended to achieve mass media exposure; hence Jasper’s (1999) emphasis on the importance of morally challenging images, ‘extreme rhetoric’ and ‘moral shocks’ in recruiting supporters to the animal rights movement.

At a broader level of analysis the work of a number of sociologists and their theoretical ideas have been touted as among the most likely candidates for explaining one of the most misunderstood social movements of our era: Eliasian theory (Van Krieken 2001), Marxist realism (Benton 1993), feminism and ecofeminism (Vance 1993), and social constructionism (Hannigan 1995; Yearley 1992). An account of these perspectives follows.

Eliasian theory is most promising in explaining long-term processes such as changing attitudes to animals over the past several centuries. Elias emphasizes the importance of shame and changing thresholds of repugnance towards violence due to the ‘civilizing process’ (Elias 1978). He shows how cruelty and violence towards animals including the display of animal bodies in public has come to be seen as repugnant by most people in the West. His theory is supported by evidence of a long-term trend associated with ‘the civilizing of appetite’ (Mennell 1991) and the increasing popularity of vegetarian and vegan diets. Thus, meat is purchased in drastically disguised forms and vegetarian diets become more popular along with demands for the more humane treatment of farmed animals (Fiddes 1991). Eliasian theory, although disputed by Tester (1991) and Franklin (1999), is nonetheless a useful resource for the animal movement, especially for what it has to say about long-term trends in meat eating, vegetarianism and a predicted decrease in cruel practices towards animals.

The Marxist realist and sociologist Benton (1993, 1995) notes how humans are bound to animals in a variety of social relationships such as in nature parks, zoos and circuses, pet-keeping, animal experimentation, and intensive farming. In each of these contexts, he argues, animals are treated as property and not as sentient beings. He also draws parallels

between factory farming and the conditions of workers in slaughterhouses and in intensive animal factories. His wish for the emergence of 'affective ties of trust, loyalty, compassion, and responsibility' (1995, 175) is, as he acknowledges, not likely to develop given that it is against the interests of workers to object to the exploitation of animals. The women's movement, especially the strand known as ecofeminism, is much more in sympathy with these sentiments.

There is now a large ecofeminist literature on animals and the environment (see Vance 1993 for an outline) which provides a comprehensive resource for animal and environmental activists. The ecofeminist critique is particularly important as a corrective to the movement's most prominent philosophers, who Ruddick (1980) asserts, are obsessively fixated on reason while dismissive of what she calls a 'maternal epistemology' based on an ethic of care and humility. This should not be construed as a soft-hearted alternative to rational debate, as women, many with strong feminist leanings, constitute the majority of animal protectionists; to them, the abuse of animals as a social problem is no less deserving of moral condemnation than other, more recognized abusive practices such as racism – and its offshoots ethnic cleansing, slavery, lynchings, hate crimes against people of color and so on – and sexism with its related violations of bodily integrity including clitoridectomy, rape, and wife bashing.

The theory that is arguably most in accord with the animal movement's ideology and campaigns – as well as with the testimonies of animal protectionists – is social constructionism; when it draws on social movement and social problems theories, social constructionism offers one of the most sociologically promising ways to analyze the animal movement.

#### *A social constructionist framework*

Social constructionist theory, argues Buechler, 'brings a symbolic interactionist approach to the study of collective action by emphasizing the role of framing activities and cultural processes in social activism' (1995, 441). In other words, the idea of animal rights is not natural; it has to be argued and contested as an issue in interaction with sympathisers and critics, typically as a collective enterprise; the issue of animal rights as a social and moral problem is thus constructed and framed by the movement's activists (in the streets) and advocates (in the suites). According to Mauss (1989) social movements and social problems are 'alternative features of the same reality' (cited in Bash 1995, 248), a proposition also supported by Jenness (1995) and McCright and Dunlap (2000). Munro (2005) contributes to this conceptual framework by showing how both traditions are utilized by activists in what Holstein and Miller (1993) and Miller and Holstein (1989) designate as 'social problems work'. McDonald (2000), also writing in this tradition, has described how individuals become animal activists, vegans and vegetarians by engaging in social problems work – 'reading, thinking, talking, and becoming involved in animal rights or vegetarian-related activities'. Similarly, Irvine (2003) has shown how animal shelter workers in the United States engage in social problems work that includes educating the public about animal health, training, and behavior. Improving the fate of unwanted pets is part of the animal welfare agenda to rescue individual animals; more important for animal rightists and liberationists is the quest to expose the abuse of millions of animals in what Noske (1989) and Kew (1999), respectively, label 'the animal-industrial complex' and 'the animal-using consensus'.

The concept of social movement framing pioneered by Wilson (1973) has since been comprehensively developed by Snow and Benford (1988, 1992) and more

recently by Snow and Byrd (2007). These theorists argue that all social movements have three core framing tasks, namely diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing, or in Wilson's (1973) original terminology, a movement's diagnosis, prognosis, and motivation. In the case of the animal movement, issue entrepreneurs identify animal exploitation as a social problem in much the same way that environmental threats are increasingly constructed as anthropogenic social problems (Hannigan 1995; Yearley 1992). The animal movement's diagnostic frame is to target animal abuse as a social problem on a par with harming children, women, the elderly, and most pertinently, fauna and flora. This means that the animal movement seeks to gain social problems status for its concerns about our (mis)treatment of animals particularly in the culturally sanctioned contexts of animal experimentation, intensive farming, and recreational hunting.

While much of the movement's diagnostic work is associated with the ideas of philosophers, it is the social problems work of animal activists and advocates that transforms ethics into social action. Movement insiders discover, name and frame putative abuses – primarily vivisection, factory farming and bloodsports – as injustices to living creatures no decent society should tolerate. The practical work of animal activism and advocacy is the movement's prognostic frame, that is, the tactics it employs to prosecute its cause. Mobilizing structures in the iconic form of social movement organizations have been developed to organize various grassroots campaigns and to mobilize emotions and moral capital on behalf of individual animals. (See Cudworth 2003, Chapter 6 on some of these campaigns).

For most people the concept of animal rights is an alien one so that the task of the animal movement is to normalize it: 'If there is a telos of social movement activity', writes Scott, 'then it is the normalization of previously exotic issues and groups' (1990, 10). Normalizing the idea of animal rights in the seminal campaigns against vivisection, factory farming and bloodsports is what constitutes the social problems work of the mainstream animal movement. Thus far, social movement activists rather than social scientists have diagnosed these practices as unconscionable; while there are some notable exceptions, most social science writing on 'the animal issue' has focused on animals as inconveniently 'out of place' (Fine and Christoforides 1991; Irvine 2003; Jerolmack 2008; Marvin 2000) and dangerous animal rights extremists as 'out of control' (Bryant 1991; Bryant and Snizek 1993; Dizard 1994; Kerasote 1993; Wolfe 1993). In short, social scientists' interest in animal issues has generally been characterized by anthropocentric motives or silence on what Agnew (1998) and Sunstein (2000) refer to as one of the most seriously neglected moral and legal problems of our time.

### **A closer look at the animal movement's styles of advocacy and activism**

Pain and suffering have featured prominently in the campaigns initiated by reformers in civil rights, women's and animal movements to promote 'the sacred rights of the weak' (Clark 1995). Animal protectionists in the movement's three main strands – welfare, liberation and rights – are united on the principle that animals are sentient beings rather than 'things' to be commodified as food, research tools, or sporting trophies. Sociologists who have used a constructionist approach in relation to animal-related issues as social problems include Maurer (1995) on meat, Kunkel (1995) on factory farming, and Munro (1997) on duck shooting; these studies reveal how vegetarians, health advocates, and opponents of bloodsports use various rhetorical strategies to frame their concerns as social problems.

In anthropocentric thinking, exemplified in Wolfe's (1993) *The Human Difference*, humans and animals are perceived as entirely different species. In this dominant paradigm, animals deserve kindness rather than rights and their interests are always subordinated to the demands of human well-being. This corresponds to the most moderate form of animal protection represented by animal welfarism. The moral orthodoxy of animal welfare is what Clark (1997) calls 'the norm of *moderate* concern for animals'. By contrast, animal rights calls for the *abolition* of animal exploitation, while animal liberation as espoused by Peter Singer (1975, 1990) falls in between these two extremes. Animal welfare/liberation/rights constitute the main ideologies and strategies of the animal movement and are discussed in the remainder of this review.

### *Animal welfare: supporting moral orthodoxy*

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) in the UK and Australia) and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA in North America) are the quintessential animal welfare non-government organizations (NGOs) responsible for lobbying policy makers on the humane treatment of (mainly) companion animals. The (R)SPCA's strategy of working within institutional politics has ensured that the NGO maintains a moderate, reformist agenda designed to achieve only incremental changes in legislation affecting animals. From its inception in the early 19th century in England up until the 1960s, the RSPCA has epitomised middle-class respectability in its membership and moral orthodoxy in its aspirations for the humane treatment of animals; that is, animals matter but not as much as humans.

Robert Garner (2006) has criticized the animal welfare ethic because it fails to reject speciesism, the idea that humans are superior to non-human animals. However, while he sees the animal welfare position as philosophically flawed, he defends its political strategy. Garner argues that it makes sense politically 'to focus on reforms improving the treatment of animals which do not compromise significant human interests, and to engage in campaigns to try and shift perceptions on what is regarded as unnecessary suffering' (2006, 161).

Elsewhere, Garner (1993) suggests that legislative reform in animal welfare is more effective than moralizing efforts to win over public opinion; in a subsequent paper, while acknowledging the importance of the British public's support in animal rights campaigns – for example, in the long-running campaign against fox hunting – Garner (1998) attributes the movement's success to both militant grassroots direct action by the Hunt Saboteurs Association and the advocacy work of the League Against Cruel Sports; he explains how the mass media were eager to broadcast the dramatic images of confrontations between hunters and the hunt saboteurs whose respective claims the protagonists hoped, would influence public opinion in their favor. However, Garner believes the legislative-advocacy work of the League has ultimately been more effective in winning the issue for the anti-hunting campaigners as large numbers of British members of parliament have acknowledged the League's long-term commitment by voting successfully for a ban on fox hunting.

The hunting controversy in England highlights the importance of the political opportunity structure when access to political elites was achieved by the League with the support of many Labor parliamentarians sympathetic to the anti-hunting cause. However, the political-process model – the key concept of which is the political opportunity structure – has been found wanting by prominent social movement scholars including Goodwin and Jasper (1999) and Goldstone (2004). According to the former, the model biases

structure and neglects culture while Goldstone finds the model too broad to take into account all the elements in a complex field of competing players (2004, 358). Goldstone's alternative to the political-process model resembles Giugne's (1998) identification of two crucial aspects in any analysis of the relationship of a movement and its political environment, namely 'the system of alliances and oppositions and the structure of the state' (381).

It would therefore seem obvious that the political context is a crucial factor in a movement's success or failure since strategies and tactics that are effective in one political environment may not be effective in another. Timing is also crucial in that the political climate may be either favorable or unfavorable to an idea or a tactic. An idea whose time had come by the mid-1970s – animal liberation – is discussed next.

### *The pragmatism of Singer's 'Animal Liberation'*

Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975) – which many observers believe launched the modern animal rights movement – came on the scene during 'the protest cycle of the 1960s and 1970s' (Goldstone 2004, 340), a heightened period of social movement activism that saw the emergence of liberation movements on behalf of women, gays, people of color and the environment. Animal liberationists espouse Peter Singer's (1975, 1990) utilitarian philosophy in seeking a balance between the interests of humans and other animals by advocating a pragmatic approach to our treatment of animals. Thus, factory farming is seen as morally repugnant, but not traditional farming; recreational hunting is condemned but not subsistence hunting by say, indigenous peoples; and in the vexed issue of animal research, animal liberationists seek a compromise with animal experimentalists based on the three Rs – reducing, refining, and replacing the use of animals with alternatives.

Animal rights activists and more extreme animal liberationists in what Fluekiger (2008) categorizes as the Radical Animal Liberation Movement (RALM) see this kind of compromise as morally bankrupt. Critics of animal rights activists are inclined to label them in ascending order of deviance – as 'radicals', 'extremists', and 'terrorists'. Kew (1999) has noted the prevalence of such labels in the mass media and no doubt ordinary people are influenced by negative portrayals of 'animal people'. Animal protectionists counter these designations with their own labels, for example, 'animal defenders', 'animal protectionists', 'animal rescuers', 'animal advocates' and the like. While Singer's (1975) manifesto may have spawned the various groups and individuals who constitute the RALM, Singer himself is neither an abolitionist nor indeed a rightist; and nor are the vast majority of animal protectionists. Like Singer, their aims are pragmatic as is their acceptance of the idea of 'animal rights' as useful only as a political slogan.

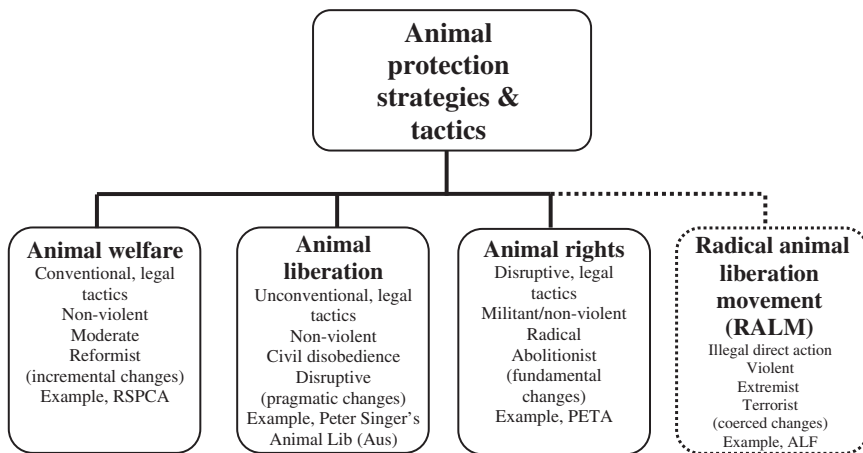
Most animal liberationists are not concerned with the broader philosophical debate between animal welfare reformists and animal rights abolitionists as represented, respectively, by Robert Garner (1993, 2010) and Gary Francione (1996, 2000) and recently in their extended arguments in Francione and Garner (2010). Mainstream activists are more inclined to believe in Garner's preference for improvements in animals' lives via regulation rather than Francione's stance that calls for the abolition of all practices involving our use of animals. Garner's view is that animal welfare's pursuit of incremental legislation delivers more improvements in our treatment of animals than moral purity: 'Getting something of what you want is better than nothing' (2006, 161). This strategy also endorses 'the psychology of small wins' (Weick 1984) whereby activists are inspired by the success of a political win, no matter how small.



The pragmatism of animal liberation – as indicated in Figure 1 – offers animal protectionists a position *between* the proponents of regulation or abolition as well as the prospect of finding common ground with like-minded groups in other social movements. Animal liberationists frame speciesism as a social problem comparable to sexism and racism and other forms of intraspecies exploitation and so are amenable to coalition-building with progressive social movements such as social justice, consumer, public health and environmental groups (see, e.g. Hargrove 1992; Luke 1995). Elizabeth Cherry’s (2010) study of animal activists in France and the United States revealed how the concept of ‘anti-speciesism’ – a term which fails to resonate outside the movement – was popular among her French informants because of its potential for making common cause with movements against racism and sexism. Cherry reports a second activist strategy whereby animal cruelty is explicitly invoked in tactics which are physical (e.g. a woman wearing a circus elephant’s shackles), discursive (e.g. does a hen have a right to a beak?), and iconographic (foie-gras evoked in a poster where ducks and geese force-feed humans). Such tactics, designed to recruit members of the general public via moral shocks (Jasper and Poulsen 1995), may also alienate potential supporters as Cherry acknowledges. According to Jasper (1997, 180) for a moral shock to stir people to action, it must have explicit cognitive, emotional and moral dimensions. However, if the impact on the audience is too shocking, it may well backfire and render the tactic counterproductive (for an example of such a case, see Mika 2006).

*Animal rights: challenging the status quo*

In contrast to the animal welfare strategy of working within the political process, animal rights activists press their claims within civil society. Bypassing institutional politics is seen by grassroots activists as the most effective way to mount militant, disruptive (albeit non-violent) protests in pursuit of their abolitionist agenda. In contrast to the animal welfare lobby’s focus on incremental change via legislative means, animal rights activists seek fundamental changes in the way individuals and industries treat animals. Following Regan (1984, 1987), animal rightists reject the pragmatism of animal liberation and argue instead for the abolition of all practices in which humans use other animals, including



**Figure 1** Modes of animal protection.

pet-keeping. Regan calls for the 'total abolition of the use of animals in science; the total dissolution of commercial animal agriculture; the total elimination of commercial and sport hunting and trapping' (1985, 13). Garner has recently suggested that animal rights would be taken more seriously if the argument for moral egalitarianism was jettisoned and replaced by 'a much more (morally and politically) acceptable version of animal rights based on the sentience of animals and not their personhood' (2010, 128).

Similarly, the issue of vegetarianism raises an important question about what Perlo (2007) calls 'strategies for promoting animal rights'. Purists in the animal rights stream almost always insist on a commitment to vegetarianism (and ideally veganism) as a basic principle of membership in the movement. To judge the success of animal rights by a widespread conversion to ethical vegetarianism would surely doom animal rights to obscurity in most countries. A more pragmatic strategy is suggested by Frank (2004). He emphasizes the role of radical animal activists in providing information to consumers and argues that illegal, non-violent, undercover actions have revealed serious defects in food regulations as well as providing 'moral shocks' to consumers. It is on this issue that animal welfarists, liberationists and rightists could unite in common cause, but only if the subversive potential of vegetarianism is fully exploited. This means that the framing of a vegetarian lifestyle would need to include not just animal welfare considerations but also environmental and health improvements for humans.

Thus, Franklin (1999) argues that the destruction of habitat and the use of animals in research and commercial agriculture – once justified as necessary for the greater good of humanity – are now seen as creating unacceptable risks and problems. Food scares such as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy ('mad cow disease'), salmonella, and genetically modified food have been identified as social problems in a number of fields: the costs of agribusiness to small farmers (Dolan 1986); health (Fraser et al. 1990); environmental risks to consumers (Rifkin 1992); the physical environment (Coppin 2003); the specter of third world hunger (Coats 1989); and genetic engineering (Kimbrell 1994). Although the concerns over these developments are primarily motivated by fears for human survival and rarely by animal welfare considerations, all animals – human and non-human – would ultimately benefit by a revolution in dietary habits along the lines described by Elias (1978) who predicts that vegetarianism will become the long-term dietary future of our species.

Thus far, the review has focused on some of the main theoretical approaches employed by social scientists in analyzing the animal movement. The rest of the review addresses the practices of animal protectionists as well as the question of how the social problems work of these activists can be helped or hindered by collaborating with the intellectual work of academics.

### **The animal movement in action**

It is through actions that social movements *move*, a process involving different levels and dimensions of movement – 'mobilising and affecting opinions, engaging emotions, changing laws, preventing some actions while encouraging others' (Eyerman 2006, 194).

In Figure 1, strategies refer to the broad organizing principles of the mainstream movement's three main strands – welfare, liberation, and rights (and outside the mainstream in the case of the RALM); associated tactics are listed below these strategic categories. Singer's philosophical views in *Animal Liberation* (1975, 1990) are located between animal welfare and animal rights; politically, however, they are more in tune with animal rights practice. The latter is frequently and often deliberately confused with the violent, extremist actions of RALM groups. It should also be noted that Fluekiger's understanding of



what is 'radical' in the RALM covers '...direct actions, including sabotage and vandalism, the liberation of animals, arson, and home visits' (2008, 111), a list which misinterprets radicalism as extreme and violent; RALM groups do employ extreme and violent tactics but the activists are not radicals or terrorists in the conventional meanings of these terms as virtually all social activists who challenge the status quo can be viewed as radicals while the more sinister designation of 'terrorist' should only apply to those who plan and carry out deadly, random attacks in the public domain.

While some movement theorists and philosophers would question the accuracy of the above model, it broadly corresponds to the ideologies of the movement's three main strands and importantly, with the testimonies of animal protectionists; Figure 1 also closely resembles Orlans's (1993) 'preliminary classification chart' which in addition to animal welfare, rights, and liberation organizations, includes details of legal and illegal animal industries. Orlans points out that the chart is an oversimplification since the categories resist strict demarcation; however, as intended, it is an approximation designed to highlight basic differences between the key terms – animal exploitation, animal use, and animal welfare/rights/liberation.

In reality, classification disputes are of little interest to animal protectionists; what really matters and what is most contentious for both supporters and opponents of the movement is its prognosis, that is, how activists seek to abolish cruel practices strategically and tactically. Marginally less problematic is the related issue of the movement's motivational framing or how it mobilizes support. These tasks are about making strategic choices such as the use of violence or non-violence, direct or indirect action, collaboration or confrontation or in Tarrow's (1998) terms, choosing between conventional, disruptive, and violent repertoires. Tarrow's terminology is an accurate categorization of the strategies employed by animal welfarists (moderate and conventional); animal rightists (militant and disruptive); and liberationists (extremist and violent) in the RALM's case.

In the UK and North America, where animal rights activities are most in evidence, the media typically frame the campaigns as the actions of violent extremists or terrorists (Kew 1999), and in so doing support the backlash against animal rights by animal-user industries. Thus, moderate reforms to improve anti-cruelty laws in Canada relating to individual acts of cruelty were strenuously opposed by animal-user industries when they exaggerated the effects of the reforms on their activities and cast the animal welfare reformers as 'terrorists', 'extremists', and 'radicals' (Sorenson 2003). The fact that the anti-cruelty amendments did not affect their interests was irrelevant as the animal-user lobby believes it has to be on constant guard lest the enhanced status of animals becomes 'a challenge to human uniqueness' (Sorenson 2003, 397). Meanwhile, the extremists in the RALM pose more of a threat to the financial and physical well-being of its targets, and academics engage in philosophical disputes of little interest to activists. However, the abolitionist Francione and reformist Garner claim that their comprehensive debate – 'broad animal protectionism' advocated by Garner and rejected by Francione as the 'new welfarism' – is not simply an academic exercise but rather something that is relevant and indispensable to practitioners: 'The practical strategy of animal advocates must necessarily be informed by theory, and their political, legal, and social campaigns will be determined by (it)' (Francione and Garner 2010, xi–xii). How this might be achieved is taken up in the next section.

### **Academic and activist collaboration: a call to action**

In a rousing call to action, Reese (2001) has appealed to sociologists to confront troubling social problems affecting human beings; given the tone of her manifesto, the omission of

any mention of non-human animals is no doubt inadvertent. In this mobilizing tract, Reese appeals to sociologists to take to the streets and engage with social movement activists by documenting their causes and grievances. By critically evaluating the movement's issues, their strengths, and deficiencies, she believes that sociologists will derive a sense of purpose and relevance. Similarly, Bevington and Dixon advocate 'dynamic engagement with movements' (2005, 190). Social scientists, they believe, should have neither a detached association with social movements, nor an uncritical, unconditional stance towards a favorite movement. Sociologists, they suggest, need to develop 'movement-relevant theory' that can be utilized by activists in their various campaigns; for social movement scholars the relevance of their theories would be enhanced by what Maddison and Scalmer (2006) call 'activist wisdom'.

The idea of the social movement analyst as activist is controversial, with various commentators referring to both the risks and opportunities of scholar-activist collaboration. Space limitations preclude a detailed discussion of these ideas, many of which are described most recently by Eyal and Buchholz (2010) in what they refer to as 'a sociology of interventions'. Detailed accounts of scholar-activist collaborations can be found in Croteau et al. (2005), Maddison and Scalmer (2006), and Valocchi (2009). Although the present review will focus on the positives rather than the negatives of scholar-activist collaboration, Einwohner's (2002) study of the strategies animal rights activists use to maintain their motivation provides an example of the risks involved; one of the 'four fortifying strategies' refers to how the activists boost their morale by claiming credit for successful campaigns, a strategy that may be less viable if they were to accept substantial input from academic collaborators.

Many of the questions and dilemmas posed by activists in progressive social movements that might be resolved by social movement scholars are comprehensively described in Maddison and Scalmer (2006) and Valocchi (2009) who canvassed the ideas of grassroots activists in a range of progressive social movements in Australia and the United States, respectively. Valocchi's (2009) *Social Movements and Activism in the USA* shares the aspirations of the Australian authors to discover what activists and scholars can learn from each other. If, as the Australian scholar activists claim, academic theories are enhanced by their informants' 'practical knowledge', and 'activist wisdom', can animal activists profit from an understanding of social movement theories and concepts?

*'There is nothing as practical as a good theory'*

As the best-known scholar activist in the animal movement, Peter Singer has been both praised and condemned for practicing what he preaches. Many animal activists attribute Singer's 'activist wisdom' to the pragmatism that characterizes the style of animal liberation he described in his 1975 best-seller of the same name. Although social movement scholars would be hard pressed to achieve Singer's credibility in the animal movement, their academic 'tool kit' might prove to be more useful than the philosopher's more abstract concepts and reasoning; this would certainly be the case in the everyday practice of activism where strategy and tactics are of paramount importance. For example, Jasper (2004) has identified about two dozen 'strategic dilemmas' of concern to activists such as 'the organization dilemma' – the choice between activism in the streets or advocacy in the suites. Maddison and Scalmer (2006) devote two chapters to this dilemma of 'expressive *or* instrumental action' and 'democracy *or* organization'. Saul Alinski's (1971) advice – 'If you want drama, get a movement; if you want results, get an organization' – may be a satisfactory solution to this dilemma; on the other hand, social movement scholars

would be obliged to point out the dangers of bureaucratization when organizations develop a CEO culture obsessed with fundraising or impression management.

The six additional activist dilemmas identified by Maddison and Scalmer (2006) deserve a brief comment on their relevance to the animal movement. The *Unity – Difference* dilemma is one that confronts animal activists whenever strategic and tactical choices are debated. As argued in the present review, the mainstream animal movement consists of three main strands which differ in their tactical repertoires but are united in their ideological and strategic opposition to speciesism. Movement scholars, in their role as ‘critical friends’ of activists (Yearley 1992), would serve them well with this analysis as disunity is one of the main threats to the movement’s viability. Similarly, the choice between *Revolution or Reform* and the issue of *Counter-publics and Mainstream* are causes of conflict inside and outside the animal movement which the discussion of strategies in the review highlights. The present review suggests activists would benefit by exposure to the debate between Francione and Garner (2010) on the merits of abolition *versus* moderation and fundamentalism *versus* pragmatism; the review also indicates that non-violence rather than violence is more likely to achieve the goals of mainstream animal protectionists (Elias 1978). Furthermore, Elias’s disdain for the abstract theorizing of philosophers, which accords with Marx’s famous dictum – ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point is to change it’ – is worth serious reflection by both movement scholars and activists.

One of the issues identified by Jasper (2004) – ‘the extension dilemma’ – corresponds broadly to what Maddison and Scalmer (2006) refer to as the *Local-Global* issue. Jasper makes the point that a movement will have difficulty in maintaining its collective identity if it forms coalitions with other cause groups. However, in the case of the animal movement, this may be a risk worth taking as it seems unlikely that a relatively small and unique movement could prosecute its campaigns globally without initiating common cause with like-minded activists (see Munro 1999; Szasz 1994). As a NSM the animal movement does not seek a wholesale transformation of society in the manner of earlier movements inspired by socialism and so Maddison and Scalmer’s couplet *Redistribution and Recognition* is only relevant to the extent that animal activists seek to destabilize ‘the animal-industrial complex’ (Noske 1989); and while activist campaigns are not about the redistribution of wealth or capital, they are about promoting the value of animals as sentient beings as opposed to exploitable commodities for the animal-user industries. In this way, animal activists hope that their moral capital will triumph over the financial resources of the animal-exploiting industries. Moral capital, therefore, is a concept worth employing when activists challenge ‘the animal-using consensus’ (Kew 1999).

Occupying the moral high ground is not, however, enough to achieve widespread public support for a movement’s cause. Tilly’s (2004) WUNC idea is relevant in this context and well worth the consideration of animal activists in their quest for respect and recognition. WUNC – worthiness, unity, numbers, commitment – according to Tilly, are prerequisites for the success of social movements. Valocchi’s engagement with local activists suggests how scholar-activist discussions of such ideas are likely to generate useful information for both parties: ‘Our discussion of goals, strategies and political opportunities, resources and organizations, participation, commitment, conflicts, and identities enabled a dialogue between scholars’ theories and concepts and activists’ concerns and dilemmas’ (2009, 167).

The last dilemma in Maddison and Scalmer’s list – *Hope or Despair* – is especially important for the success of the animal movement not least because of the opportunities – and therefore hope – scholar-activist collaboration might provide. One hopes, for

example, that this review of the theories and practices relevant to the animal movement, and the concluding summary below, provide an accurate portrayal of the animal movement's grievances, goals, strategies, strengths, and dilemmas from which both animal activists and movement scholars can profit.

## Conclusion

The main topics covered in this review are the theories and practices of the animal rights movement and their possible integration by scholar-activist collaboration. I will now summarize some of the key ideas relating to these themes in the hope that they might stimulate further research. First, Eliasian, Marxist, feminist, and social constructionist theories provide insightful analyses of the animal movement. Elias's (1978) notion of the civilizing process is relevant to changing attitudes toward violence against human and non-human animals and along with Mennell's (1991) work on 'the civilizing of the appetite' point to vegetarianism as the dietary future of human beings; more work is needed on the political economy of the 'animal-industrial complex' (Noske 1989) along Marxist lines begun by Benton (1993); the latter's plea for the emergence of 'affective ties of trust, loyalty, compassion and responsibility' (1995, 175) resonates with Elias's view that increases in mutual identification within and between species should lead to decreasing levels of cruelty; (eco-) feminists also support these sentiments both in theory and practice, in particular in their approach to animal protection as social problems work against speciesism and sexism; finally, social constructionist theory emphasizes the role of framing and cultural processes in social movement activism (Buechler 1995); as we have seen in this review, the efficacy of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames is of crucial importance to the success of the animal movement.

The practice of animal protection as depicted in Figure 1 is the second theme covered in the review. Animal activists and advocates, it is argued, are engaged in three modes of animal protection – welfare, liberation, and rights – characterized by different strategies of activism and advocacy; these non-violent mainstream animal movements should not be confused with extremist groups in the RALM. I have argued that the pragmatism of Singer's animal liberation occupies the middle ground between animal welfare's preference for regulation via legislation and the strict abolitionist goals of animal rights; again, the latter's methods of persuasive communication via militant, non-violent actions should not be confused with the violent tactics of the RALM.

Finally, the review's third theme of scholar-activist collaboration indicates some of the promises and pitfalls of such an engagement. It is surely logical that social movement theories and concepts are enhanced by a scholar's engagement with activists whose 'practical knowledge' provides empirical credibility for what otherwise is often perceived as esoteric, abstract theory. On the activist side of the collaboration, as Francione and Garner (2010) maintain, campaign strategies need to be informed by relevant theory; an admittedly exploratory account of how this might work is outlined under the axiom 'there is nothing as practical as a good theory'. The themes outlined above eminently qualify as topics for future research by social movement scholars; this is especially true for the animal rights movement which remains one of the most misunderstood and understudied social movements of our era.

## Short Biography

Lyle Munro teaches sociology at Monash University in Australia. His research focuses on the sociology of social movements, deviance, education, and environmental and animal

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## Note

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