

The Rhetoric of Animal Advocacy: Closing Communication Gaps

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Abstract

This thesis' primary purpose is to create solutions for individuals who want animal advocacy rhetoric to include animal agricultural workers. It reviews the ways that animal activists and advocates use rhetoric, including the view that morality is the center of the animal advocacy movements. Additionally, it discusses how politicians talk about animals and how they write related legislation to appeal to potential voters. Then, it shows how farmers discuss animal rights, and how misunderstandings around their roles prevent them from actively participating in animal welfare discussions. Finally, the thesis displays the solutions that individuals discussing animal rights can use to refine animal welfare rhetoric, ensuring that farmers can collaborate with them to propose realistic solutions to better advocate for animals. Such solutions include showing respect for farmers, learning about their perspectives before making assumptions about them, and acknowledging that they have access to knowledge that is unavailable to the public. Making rhetoric more inclusive for animal agricultural workers is crucial for animal welfare reforms because without their voices, animal activists and politicians cannot properly advocate for animals. As the current dialectic often fails to welcome farmers, this thesis serves as a foundation for addressing the shortcomings of animal advocacy rhetoric.

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Introduction

Animal activism is a social movement that has garnered support from people across America, and on a moral level, many people find advocacy for non-human creatures to be a noble and virtuous cause. After all, who does not want animals to live high-quality lives, whether they live within the natural world or inside human houses? Even animals raised for human consumption are given some consideration for how they are treated in farms. As somebody who was raised in a rural area surrounded by farms and nature, I wanted to stand with the causes of these advocates and do whatever it took to represent animals. However, I was unable to come to a full agreement with the rhetoric that the animal activist circles during the late 2010's were using in their discussions, especially on social media. None of the discussions about animal rights seemed to include animal agricultural workers, and if they did, it was often placing them in a negative light. I wondered why farmers were not contributing to the animal rights discussions, but at the time, I could only conclude that somehow, social platforms were not amplifying the voices of animal agricultural workers.

The feeling of farmers being mistreated because of misconceptions that animal activists made about them were further solidified after watching a VICE documentary. It was about activists in California breaking into facilities owned by local animal farmers and harassing the employees maintaining the farms ("Animal Rights"). I was disheartened by the treatment of the farmers, but I had found a video that had included the perspectives of both animal activists and farmers. Hearing the farmers being able to defend themselves in the media, despite the circumstances, gave me hope that in the future, I could see more animal agricultural workers represented in animal welfare discussions. I understood the animal activists' drive to improve the treatment of animals, but I empathized more with the farmers' struggles. These animal

agricultural workers had to deal with other people sabotaging their livelihoods and making false accusations against them, all in the name of animal rights. I see myself within the shoes of those farmers, as well as other animal agricultural workers, because I have worked inside chicken houses as well.

During the summers of 2021 and 2022, I had the privilege of working in poultry farm repair and maintenance, traveling to over fifty different farms across northeastern North Carolina. I performed needed upgrades to these facilities such as plumbing, AC installation, auger replacement, and installing mats underneath free-range doors to improve the chickens' access to a fenced-in area outside the house. Naturally, the heat, the scrambling for materials to repair chicken houses, and the occasional mishaps and malfunctions made such work intense and difficult. However, the job allowed me to meet the diverse range of agricultural workers that form the backbone of the animal farm industry. Most of the farmers I met were older men with kids, and were usually the breadwinners of the family. They woke up before sunrise to pick up dead chickens or check that the mechanical aspects of the house were operational, and sometimes did not return to their families until after dusk. In addition, the farmers were part of a community that I admired as a child, and doing some of the tasks that they did on a daily basis was a privilege and honor. However, it also allowed me to reflect on how the rhetoric of animal activists impacted farmers and how I could further understand the dynamics of animal welfare conversations and who was able to make the most contributions to the discussion.

Animal activism is a social movement that has gained a great deal of attention over the past few decades, especially with the rise of social media, the increased consumption of meat, and the rising impact of climate change on the world. However, on the legislative level, the United States only has one federal law in place that regulates animal treatment: The Animal

Welfare Act, which was passed in 1966 (U.S. Department of Agriculture). That being said, the social aspects of animal activism have been continuously evolving over the decades. According to M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer, wilderness preservation had a stronger appeal for the public after World War II, as the belief that nature's value went beyond the resources it could provide became popular. The public body has the greatest influence towards politics and the acceptance of ideas and discourse, and environmental activists must use rhetoric that appeals to their experiences (Killingsworth and Palmer 24-25). In other words, nobody will be able to place ideas within mainstream discourse if it does not appeal to the most amount of people within a given society.

If animal activists want to bring animal welfare issues into the spotlight, they must make their cause relevant and significant for individuals who are outside of their activist circles. Aldo Leopold, an animal conservationist, drives home the need for animal activists to appeal to the public by using short stories to show how individuals must consider all perspectives to increase relevance among the audience. Leopold makes analogies between the ecosystem and advocates to broaden their perspectives about an issue and be receptive to others' opinions. He avoids claims of one aspect of the environment being superior to another, and he does not create narratives that place any particular group in a negative light. Instead, he uses the audience's knowledge about the ecosystem to show how they can view concerns about animal welfare as not being exclusive to them, but as an issue that other people want to resolve. Because other groups want to increase their involvement in animal rights discussions, Leopold shows how crucial it is for animal activists to use rhetoric to foster welcoming conversations for other groups of people.

The mission of the thesis is not to take a side in the animal welfare discourse or argue the

ineffectiveness of another side of the argument. The goal is to showcase how the rhetoric of animal rights activists and politicians operate to contribute ideas and proposals to solutions for society, and then show how farmers have been left out of the conversation. Then, the thesis will propose how to include animal agricultural workers into the conversation of animal welfare, which will include changing the rhetoric of how we discuss the role of farmers and meat industry workers. Agricultural workers must be treated not as adversaries that intentionally promote the abuse and suffering of animals, but as people who also want to promote animal welfare. Inviting the voices of farmers can pave the way for improved collaboration, such as improved designs for agricultural buildings, and decrease the polarization associated with environmental advocacy.

Leopold's stories not only show a generalized message of individuals learning about all sides of an issue, but they can be applied to the discussion around animal advocacy. For example, one of his articles, "Thinking Like a Mountain", discusses how the removal of the wolves caused the deer population to increase, therefore reducing the flora populations and causing massive erosions for the mountain (Leopold 114-117). Leopold admits to believing that the decrease in wolf populations would mean less deer would die, which would mean that the ecosystem would be better for deer hunting (Leopold 115). The consequences of the wolves' absence in the ecosystem can allude to the rhetoric of animal welfare in that leaving one group out of consideration can have disastrous effects on the strive to improve animal welfare. When the wolves were exterminated, the ecosystem was thrown into chaos, much like how farmers being left out of the conversation can lead to animal activists dominating the conversation. Leopold's story shows how all aspects of the ecosystem, just as all aspects of animal welfare rhetoric, are interconnected, and all parts are crucial to understanding the full picture of animal rights.

The first subheading of the thesis will focus on the background and context of animal

welfare discussion among animal activists and environmentalists. I will analyze how different types of animal advocacy rhetoric impacts the conversation around animal rights in America, as well as the criticisms that animal activists may bring up. When comparing and contrasting the arguments that animal rights philosophers make around the discussion of animals, I will reference and delve into the works of individuals such as Tom Regan and Paul Waldau. The works of academics who focus on animal rights rhetoric will be critical for analyzing how the ethics and conversations surrounding animals have evolved over the last few decades. Ultimately, animal rights activists are influenced by the ideas first highlighted by academics.

The second portion of the thesis will shift gears into the rhetorical methods that American politicians such as Matthew Scully and Brad Sherman use to discuss animal welfare. This section will not make arguments for or against their solutions on resolving issues involving animals such as regulations around their welfare, economics, or climate change. Instead, I will explore the rhetoric that political figures use to discuss animal rights within the contexts of political issues surrounding human affairs. The thesis will explain the rhetoric behind animal rights, especially as a means to appeal to potential voter bases and garner votes for office. I will mention politicians currently serving in public office and retired politicians, and they will either be on a state level or national level.

The third part of this thesis will analyze how farmers and other meat industry workers discuss and engage with animal welfare discussions when they are given a platform to speak. Then, I will go into an in-depth discussion of how animal activists and politicians, though oftentimes not intentionally, make it more difficult for farmers to engage with the discussion of animal welfare. Even in the scientific community, people who perform research on animals find themselves discussing animal welfare issues without considering the experiences of farmers.

Bernard E. Rollin notes the lack of consultation from meat industry workers and states that one of the problematic beliefs that scientists and producers hold is that “one can talk of animal welfare in a value-free, objective, factual context” (27). In other words, scientists are more likely to talk about animal welfare from this definitive line of objectivity and place the experience of animal agriculture workers into a footnote in research. Not having the contributions of groups involved with the treatment of animals can have disastrous effects for all parties. One of those effects include the implementation of ‘solutions’ that may look good on paper, but would have drastic consequences for people and animals.

In the final subheading of the thesis, I will elaborate on the solutions to improve the rhetoric that advocates and politicians use to discuss animal welfare. It will showcase how people should discuss animal welfare effectively, including the rhetoric around the roles that farmers and activists play in the animal agriculture industry’s operation. It will include solutions on how to make the discourse more inclusive for farmers and how to tailor rhetorical methods so that they are more inclusive. The suggestions on effective communication with different groups is not intended to be a one-size-fits-all solution to the polarization of animal rights activism. After all, somebody in a different country or people who have unique views on animals’ roles in society may perceive animal welfare issues differently. This thesis’ intent is to pave the way for future research about how animal welfare rhetoric works among American discourse and how such communication can work to unite people for animal rights causes. Furthermore, I want this thesis to inspire animal rights activists to collaborate with animal agricultural workers to advocate for tangible solutions to improve farm animal welfare. If farmers, animal activists, and politicians are able to collaborate using effective and inclusive rhetoric, then it will be easier to create solutions for improving the quality of farm animal life in the agricultural industry.

The Rhetoric of Animal Activists

The modern concept of animal rights gained popularity in America during the Civil Rights era as activists brought attention to how identity-based discrimination impacted American culture. The strides towards liberation for systematically oppressed groups of people such as people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals not only brought attention to the animal rights movement and the way that people view animals, but how people use language. As the movement brought attention to how language impacts how individuals view people outside their demographics, it also allowed room for advocates to question how people speak about animals. The Civil Rights movement's view on giving previously underrepresented groups attention allowed for activists to group animals into the same categories as humans experiencing systemic discrimination. Concern grew among advocates and their allies about animals' treatment as sources of food and their discussion as members of the natural world, thus kickstarting the animal rights movement. Ronald T. Libby makes the claim that the animal rights movement was "influenced by the New Age movement... with its concern for how products are produced and what effect they have on the natural world" (53-54). With humans raising animals as products raised for meat, Libby demonstrates how farm animals go from only being treated as products to creatures that produce products, therefore elevating their value. In other words, the animal rights movement gave animals the status of living beings that experience thoughts and feelings.

Throughout animal rights discourse, a sizable level of discussion revolves around the moral aspects of treating animals with compassion and respect. Views include utilitarianism, which advocates for an action being morally correct if it helps a majority, and deontology, which states that an action is right if it follows a principle. Paul Waldau elaborates on the utilitarian and deontology-based views of ethics by stating that they both assume that humans

can take the perspectives of other beings into consideration (67). He claims that, “Utilitarians have to figure out the harms suffered by each sentient being, and deontologists have to figure out who should be the right holders” (67). After going into how utilitarianism and deontology are similar in their attempts to see the world through the animals’ perspectives, Waldau goes on to state that the calculations often favor humans, and a classic animal rights opinion is that the biases for humans are unjust for animals (67). Waldau gives the reader the knowledge of how utilitarians and deontologists differ from each other, but then speaks about them as one group to show readers how they both approach an understanding of animals. However, the process of understanding does not suffice for giving animals proper attention because both utilitarianism and deontology do not account for human prejudices and misunderstandings toward animals. That is because the two types of ethics discussed above deal mostly with how humans interact with each other, and animal rights activists have adapted these ethics to relate their experiences with animals on the same level as with humans.

Still, despite the shortcomings that applying human-oriented views on animals may have for animals, it is the most effective way for animal activists to reach potential supporters of animal rights. After all, creating arguments centered around morals and ethics appeals to an individual’s desire to stand for something that is just. Lyle Munro comments on how people view their justice-oriented role by stating, “Activists and advocates invariably perceive animals as innocent victims of human cruelty. A desire to end what they see as an outrageous injustice perpetrated by human beings against animals drives their campaigns” (39). The absolutism of how Munro claims humans victimize animals, combined with how prominently the activists and advocates state the injustice, shows the resolve that many people hold towards animal rights. His language towards their resolve shows that he respects their desires, and he allows the charged

diction of his statements to speak of how passionate they are about advocating for animal rights.

However, the approach to how humans should treat animals, if humans are even allowed to interfere with the lives of animals, can vary. Tom Regan, an animal rights philosopher, begins the discussion by stating that opinions often remain divided about what humans are morally permitted to do to animals (142). He then delves into the differences by explaining that, “Some people (abolitionists) believe that we should stop using non-human animals... Others (welfarists) think such utilization is permissible as long as it is done humanely” (Regan 142). In this passage, Regan brings up the diverging viewpoints that come up when discussing animal rights, especially with how willing advocates are to give up the use of animals for the sake of animal welfare. Both abolitionists and welfarists believe that their approaches to how animals should (or should not) be used shows their audience that humans do not need to mistreat animals for our own benefits. While welfarists believe that ensuring humane treatment of animals in human industries will advance animal rights, abolitionists believe that any human use of animals is unacceptable.

While activists will debate the morality of humans using animals for food or scientific research, another important conversation that activists engage in is the equality of animals in relation to humans. Waldau engages with the discourse when he states that, “claims like ‘all animals are equal’ and ‘all life should have equal rights’ need to be scrutinized carefully if we are to communicate well about ‘rights’ for living beings of any kind” (57). While Waldau does not claim that animals should not be treated as respectfully as humans, he raises the issue surrounding the vagueness of these common terms that animal activists use. He encourages his readers to analyze animal rights beyond “all animals” and “all life” because the phrases he mentions are broad and need deeper analysis before conversations begin. He asserts that effective talks about animal rights cannot begin with broad statements, as logically, broad statements do

not lead to any fruitful discussion on how to solve animal welfare issues. However, by calling for the audience to analyze broad statements more carefully, Waldau encourages the reader to think deeply about the claims before engaging in the dialect surrounding animals and their treatment.

Morality is a crucial aspect of animal rights discourse, if not the center of it. Though there are debates around how humans should view and treat animals, it is important to remember that any argument about morality creates the backbone of animal rights discourse. Lawrence and Susan Finsen argue for the importance of morality by stating, “First, neglecting the moral grounds for animal rights is simply dishonest” and that doing so “perpetuates speciesism” (279). Finsen and Finsen want to show that morality is crucial because animal rights is based on morality, and denying morality would mean rejecting the basis of animal rights. Now that Finsen and Finsen have established that morality makes the premise for animal rights, they move into the reason that ignoring morality is problematic for animal rights. By introducing speciesism as an idea that elevates humans above animals, Finsen and Finsen argue that denying morality would not only destroy the foundation of animal rights, but would center animal welfare discussions around humans and displace animals from the conversation.

Another reason that Finsen and Finsen offer for why denying morality hurts the animal rights movement focuses on how the audience perceives individuals who do not account for morality. Finsen and Finsen state that it fails to show the audience consideration, as it asserts that they do not care about morality and are speciesistic (279). They include the audience’s perspective because animal activists must appeal to their audience to gain support for their movement, and by refusing to address morality, they could lose support for their movement. Social movements cannot gain traction without a supportive community to back the movement’s ideals, so Finsen and Finsen’s point shows that they, like many animal advocates, want to be accessible for a broad

audience. Based on the arguments that they make, the animal rights movement not only wants to remain faithful to the moral grounds in which humans view animals, but wants to encourage multiple demographics to join their movement.

To expand the range of people who are receptive to the idea of improved animal welfare, animal activists must notice and tailor their rhetoric according to the demographics of their audience. After all, movements can shift depending on whose voices are the most influential for the public, and if animal advocates can appeal to their audiences, then they can gather more supporters for their movement. James G. Cantrill, an assistant professor of communication and performance studies at Northern Michigan University, writes in his article about how demographics affect who has a say in social movements. He states that while demographic factors such as education, “economic freedom”, and age are not good predictors of environmental concern, they will still impact how a person reacts to discourse (Cantrill 72-73). In other words, demographics cannot be used to show which groups will have the most concern for the environment, but they can still impact on what types of discussions appeal to them the most. It is up to the proponents of the animal rights movement to determine what types of rhetoric appeal to which types of audiences and how to market their values in a manner that other people can sympathize with and understand.

Fortunately, there is a group of people who are able to study the ways that rhetoric impacts the discourse surrounding animal rights: college and university academics. The research that academics conduct around social movements and how rhetoric operates in American discourse can impact the way that individuals outside their field view their topic of choice. Also, they can use their work to shed new light on preexisting works, contribute new ideas for discussion around animal welfare, and even influence how their audience views other ideas. The

subjects that academics discuss within their circles are what Waldau coins, “academic philosophy”. He claims that it, “refers to subjects that are taught traditionally in academic centers... and also a variety of approaches to ethics, reasoning, and some traditional philosophical questions found in academic books and journals (Waldau 61-62). Academics are crucial for animal welfare discussions because oftentimes, their research and ideas are what activists use to formulate their ideas. A major difference between academics and activists is that academics strive to create understanding using their research. Activists, on the other hand, seek to create social and political change using social platforms and rhetorical arguments.

Strides for animal welfare reform are a growing concern for the public due to increased media attention surrounding the conditions that farm animals face in the animal agricultural industry. Animal activism has a rich background in America, skyrocketing in popularity from the Civil Rights era and continuing to gain traction throughout the decades as concern for animals surged. While there are different approaches as to how animal activists want to secure rights for animals, most can agree that the animal rights movement has its foundation on morality, specifically that humans have an obligation to care for animals. Eventually, with the rise in advocacy for animals under human-ran industries, activists began to call for reforms on the legislative level. The impact on legislation for securing an improved animal welfare system in industries that profit from animals is where politicians also play a role in influencing the rhetoric surrounding animal rights. After all, politicians also want to appeal to an audience to gain popularity and secure their places in office using the votes that citizens cast when they favor the politician’s views. The responses of political figures to the animal rights movement will play into the broader rhetoric that surrounds how individuals discuss animal rights, especially around the introduction of legislation to protect animals from human cruelty.

The Rhetoric of Political Figures

The social movements that animal rights activists lead across America have a primary goal: to use their numbers and influence to impact legislation on a local, state, and federal level. Animal activists seek to convince politicians that they must enact laws that will protect animals from abuse and neglect under human care. While most people can question the enforcement of laws, Libby states, “What matters is the ultimate success of getting the law ‘on the books.’ It may or may not be enforced... but enactment is important” (109). Laws to protect animals ensure that when animal abuse occurs, responsible parties are prosecuted to the fullest extent. By creating and pushing forth legislation, politicians become a bridge between social movements and their ideals and the laws that criminalize animal abuse and neglect. Animal advocates, through media platforms and the influence of their social movements, will push politicians to create and modify laws that align with how they believe people should operate. In other words, many animal activists believe that legislation is key to ensuring that people treat animals with respect and compassion, both in private and in industrial complexes.

Just as animal activists will reach out to politicians, allowing social movements to influence them, so do politicians interact with the public about animal rights, especially about laws that impact how humans treat animals. Killingsworth and Palmer further elaborate on the relationship between the public, politicians, and social movements. They state that as the public identifies more with social groups, “the groups themselves shifted to the center of the American political spectrum in an effort to form stronger political links” (Killingsworth and Palmer 193). In other words, social movements use their relationships with the public to gain relevance in politics, therefore gaining a foothold in the political arena. Since politicians also want to stay relevant to an ever-changing political spectrum, they will show their awareness of animal rights

issues and pass related legislation to either gain office or stay in their positions.

One example of how politicians can work with each other, as well as with animal activists, comes from an article that *Science*, a nonprofit science journal publication, published about a briefing in Capitol Hill. In 2016, the White Coat Waste, a coalition of liberal activists and fiscal conservatives, discussed the ethics of using animals for research purposes and called upon policymakers to “launch an audit of the agencies that fund animal research” (Grimm). The inclusion of information that both conservatives and liberals participated in this event shows that the dialogue the White Coat Waste coalition holds is inclusive to most people in the political spectrum. Also, the information lets readers see that politicians can cooperate with each other and advocate for animal rights by holding industries accountable for how they treat animals. By having both political parties collaborating to address taxpayer-funded animal research facilities, readers see that politicians who attend the event are aware of public concerns and want to represent them by addressing animal welfare issues.

Political figures do not just show their commitment to animal rights through participating in coalitions and interacting with other politicians to push forward their viewpoints. Books are another outlet for those in office to connect with a wide range of people, especially individuals who want to learn a politician’s stand on animal welfare issues and how they plan on addressing them. One such politician is Matthew Scully, a former senior speechwriter to President George W. Bush and author of *Dominion*. In his book, he writes, “No age has ever been more solicitous to animals, more curious and caring. Yet no age has ever inflicted upon animals such massive punishments with such complete disregard” (Scully x). Scully’s book comments on animal welfare practices happening today, with a focus on bringing the cruelties that humans place upon animals into the awareness of his audience. While he states that morals around animals have

evolved, he uses the audience's knowledge about the farming industries to argue that their practices increase the amount of animals in pain, as well as the extent that they suffer.

Another way that Scully writes about animal welfare deficiencies is to address the issue of justice for animals as an arguing point for why factory farming is detrimental to animals. Scully states that, "Factory farming isn't just killing: It is negation, a complete denial of the animal as a living being... It is not the worst evil we can do, but it is the worst evil we can do to them" (289). Here, Scully uses absolutes such as "complete" and "worst" to signify the extreme level in which factory farming objectifies animals. From his view, factory farming not only kills animals, but denies them a chance to live, which leads to him labeling the actions of the agricultural industries as "evil". By giving the word "evil" to describe the farming of animals, Scully denies readers a chance to argue for the necessities of factory farming for the agricultural industry. As the farming industry is committing some sort of moral wrong against animals, anybody who would try to defend the industries would be siding with immorality.

The idea that animals need justice is a sentiment that Alasdair Cochrane, a lecturer who writes about political theory surrounding animals, elaborates on when he argues that human concepts of justice should be inclusive towards animals. He states that, "Many would be appalled by and willing to resist principles of justice which said absolutely nothing about the proper limits to our treatment of animals" (Cochrane 59). Cochrane asserts that if justice was exclusive to humans, then most people would reject the concept, as they would find it repulsive that humans cannot extend the principles of respect and compassion to animals. Scully's belief that the treatment of animals reflects the moral values of a society and Cochrane's arguments that humans owe animals the same justice as our own species have one idea in common. Both their assertions suggest that their audience must reflect upon their own morals around animals and

evaluate how agricultural practices reject justice for animals. Since the idea of justice comes with the obligation that people must act for the good of others, the audience must be willing to advocate for animals if they want animal welfare reforms in the farm industries. Therefore, individuals would view Scully's assertions of how the industries do animals a significant level of injustice as a calling to support animal rights, whether it be evaluating their own opinions or enacting their morals through some form of advocacy.

Politicians must be receptive to the thoughts and beliefs of the general public if they want to tailor their rhetoric to gain their attention. Appealing to the public's values is a politician's best way of securing votes and to show the audience that the politician shares their values, and will therefore pass legislation that resonates with their cause. Brad Sherman, a Democratic representative for the San Fernando Valley in California, signed a letter to Biden officials calling for them to support Proposition 12 by withdrawing cases that the Trump administration filed against it (Feinstein). Proposition 12 sets new minimum space requirements for pigs and laying house chickens, particularly for chickens to not be in cages, and it bans the sale of any products that do not come from farms following these policies ("Proposition 12"). In addition, The League of Conservation Voters' website, the "National Environmental Scorecard", shows that Sherman has almost always voted for laws that support environmental reform. The evidence demonstrates that Sherman has a detailed history of supporting laws to protect animals and the natural world.

Sherman also appeals to an audience that is passionate about animal welfare by writing editorials and opinion pieces about his efforts to curb animal abuse. In one editorial, he writes about cosponsoring the Animal Fighting Spectator Prohibition act, stating, "The most effective way to prevent dog fighting is to not just target the organizers, but the participants as well" (Sherman). Furthermore, he explains that the act "makes it unlawful to knowingly attend or bring

a minor to an animal fighting venue” (Sherman). Sherman establishes that he is a leader fighting for animal rights by stating that he cosponsors animal protection laws, increasing his credibility for the audience and showing how he acts out his values. In other words, he is not just saying that he is an advocate for animals, but is reforming laws to reflect the beliefs of the public. Supporting the desires of his votes allows him to gain the respect of individuals concerned about giving animals more rights and criminalizing any form of their mistreatment under human hands.

However, establishing credibility is not the only way that Sherman validates the power and influence of the law. By explaining what the law will do to penalize individuals who watch dog fights, Sherman employs the logical reasoning that watching animal cruelty unfold is as morally wrong as actively abusing animals and will be punished by law. He reinforces this idea with the claim that, “Spectators are more than mere observers at animal fights. They are participants and accomplices who enable the crime” (Sherman). Sherman demonstrates that the morality of watching dog fights is wrong by taking away the status of individuals who watch dog fights as bystanders. Instead of people being bystanders, Sherman shows that the individuals are active participants because they give dog fighters a reason to abuse animals, and accomplices in that they find entertainment in abuse and do not report it to the authorities. After all, dog-fighters gain money and attention from making dogs battle each other, and without the audience, they would not victimize animals. By punishing the accomplices and participants supporting the dog fighters, Sherman shows real-life consequences of their choice to aid in animal abuse. Punishments would include prison time or fines on top of the social stigma that the viewers of dog fights would face by other people. After all, individuals would not be present at dog fighting events if they did not condone the animal abuse taking place when dogs fight for entertainment.

While Sherman uses his platform to argue that animals deserve equal rights and

protections as humans, Scully argues that because humans have power over animals, we have an ethical obligation to protect them. Though these politicians have unique views on how humans should view their relationships to animals, both have one goal in mind: to appeal to their political bases and individuals who are outside their political spectrum. One of the ways that politicians try to gather supporters is to increase their visibility to the audience, which in turn allows the audience to appreciate their efforts and see them as a credible political figure. When writing about how politicians increase their reach through the media, Herbert E. Alexander states that, “television” helps candidates “reach uninformed and disinterested citizens” who comprise the “crucial swing vote in the election” (262). In other words, politicians need to broadcast their views and beliefs to gather support for them to stay in office. Political figures may have virtues and ideas that the audience may find appealing, but if they cannot convince their audience that they hold those views, then they will not get into office. In terms of animal welfare and animal rights, politicians need to show that they share the same values as their audience, especially leaders of animal activists and related groups.

Animal activists raise awareness for issues such as the treatment of farm animals in the agricultural industry, and they advocate for legislation that will regulate their treatment. In turn, politicians work to appeal to their voter base and to these groups by signing legislation that will improve animal welfare and by writing about these issues through books and editorials.

However, when discussing farm animals in the agricultural industry, there was a significant lack of discussion about the role of farmers and farm industry workers in the conversation.

Furthermore, there were almost no examples of how animal agricultural workers participated in the political or academic arena. Including farmers is significant for discussing the rhetoric of animal advocacy because they are the individuals who work closely with farm animals and who

have the most knowledge about how this industry functions. Their input can help activists and politicians propose realistic solutions to refine the welfare of animals raised for meat because they can ensure that legislation can aid their work in maintaining animal welfare. It is important to discuss the instances when farmers speak about animal activists, politicians, and their ideas, and show how their contributions impact the rhetoric around animal welfare and animal rights.

The Rhetoric of Animal Agricultural Workers

In the conversation around animal welfare, farmers and other workers for the agricultural industry are essential to gaining a full picture of how farm industries treat animals and the specific protocols that they follow to ensure their well-being. Unfortunately, their voices remain relatively obscure, even among discussions on how to improve animal welfare in animal agricultural facilities and advocating for animal rights. The ideas around animal welfare are to make animals more comfortable under human captivity, whereas animal rights seeks to liberate them from human control and grant them equal status to humans under the law. Yet despite the farmers' direct involvement with animals, they cannot find a foothold in either conversations around animal welfare or animal rights. There are three reasons why animal agricultural workers struggle to gain influence in the dialectic surrounding animals and their place within society.

First, agricultural workers simply do not have the time to engage in social media or in-person discussions revolving around animal welfare. As the maintenance of large-scale farms is immense, some farmers find themselves lacking the time and energy needed to engage in the proper discussion of what happens in the industry. Another reason for why farmers may not participate in animal welfare rhetoric is that they may lack the physical or technological means necessary to communicate their opinions about animal welfare. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 34% of adults in rural areas have a high school degree. The low

literacy rates, combined with a technology scarceness and the lack of attention given to farmers' lives, could hinder the ability of agricultural workers to go public with their experiences. It could also become a barrier for farmers to advocate for improved animal welfare and inform the public about the practices that occur within their respective industries. Either way, the physical and technological means could dictate what many agricultural workers are able to broadcast into the public arena or on social media platforms.

The third reason why farmers remain obscure in their participation in the animal welfare and animal rights conversation is due to a fear of judgment, particularly with being shamed for misunderstandings that people could make about them. Misjudgments about farmers could come from the media, from the Internet, or even from the welfare specialists and activists who work for the animals' best interests. Dr. Naomi Botheras, a researcher at the Ohio State University, states during her research at a turkey farm, "Some producers, understandably, can be hesitant about working with someone who has 'welfare' in their job title because they may see me as someone who is not working in their best interests" ("America's Heartland"). Because agricultural workers fear losing their jobs and vilification from people who misunderstand their roles in the farm industry, they may not offer their expertise on how the industries operate. Botheras admits that there is tension between farmers and animal activists, which shows the audience that she is aware of the concerns that these groups have, therefore establishing credibility. Audience members, including farmers, are more likely to listen to Botheras because she brings attention to their concerns, and her understanding of their opinions towards animal advocates allows them to sympathize with her desire to improve animal welfare.

A reason for the divide between agricultural workers and the rest of the American public is the urbanization of America, which Botheras mentions during her participation in an episode

of *America's Heartland*. Kendra Lancaster and Josh Boyd elaborate on this sentiment in their article, when they state that the “increased division between farm and non-farm America has led to a lack of public understanding about farm animal care and management practices” (188). Even though many people have become distant from the agricultural practices, empathy towards animals has grown over the decades as awareness for the suffering of animals spread throughout the public. This leads to people wanting to speak more about animal welfare and animal rights, even when they are not presented with all the information needed to understand farmers' industry practices and norms.

This lack of knowledge about agricultural practices can lead to misunderstandings between the public and agricultural workers. Lancaster and Boyd argue that when individuals outside the animal farm industry post a video or image, the explanation they provide with it tends to be misleading because it is taken out of context. Furthermore, the agricultural norms that farmers practice can confuse or upset the public (Lancaster and Boyd 188). In short, the increased engagement of social and political issues around animals, combined with the lack of knowledge that many people have around agricultural practices, can create misinformation surrounding farmers. Misconceptions about the agricultural industry and farmers' participation in it can ultimately lead to individuals perpetuating biases against animal agricultural workers.

Many farmers place guards up against animal rights activists, especially with the rise of the Internet, because they see activists as being more concerned with ending their livelihoods than focused on animal welfare. A magazine published by *The Egg Industry* reports that Hannah Thompson-Weeman, the vice president of communications for the Animal Agriculture Alliance, warns farmers against animal activists (Watt Global Media). The article uses language such as “their agenda” in reference to animal activists, and if farmers have any problems that animal

activists could “exploit”, then they should address it immediately (Watt Global Media). Many of the suggestions that Thompson-Weeman makes to her audience revolve around farmers guarding themselves and their employees against animal rights advocates. Some of the advice is valuable, such as increasing transparency about what happens inside farming facilities and educating employees on animal welfare practices. However, Thompson-Weeman’s advice is not as centered around the animals’ welfare as much as the protection of the farmers. She places an emphasis on how animal agricultural workers interact with animal activists and allies who may infiltrate the facilities while posing as workers, and animals are seen more as a third party. By discussing animals only in the context of the farmers’ well-being, she does not factor animals into the conversation around how animal agricultural workers can improve relations with other groups. By narrowing down the impacted groups to farmers and animal advocates, Thompson-Weeman creates a concise article that shows her audience how they can defend their place in the farming industry without diverging from the text with the inclusion of animal rights.

Of course, one cannot fault farmers for wanting to protect themselves and their colleagues from situations where other people may villainize them. Farmers want to protect their livelihood, and at the center of that livelihood are the animals. Animal agricultural workers who cannot fulfill their duties in the farm will be unable to maintain humane conditions at the farms. Therefore, the animals suffer, which leads to them becoming sick or dying while living at the farms. Farmers do not want the animals in their care to die because their deaths will decrease their profits and tarnish the credibility of their work and the operation of their specific farm. After all, consumers want to purchase meats that are not only affordable, but come from environmentally-friendly and humane sources. The need for farmers to establish trust with consumers about their practices comes as agriculture becomes more competitive and

industrialized. Matthew Scully argues that traditional farming has been eradicated because “small farmers simply cannot offer superior quality at a competitive price”, nor can they keep their products consistent with each other (Scully 254-255). With the large-scale industrialization of farming, farmers and those like the Animal Agriculture Alliance must find ways to appeal to consumers and reduce the fear of defamation from animal activists.

Due to the struggles that Scully mentions about many farmers struggling to meet consumer demands, it is crucial that agricultural workers have somebody to rely on for direction, especially with increased pressure to prevent defamation and mistrust from their consumers. Looking at Thompson-Weeman’s advice to her audience, her goal is not only to protect farmers against animal activists, but to encourage transparency to prevent misconceptions that consumers may hold with farmers. If farmers take advice from Thompson-Weeman such as becoming active on social media and doing guided tours of farms, then it will increase awareness of how they run agricultural facilities. This establishes trust within the consumer base, as the audience will believe that animal agricultural workers are responsive to their concerns about animal welfare and also desire to care for animals. But even if a farmer cannot use social media, she encourages farmers and their employees to prepare for holding a conversation with people outside the agricultural industry (Thompson-Weeman). Her extra measure ensures that they are not caught off guard whenever activists or their related movements decide to visit their facilities to raise awareness for animal welfare. Although there are organizations that are willing to give farmers a voice, their impact on the world of social media is not as great as the influence that animal activists have on the internet. There is still a divide between animal activists and agricultural workers, as Thompson-Weeman’s us versus them rhetorical approach suggests in the article.

To amplify the voices of animal agricultural workers and ensure that their insights are

used wisely, it is crucial that they not be put in opposition to other groups of people, whether it be politicians, animal activists, researchers, or the public. Because animal farmers have unique experiences in the farming industry, and because they play a role in providing for animals, they need the space to voice their opinions and share their backgrounds. A. J. F. Webster highlights the importance of farmers' participation in animal welfare discussions by stating, "On moral grounds, our concern for the welfare of any sentient animal *should* be determined by our respect for the intrinsic value of its life" (230). However, many judgements about animals are done in self-interest, and to make decisions about animals, one must take the environment, consumers, and farmers into account (Webster 230). To prevent personal agendas and generalized assumptions from permeating conversations around farm animal welfare, it is important to take all perspectives into consideration. Creating spaces where unique parties can discuss animal welfare without judgment will allow animal agricultural workers to collaborate with individuals outside the industry to improve the welfare of animals. The collaborations can look like starting coalitions to bring awareness to animal welfare issues and advocate for animals, or proposing more humane design plans to the animal agriculture industry.

The first step to starting this collaboration is to change our rhetoric surrounding how we treat farmers. In other words, we need to make animal advocacy and activism more inclusive to farmers, instead of seeing agricultural farmers as being at odds with the causes of animal activists. Leah Garcés, author of *Grilled*, states in her book that "The system thrives on the back of farmers... We cannot ignore these farmers and their struggles. We must create a future with them in it" (87). In other words, ensuring that animal welfare rhetoric invites farmers into the discussion around animals will ensure that as animal activists make strides towards advocating for animal rights, that farmers are not left out of the reforms. The next section will elaborate on

how animal activists can use inclusive rhetoric to establish credibility and friendliness with farmers and their issues with the industry. It is important to note that more inclusive rhetoric will ultimately lead to solutions that impact how people treat and care for animals living on farms. Using collaborative rhetoric instead of vilifying farmers will benefit the animals as well as the farmers, which helps the animal activists achieve their goals of improving animal welfare.

The Rhetoric of Improved Animal Welfare

The process of refining relationships between animal activists and their movements and the animal agricultural workers is a step-by-step affair that is easier to write about than to execute. After all, activists and farmers have often been at odds with each other when it comes to discussing animal welfare and animal rights. In addition, politicians, the individuals who must appeal to both parties to be elected in positions of authority and keep their offices, work to appease both animal advocates and agricultural workers. However, some politicians will focus their attention on representing one group or another, ultimately leading to increased divisiveness over the topic of animal welfare and what that looks like in law and practice. For farm animals to receive the best advocacy from humans, farmers, animal advocates, and politicians must communicate effectively with each other. Collaboration for the good of animals must begin by tailoring rhetoric to be more inclusive for agricultural workers. Animal activists and their allies must see farmers not as enemies, but as potential allies whose contributions will aid in creating realistic solutions to the animal welfare issues in the agricultural industry.

There are three ways in which animal activists, academics specializing in animal welfare, and related individuals can expand the conversation about animal rights to animal agricultural workers and the public. Each method of improving animal welfare rhetoric will be based on a point in the rhetorical triangle: pathos, ethos, and logos, which can have multiple versions such

as the one created by Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown. They created a triangle where an ethos approach views nature as a regulatory discourse, whereas a pathos outlook sees nature as spiritual, and a logos approach views nature through a scientific lens (Herndl and Brown 11). However, when discussing the three ways to improve rhetoric for agricultural workers, the pathos-based approach will be tailored to appeal to the farmers' desire for connection with individuals outside their industry. By honoring their experiences, animal activists create an invitational space for farmers to be honest with their views and to feel like their opinions are valid. An ethos-based approach allows farmers to be the center of regulatory discourse, meaning that their viewpoints are critical for animal welfare discussions, and people must honor their experiences and knowledge to create rhetoric that amplifies their views. Finally, the logos-based appeal will mean that individuals discussing animal welfare should see farmers as experts in their field and seek their wisdom in creating informed discussions about animal welfare. In other words, reforming the rhetoric around animal welfare means acknowledging that farmers know more about the workings of the farm industry than we do, and therefore should be able to voice their concerns. Overall, the revisions of the rhetorical triangle that Herndl and Brown propose seek to center animal agricultural workers around the need to include them more in animal welfare debates.

The first way to make the rhetoric of animal advocacy more inclusive is to appeal to the farmers' emotional experiences, especially the responses to their work in the farm industry and how the industries treat them and the animals. A primary way to appeal to their pathos is to show them respect, as it is crucial for creating open-ended conversations regarding animal advocacy and allows them the validation needed to speak about their views. After all, treating somebody with fairness is easy to do when looking at them face-to-face. However, with many debates about

animal advocacy moving to the Internet, some people may forget to empathize with the individuals they interact with, making discussions tense. Strained discussions can include asserting false information about the other person or group or refusing to acknowledge a positive point that somebody else makes, which can make an individual feel unheard and invalidated. Most agricultural workers not only want to be heard outside social media, but to collaborate with individuals who respect their work and whose goals of improving animal welfare practices align with their own. To cultivate invitational rhetoric, it is vital to show farmers that the individuals who care for animals are able to display empathy towards them.

Similarly, Garcés shows a good instance of showing empathy for animal agricultural workers when she strives to connect with poultry farmers to address the issues of the farming industry. When discussing the farmers' work ethic, she states that they "work hard, they overcome odds, they are opportunistic yet calculated risk-takers. They are fiercely loyal to their families, neighbors, land, and history. And they keep the rest of us alive— that's useful, too" (Garcés 27). Referring to animal agricultural workers as individuals with unique needs and aspirations is a common theme in Garcés' book. Her empathetic take on the farmers' place in their communities allows readers to see her as a reasonable person who would rather connect with people than to criticize them for their association with an industry. Her method of referring to the farmers with respect not only strengthens her credibility, but allows more inclusion of agricultural workers and related people within animal welfare discussions. By allowing her language to show how she can relate to her audience, Garcés invites readers to look at her content as an audience also capable of empathy. In addition, it allows readers to see animal welfare issues, as well as the struggles that farmers experience, on a more personal level than if they were presented the facts in an impartial and emotionless manner. Listing the ways that

farmers are devoted to unique aspects of their communities shows that she understands how they impact the larger framework of their society, not just as farmers, but as upstanding citizens.

The second way to improve the inclusiveness of animal welfare rhetoric is to learn about their perspectives so that individuals discussing animal welfare can have the authority to speak on animal rights and appeal to farmers. Garcés employs this tactic by incorporating the experiences of farmers regarding their issues within the agricultural industry. While speaking about the aftermath of chickens becoming sick due to genetic engineering, Garcés mentions the plight of two farmers, Eric and Rachel, who had to shut down their farms due to loss of profit. She states that “I had deep anxiety about their financial situation. I worked to connect them to alternative options but... Eric and Rachel still hadn’t found a solution and were preparing to file for bankruptcy” (Garcés 87). By summarizing the experiences that the farmers share with her, Garcés explains the farmers’ financial trauma, but does so in a concise and straightforward manner. If Garcés wrote the farmers’ direct quotations in the book, then it would still allow readers to understand the impact that the farm industry’s practices had on Eric and Rachel, but there would be more focus on the individuals impacted and not the farm industry. Since Garcés wants her readers to focus on the farm industry’s practices hurting agricultural workers, it would appeal to her audience’s logical senses to summarize their experiences. Readers still get the information about Eric and Rachel’s financial situation, but Garcés ensures that the focus of their pain is around the farm industry’s malpractices and not the farmers’ own shortcomings.

Garcés not only summarizes Eric and Rachel’s dilemma to move the readers along her argument smoothly, but to establish her own credibility. Garcés’ summary shows that she understands the hardships that they must endure because of the agricultural industry’s treatment of their farmers and animals. Readers see that Eric and Rachel trust Garcés with their story, so in

turn, the audience can safely rely on Garcés' authority to learn more about the issues with the farming industry. The information Garcés' provides on what the farming industry has done to place Eric and Rachel in their predicament places Garcés in a position where she can act as an intermediary between the farmers and the audience. Since the farmers have faith that Garcés will represent their interests through her book, the readers can see Garcés as a trustworthy individual who will tell them all the information they need to understand the issues with the farm industry. After all, Garcés has the same goal as Eric and Rachel: to use their stories to highlight how the animal agricultural industry fails to provide human treatment to animals or ensure that farmers are financially protected under their decision-making processes.

Another way that Garcés employs ethos is to show how she interacts with farmers, giving her audience a full picture of the farm industry. She avoids going into the conversation with a one-sided view of animal welfare issues because she knows that she could do a disservice to the agricultural workers and their ability to share their views to the world. After all, it is the misconceptions that animal activists and agricultural workers held for each other that contributed to the current divide in how some advocates discuss farmers. Somebody who can act as an intermediary for these two groups of people can restore the confidence of agricultural workers that animal advocates can work with them to highlight issues of the farm industry. Garcés fulfills an intermediary role by providing readers with an impartial view of what farmers and animal activists believe, as well as knowledge about the farming industry. Her information establishes her credibility by showing how she is well-versed in her topic, as well as the concerns that both animal agricultural workers and activists hold towards animal welfare and the farming industry.

A third way that individuals can improve the quality of animal welfare rhetoric is to enter the conversation with the assumption that the animal agricultural workers know more about the

farming industry than other groups who are concerned about animal rights. Logically, farmers know the technicalities of maintaining the health and safety of their animals more than individuals outside of the farm industry. Unfortunately, the regulations that farmers must follow often do not allow for them to disclose everything that happens inside farming facilities. Garcés elaborates on the limitations of regulations by stating that industries often lobby for laws that “would ban the taking of photographs or videos inside factory farms” (44). Because of the restriction of knowledge around the farm industry that the public can access, many people must rely on the farmers’ descriptions and stories to gain a full picture of what their jobs entail. Therefore, Garcés establishes a form of logical appeal because she shows that farmers are not holding information from the public simply because they have the power. Agricultural workers must abide by the laws and regulations that the farm industry and the government enforces, or else they could lose their jobs or face legal consequences. Garcés therefore allows readers to see farmers as individuals with exclusive knowledge about the farm industry, especially with how they are immersed with their daily experience of caring for animals. With the regulations that limit what farmers can share publicly, advocates should remove any barrier on their end to make sure that farmers can voice their experiences. Agricultural workers are able to impact animal welfare conversations by giving insight on how industries provide food, water, shelter, and medicine to animals, as well as explaining any issues within the industry that prevent animals from living high-quality lives. However, Garcés is not the only author to use logos to strengthen her arguments.

Using logical appeal allows Garcés to uplift farmers’ voices by showing how their wisdom is crucial for readers to understand the farm industry, and Scully incorporates the same technique in his writing. Scully includes information about the operation of farming industries by

seeking the advice of Faison, the CEO of Carroll Foods, which highlights that the complexities of the industry are best explained through the eyes of somebody who knows how the industry operates. One of Scully's summaries of Faison's information is that "In the new *aggicultcha*, as it comes out in Sonny's rich Carolina accent, small farmers simply cannot offer superior quality at a competitive price" (Scully 254). Scully continues summarizing the information by stating that the federal government gives subsidies to small-scale farms, allowing them to survive in the current economy (254). By giving Faison the space to give his insights about the industry, Scully shows readers that he is somebody who welcomes the knowledge that other people give him, rather than assuming that he knows everything about animal welfare. Writing about critical issues such as farm industry practices requires the wisdom that people like Faison can give, and neglecting his insights would make Scully seem less appreciative of farmers' contributions. In addition, Scully includes the dialect that Faison uses, showing how he does not ignore or downplay either Faison nor his audience's identities and beliefs. After all, farmers need the space to be authentic when describing their experiences, and without it, writers like Scully risk dismissing agricultural workers' voices, leaving their rhetoric exclusionary and limited.

The methods of improving the use of animal welfare rhetoric are not intended to be a solution that fits every scenario that comes up within American public discourse. After all, animal agricultural workers, activists, and politicians may all find themselves in situations where they cannot practice all of these suggestions. However, the purpose of this thesis is to introduce ways of using rhetoric that will lay a foundation for how individuals can have meaningful and collaborative conversations with agricultural workers. Collaboration is a vital aspect of animal advocacy because it shows how people can incorporate the views, concerns, and stories of others to create well-formed opinions and craft solutions to the problems surrounding animals. Aldo

Leopold's essays about how the unique aspects of the environment work together to create a self-sustaining ecosystem elaborates on the importance of inclusivity towards other people. He shows that without one species or aspect of the natural world, everything else will be thrown out of balance. Having a way to use rhetoric effectively is also important for completing any research or writing up any sort of media report on farm life, as it prevents divisiveness among the stakeholders of the issue. Finally, improved animal welfare rhetoric will allow animals in the industry to have more impactful representation, as different groups will not be as focused on protecting themselves and pushing their interests as much as seeing how the farm industry impacts animals' well-being. In conclusion, having a template for how people can remain inclusive towards other stakeholders can create a future where all groups can contribute to the discussion of how farm animals should be treated within the agricultural industry.

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