



## **Reproducing Dominion: Emotional Apprenticeship in the 4-H Youth Livestock Program**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines young people's socialization into the doctrine known as "dominionism," which justifies the use of animals in the service of human beings. Using qualitative research, it focuses on the 4-H youth livestock program, in which boys and girls raise cattle, pigs, goats, and sheep for slaughter. The analysis portrays 4-H as an apprenticeship in which children learn to do cognitive emotion work, use distancing mechanisms, and create a "redemption" narrative to cope with contradictory ethical and emotional experiences. Although this paper focuses on young people's relationships with animals, and particularly with types of animals that have received little scholarly attention, the conclusions have implications for understanding the reproduction of inequalities, more generally. An understanding of the means through which people learn to justify the treatment of the animals known as "livestock" can shed light on the mechanisms involved in generic processes of inequality.

### **Keywords**

animals, children, emotions, livestock, socialization

As Arnold Arluke and Clinton Sanders report, "inconsistent behavior toward animals is omnipresent in Western society" (1996, p. 5; see also Plous, 1993). Many of our uses of animals involve inflicting harm, and many involve killing. Yet, many people also claim to care deeply about animals. This study examines this ambivalence in the youth livestock program in the 4-H organization. We suggest that participation in a 4-H livestock project entails an "emotional apprenticeship" in human dominion over other animals. We use the term "apprenticeship" in the broad sense of a guided learning experience, not necessarily in the occupational sense. We situate this work among studies that examine socialization into activities that involve morally troubling treatment of animals, such as dissection and experimentation (Arluke, 1999; Solot &

Arluke, 1997; Arluke & Hafferty, 1996; Arluke, 1994b, 1994a, 1993, 1991, 1990, 1989, 1988).

4-H is the youth program of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. At the turn of the 20th century, researchers at land-grant universities found that rural adults often resisted new technologies intended to advance agriculture. If young people became engaged in projects that involved those technologies, however, they would not only convince their parents of their worth; they would also experiment with other new ideas in farming (see Van Horn, Flanagan, & Thomson, 1998). Over the course of the 20th century, 4-H became the largest educational youth development program outside of school in the United States. In the 1950s, clubs began in cities and suburbs, as well as rural areas, and its curriculum extended beyond the realm of agriculture (see Van Horn, Flanagan, & Thomson, 1999). Its literature describes its programs as centering on leadership, citizenship, and life skills. 4-H currently serves over seven million youth between the ages of 8 and 18.<sup>1</sup>

The four *H*'s stand for head, heart, hands, and health, the components of the 4-H pledge: "I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living for my Club, my Community, my Country, and my World." The members of 4-H learn by doing; they participate in nearly 200 adult-supervised activities such as cooking, ceramics, electronics, model rocketry, sewing, computers, livestock, and archery. Members of 4-H clubs also become active in local food banks, children's hospitals, nature centers, homeless shelters, and senior centers. Support for 4-H comes from county, state, and federal funds. The Cooperative Extension System of each state's land-grant university conducts the program and provides the curriculum in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture and individual county governments. Parents and older siblings play a large role in 4-H by volunteering as group leaders. The national 4-H headquarters estimates that half a million adults and teens currently serve in this capacity, many of them former 4-H members themselves. 4-H appeals to boys and girls about equally, with slightly higher membership rates (52.5%) for girls.<sup>2</sup> The majority (77%) report white as their ethnicity.

Only 11% of today's 4-H'ers, as they are known, live on farms.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, animal-related programs still hold the greatest appeal, enrolling 1,761,798 members nationwide. In order to examine relationships between young people and animals destined for slaughter, we focused on the youth livestock program, in which kids raise commercial breeds of cattle, pigs, goats, and sheep for the market. A livestock project involves approximately a year of work in all aspects of raising a calf, lamb, or other young animal. It culminates in the sale

of the animal at the county or state fair, where buyers pay far above market value to support the efforts of the 4-H members.

By examining how 4-H'ers are socialized into the process of raising livestock, this research supports and expands existing knowledge of the mechanisms people use to cope with emotional and moral conflict about the treatment of animals. In particular, we noted an apprenticeship process through which younger children learn to distance themselves from their animals. We present our analysis after briefly reviewing the relevant literature and describing our research methods.

### **Animals and Socialization**

Animals figure heavily in children's socialization. As Gene Myers puts it, "the young child's world seems saturated by animal presences" (1998, p. 1; see also Melson, 2001; Serpell, 1999). Often, children's first gifts are stuffed animals, and animal images appear on their clothing and in the decoration of their rooms. Stories and films commonly feature animal characters (Hirschmann & Sanders, 1997; Bettelheim, 1976). "Real" animals play a significant role in socialization, too. Parents take children to zoos to see the living versions of the animals depicted in toys, songs, and stories. They often bring pets into the family for the sake of the children, citing responsibility and affection as main benefits (Fifield & Forsyth, 1999).<sup>4</sup> In school, children encounter classroom pets. It is thought that caring for animals will generalize into compassion for other people, although research remains inconclusive (e.g., Daly & Morton, 2003; Grier, 1999; Ascione, 1997; Paul & Serpell, 1993; Serpell, 1981; Levinson, 1978, 1970).

The presumed association between caring for animals and compassion has a parallel belief that cruelty will also generalize. Many studies claim that childhood abuse of animals forecasts other antisocial behavior, particularly violence toward people (e.g., Flynn, 1999; Arkow, 1996; Felthous, 1980). In this view, direct acts of cruelty and exposure to parental mistreatment of animals result in decreased empathy, greater tolerance for violence, and increased likelihood of inflicting violence (Flynn, 1999; Raupp, 1999; Ascione, 1998). Although the "graduation hypothesis," or the idea that animal abusers advance to human-directed violence, has wide appeal, some scholars point out flaws in the studies linking the two types of behavior and argue that abuse of animals does not necessarily predict other violent behavior (Arluke, 2006; Bierne, 2004; Arluke, 2002; Arluke, Levin, Luke, & Ascione, 1999; Arluke & Lockwood, 1997).

Myers's (1998) study of a nursery school suggests that young children have a natural attraction to, and interest in, animals. Scholars of morality argue that children have an inherent sense of empathy (Kagan, 1986, 1984; see also Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987). Children gradually acquire the more ambivalent, conflicted attitudes that characterize the general population's view toward animals. As Arluke points out, most children "are neither exhibiting remarkable compassion nor harboring cruel intentions" toward animals (2001, p. 66). Some children, whom Arluke (2001) calls "supernurturers," however, retain a strong attraction to animals, becoming highly committed to their care. These "humane outliers" represent the other extreme from those who abuse animals.

The closest and most frequent contact children have with animals is usually through pets, and, up to now, these relationships have provided most of the scholarly knowledge on children and animals. We found no extant literature that systematically examines relationships between children and the animals referred to as "livestock." These animals have the dubious distinction of existing to die. Thus, children who raise livestock must learn to cope with the complex emotional experience of what Arluke (1994b) calls the caring-killing paradox. On the one hand, most describe themselves as "animal lovers," and they are drawn to the livestock program because they like animals. They invest considerable amounts of time, money, and personal identity in animal husbandry. They believe that they provide a high level of care for their animals. On the other hand, they must part with the animal at the end of the summer, knowing that he or she will be slaughtered. To be sure, the 4-H'ers do not kill the animals themselves. But, as will become clear, they fully recognize this inevitable feature of the livestock project.

In this way, the 4-H'ers' situation parallels the experiences of those involved in occupations that entail harming animals (Arluke, 2006, 1999, 1994b, 1994a, 1993, 1991, 1990, 1989, 1988). For example, research has examined how middle school students learn to avoid ethical and emotional conflict over dissection (Solot & Arluke, 1997). Successfully performing the dissection constitutes a rite of passage into the scientific community. Similarly, medical students must learn to absolve themselves for performing procedures on dogs and eventually killing them (Arluke & Hafferty, 1996). Navigating the moral conflict of "dog lab" is an important aspect of gaining a professional identity. Likewise, research on animal shelter workers analyzes how they reconcile their commitment to animal welfare with having to kill countless healthy but unwanted animals (Arluke 2006; Reeve, Rogelberg, Spitzmüller, & DiGiacomo, 2006; Arluke, 1994b). This paper adds to the research on how people cope with and justify their roles in causing harm to animals. We

use the 4-H youth livestock program to examine relationships with species other than dogs and cats.

## **Methods**

We conducted two waves of interviews with 45 4-H'ers raising cattle, goats, sheep, and hogs. The first wave took place during spring "weigh-ins," when the animals are weighed for comparison with the eventual weight at the show and sale in summer. Because all 4-H'ers in the livestock program must bring their animals to the weigh-in, these events provided the ideal opportunity for interviews. In addition, because parents usually drive the trucks that haul the animals' trailers, we could obtain the necessary parental consent. Because we had a limited window in which to conduct the interviews, we employed several undergraduate research assistants. We used a structured questionnaire that asked how long the young person had participated in 4-H, how s/he had first become interested, how many animals s/he had previously raised in 4-H, whether s/he named the animals, and other related questions.<sup>5</sup> We interviewed 47 4-H'ers at the weigh-ins and invited each to participate in a second interview during the fair in the late summer. Each 4-H'er who completed both interviews received a \$20 gift card to a local ranch supply store. Four declined to be interviewed.

We conducted a content analysis of the interview data, noting common themes and using these to guide the second wave of interviews. We conducted these over several days at the fair, where the 4-H'ers showed and sold their animals. The research assistants did not participate in these interviews. We located 45 of the 47 young people we had previously interviewed. This second wave took a conversational style, beginning with open-ended questions about how the young person had done at the fair and moving into a discussion of his or her relationships with the animals. We took notes during and after these conversations, making an effort to record statements verbatim. We compared notes numerous times for possible emergent directions of questioning. We used the 45 complete interviews (all those we interviewed twice) in our final analysis.

The 4-H'ers ranged in age from 9 to 18. All were white. Twenty-four of the 45 were male.<sup>6</sup> Only one was raising an animal for the first time. On average, the 4-H'ers had participated in the program for five years. Most joined because parents and older siblings had been members. Twenty-two were raising cattle. Seventeen were raising hogs, nine were raising sheep, and four were raising goats. For 42 of the 4-H'ers, their animals lived on the family's property.<sup>7</sup> Although

they described the properties as “farms,” this deserves clarification. Only eleven of the families farmed full-time as a main or major source of income. Most of the 4-H’ers lived in rural nonfarm areas where animals could be kept, or on what are called (somewhat derogatorily) “hobby farms,” where animal production is not a primary income source. For nearly all, however, farming had been a way of life in previous generations. Most of the 4-H’ers said they wanted to have a farm or ranch as adults, but only four planned to farm as a primary occupation.

All but one 4-H’er had joined the program because a parent or older sibling had been a member.<sup>8</sup> Many came from families with long histories of 4-H membership (see also Chan & Elder, 2001; Melson 2001). The 4-H organization incorporates adult family members as group leaders. Although we have no data from 4-H’ers’ very early childhoods, their responses to questions about how they became involved in 4-H suggest that the group offers a ready-made recruitment structure via the family. For example, a sixteen-year-old boy who raised pigs described how his father had grown up on a dairy farm and had been a 4-H’er. His older brothers had participated in 4-H. Several others provided similar versions of his story. One seventeen-year-old could not remember when he had *not* been in 4-H. Likewise, a boy in his final year in 4-H said his involvement “just kinda happened,” as though it were a normal part of growing up. For many, their entire social circle of siblings, cousins, and friends overlaps with 4-H. Thus, children in 4-H families have this particular identity routinely available to them. Consequently, everyday interaction with family and friends recruits them into participation and apprenticeship. We turn now to a discussion of what that entails.

### **Becoming Emotional Apprentices**

Raising an animal in 4-H requires regular interaction with the animal, often several times a day, depending on the species. We asked the 4-H’ers to describe their work with their animals, and they described the rhythms, routines, and rituals of feeding, handling, leading, and grooming them. In the case of cattle, this means halter training and gaining the trust of an animal who will weigh 1,000 pounds or more. Pigs and show lambs require regular exercise. 4-H literature on basic care of pigs advises, “It is important to spend time with the pig in its pen every day . . . Touch the pig as often as possible. This can include brushing, scratching, rubbing, etc.”<sup>9</sup> Pigs must learn to respond to nudges from a stick to walk into the ring. Similarly, the literature on steers recommends: “[B]egin touching your steer as soon as possible.”<sup>10</sup>

Raising an animal as a 4-H project, in other words, is not simply a matter of providing food and water. While caring for the animal, the young person

makes a considerable investment of time, money, and energy. She or he has to know the animal, physically and behaviorally. Over the course of the three to six months of caring for the animal, and longer if the 4-H'er has bred the animal him or herself, the young person makes a considerable investment of time. As one 4-H'er, a seventeen-year-old girl with considerable experience raising steers, told us, "If you do something bad, like slap 'em, they'll never let you do that again 'cause you have to have trust, and if you break the trust it's really hard to repair it."

The interaction between the 4-H'ers and their animals approximates interaction with a companion animal. Some of the 4-H'ers described their relationships with their animals in friendship terms. This was much more common with younger children, especially those of age 13 and under. For example, a nine-year-old girl raising two steers told us, "I talk to them a lot. Every day, we get closer. You can't raise them without developing a relationship." A twelve-year-old boy raising goats described them as "more than friends." Another of the same age who raised sheep said, "I don't really want to lose them, 'cause I worked so hard and got attached to them and now they're just going to leave." He also raises chickens, which he referred to as "meat birds." He contrasted the experiences with chickens and sheep this way: "[Chickens] are easier 'cause you don't have to work them and you don't have to stay with them. You're still sad to sell them. Yeah, I feel attached to them [the chickens] but, like you can actually [get] attached to sheep but not most birds 'cause you can't hold them." One girl who was raising sheep even described herself as the lambs' "mom." Despite this closeness, 4-H'ers must bring their animals to the fair knowing that they will, as one girl put it, "watch 'em get loaded up onto the trucks [and taken to slaughter]." They gain the ability to do this through apprenticeship. The 4-H group provides the tools with which they learn how to manage contradictory emotional or ethical experiences.

*Learning through experience.* When we asked 4-H'ers what they recalled from their first sale, only a minority (N=13) claimed to have felt sad. Notably, these were all under the age of 13. For example, a nine-year-old girl recalled, "I stayed by [the steer] until he had to go. I was sad the whole next day. I didn't even want to play with my friends." A twelve-year-old boy recalled looking forward to selling his first goat, but he found the experience harder than expected. He said the goat "was mean." He said, "I wanted to sell him, but at the fair he got nice, and I didn't want to sell him, but I had already signed up to sell. I still miss him." An eleven-year-old boy said that, "It's kinda harsh just getting rid of a heifer you've worked with." In contrast, the older kids said they "got used to it" or "learned to deal with it." A seventeen-year-old boy described sale day as "always fun." A girl of the same age described it as "challenging and

exciting.” A fifteen-year-old girl provided a clue to the difference in responses when she said, “It doesn’t bother me. The whole experience is really great. *I know what to expect. I’m ready for it.*”

Knowing what to expect, and being ready for it, highlights the apprenticeship aspects of 4-H. Through actualizing the skills required for raising livestock, 4-H prepares members to participate in a distinctive type of community. We uncovered three strategies that constitute the framework of 4-H’s emotional apprenticeship. Because we heard them used in varying degrees according to age, we propose that the 4-H’ers learn them through experience. These consist of cognitive emotion work, distancing, and using a narrative of redemption.

*Cognitive emotion work: Don’t get attached.* Although most of the younger 4-H’ers spoke of their animals affectionately, nearly all the older kids said they did not “get attached” to their animals. We heard the phrase so often that it became clear that it was part of the 4-H culture. For example, a seventeen-year-old girl raising a steer recalled: “When I was younger, it was harder, but now I try not to get attached.” Another girl of the same age, who was raising hogs and sheep, admitted, “I don’t get attached, even though it’s hard not to.” Even the most experienced 4-H’ers admitted that it was difficult not to “get attached” to their animals, especially at first. Moreover, *some* attachment is necessary for working with the animal, even as it complicates the emotions involved. As two 4-H’ers explained:

It’s easier to handle them if you’re attached, but that only makes it harder to sell them.  
(Girl, 14, raising sheep)

If you get attached, it’s hard. Like for me, [getting attached] is the worst thing to do. But, at some level you have to be attached enough to work with them. If you have no ties to the project, you’re not having any fun. (Boy, 15, raising hogs)

The consistency of the responses revealed what Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983, 1979) calls “conventions of feeling.” Just as Hochschild asks, “Why, generally speaking, do people feel gay at parties, sad at funerals, happy at weddings” (1979, p. 552), we wondered what made the 4-H’ers’ emotional responses so consistent and similar. Although the 4-H’ers did not use the term “emotion work” (Hochschild, 1983, 1979), this is precisely what they were doing. They had to redefine their feelings for their animals. Hochschild delineates two approaches to emotion work—active and passive—distinguished by the verb forms used to narrate the activity. Because the 4-H’ers described *trying* not to “get attached,” their efforts constitute active emotion work.<sup>11</sup>



The ability to avoid attachment was especially important as a milestone signifying that these apprentices were no longer “little kids.” Several observed, as did one 17-year-old girl, that the “little kids get more attached, more teary-eyed.” Over the years, the 4-H’ers learned how to manage their emotions through cognitive techniques—not to stifle or control them, but to “change images, ideas, or thoughts in the service of changing the feelings associated with them” (Hochschild, 1979, p. 562). One technique used in accomplishing this was not naming their animals. For example, a 16-year-old boy raising pigs said, “Don’t get close to them. Don’t name them. You’re more attached to them when you name them.” He simply clapped his hands to get their attention and referred to “this one” or “that one.” Another said that there had simply been too many animals over his years in 4-H to come up with names. “I don’t bother with names,” he said of his steers.

4-H’ers learn not to name their animals through experience (see also Melson, 2001). We found that those who did not name their animals were all over age 15 (N=20). All those 15 or younger could readily tell us their animals’ names. They ranged from cute (“Cupcake” and “Blossom”) to human (“Jesse” and “Adriana”) to ironic (“T-Bone” and “Bacon”). The “skill” of not naming, and consequently of avoiding attachment, comes with experience. One older boy who raises steers explained, “I used to name them, but when you grow up, you quit naming them.” Another, raising pigs said, “It’s just easier to do it that way, not to name them. Naming them makes me more attached.”

The 4-H’ers’ reluctance to name their animals confirms what Arnold Arluke (1990, 1993) and Mary Phillips (1994) found among animal researchers. Naming makes an animal into an individual (see also Irvine, 2004), and researchers cannot allow this to happen. Rather, they considered the animals “supplies” of enzyme or tissue, “breeders,” “bleeders,” or “donors,” rather than sentient beings (see also Arluke, 1988; Lynch, 1988). Not naming allows researchers to distance themselves emotionally from animals they know must die. Similarly, the 4-H’ers must reduce the conflict between the inherent sense of connection and the harm involved. The 4-H’ers cannot afford to sentimentalize their livestock, or they will not remain in the program for long.

Some scholars would argue that a strategy must intervene to produce a “discontinuity” of the empathy that exists in childhood (Myers, 1998, p. 153; see also Shweder et al., 1987; Kagan, 1986, 1984). For us, this oversimplifies the process. Instead, we argue that the 4-H’ers do not stop having empathy; rather, they learn to manipulate empathy. 4-H provides roles for empathy with “market animals” and rewards for learning those roles. The 4-H’ers are not *unlearning* empathy, but learning new roles for empathy with this kind of animal. Not naming partly accomplishes this, but it is not in

itself sufficient for doing so. The creation of the “market animal” completes the task.

*Distancing: Creating the “market animal.”* The 4-H’ers claim to care deeply about the well-being of their animals *and* they support the use of animals for food, sometimes eating the animals they raised. Their views exemplify the ambivalence with which we commonly “regard” animals (Arluke & Sanders, 1996). We construct certain animals as “pets,” others as “lab animals,” and still others as “wild animals.” A dog in one setting becomes a cherished family member, while in another, such as a racetrack, a dog becomes a “racing machine” (Cantwell, 1993; see also Arluke & Sanders, 1996, p. 12).

Consistent with this, the 4-H’ers learn to define their animals not as friends or family members but as “market animals” destined for slaughter. They talked of the animals having been “created” *for* the market. For example, a 16-year-old girl who raises steers said, “I used to cry, but I knew all along what they were raised for.” Another girl, raising sheep during her last year in 4-H, explained simply that, “They are market animals. That’s what they’re here for.” A girl raising hogs and a steer said, “When I was younger it was much harder because I was attached, but now I realize that they are market animals.” A sixteen-year-old boy who raised cattle told us, “You just can’t keep [steers]. You don’t make any money if you keep ’em, so you have to sell. You *could* keep him, but you’ll waste lots of money.” One 4-H’er even went to a higher authority. When asked how she felt about selling her pigs, she used the ultimate justification by saying, “I think about how, in the Bible, God gave us animals for food.”

The label “market animal” functions as the labels “lab animal” and “companion animal” do for other species. It defines the animal in terms of human use. Objectifying certain species as “market animals” or “livestock” (literally, “live stock,” or living capital) means that they embody the purpose of becoming meat. By existing for the market, project animals have value primarily as products. Although their destiny is to become meat, however, they also embody and evoke numerous experiences, accomplishments, and milestones for the 4-H’ers, the achievement of a sense of self-worth among them. The use of the term “market animal” manipulates empathy so that the 4-H’ers can manage contradictory emotions. One boy emphasized both the experience of caring for an animal and the sale of that animal for slaughter. He summed up by saying, “That’s the point of 4-H, to raise an animal for a good *product*.” By establishing that the animal was “naturally” *intended* for slaughter, the term neutralizes any negative attributions entailed in the 4-H’ers’ involvement. As one girl explained, “[The sale] is what I did it for.” Another said simply, “It’s life.”

The ease with which 4-H'ers refer to animals as "products" comes through apprenticeship. This involves not only learning the conventions of raising livestock but also learning a new moral sense of empathy. The use of an animal for food *requires* harm, in the form of killing. Even if done "humanely," the act of killing deprives an animal of life. One need not take an animal rights or welfare stance to understand killing as a form of harm. The 4-H'ers must care for the animal despite its destiny, however, or even because of it. Consequently, defining certain species as "market animals" serves an important purpose. It allows for a revised version of the empathy present in normal moral development.

Research on adults in agriculture suggests that the struggle with contradictory emotions and moral positions constitutes an important part of the work and lifestyle. Although research initially claimed that farmers saw animals in primarily "instrumental" terms (Kellert, 1980; Kellert & Berry, 1980), recent work reveals more nuanced views. Colter Ellis (2007) found, for example, that ranchers see their cattle as individuals, readily identifying personality traits. Ranchers also express sadness and loss at seeing the empty pens after a sale. Yet, they take the selling of livestock for granted, calling it a "natural" process.

Similarly, Rhoda Wilkie's work confirms that instrumental and emotional attitudes toward animals "can and do *co-exist*" among those who work with livestock (2005, p. 228; emphasis in original). Lewis Holloway (2001) also documents ambivalence toward animals raised for food. We have suggested that living with the ambivalence involves emotion work and the creation of the "market animal." The additional strategy of redeeming the harm completes the process. We turn now to that component of the apprenticeship.

*Redemption: The college fund and next year's animals.* 4-H'ers can often make up to \$2,000 for a steer who would bring less than half of that at market. We witnessed several gilts (female pigs under a year old who have not farrowed a litter) sold for \$800 and barrows (castrated males) sold for \$950. A lamb weighing 140 pounds sold for \$4,000. We asked the 4-H'ers what they would do with the money from the sale of their animals. Two themes dominated their answers: they would buy next year's animal(s) and save money for college. To be sure, some also mentioned computer games and cars, but these were not the majority. It struck us as remarkable that boys and girls as young as 12 already considered the following year and beyond, to life after high school. Our analysis suggests that these laudable plans form part of a "redemption" narrative that reduces conflict over raising an animal for slaughter. The college fund and purchasing next year's animals reveal slightly different approaches to the redemption strategy.

Planning to “replace” the animals initiates the apprentices into what those who raise livestock consider the “natural” cycle of life (see Ellis, 2007). To continue in 4-H, members must learn the “animal husbandry code of conduct” (Melson, 2001, p. 68). This includes the skills discussed already, such as avoiding attachment and distancing oneself from association with harm. For a farm family’s heritage to endure, however, the process of loss and replacement must continue. The “market animal” has a purpose, and once it leaves the farm to fulfill that purpose, another one takes its place. Although many young people experience the loss of a pet and go on to care for another animal, young people in agricultural families, more than those in other settings, must learn to see this loss and replacement as natural and normal. Consequently, saving to buy another lamb, calf, kid, or piglet is an important aspect of apprenticeship. In addition, because continued participation in 4-H becomes taken for granted, saving for the next project comes without question. *Not* participating in a livestock project would mean alienation from friends and extended family, as well as absence from the tradition of going to the fair. Moreover, the anticipation of raising next year’s animal(s) helps soften the emotional blow on auction day. For example, one girl raising a steer told us, “It’s easier when you get a new animal next year and you get over it.” Another said, “You learn that you get a new one next year to make friends with.” Yet another explained, “Normally, I’m sad, but then I get over it because I know I’ll get another one next year.” A boy who had raised hogs for several years recalled, “I was sad, but happy to get the money for next year’s animals.”

The 4-H’ers plans to purchase next year’s animals “redeem” those sent to slaughter. The sale is ultimately a positive experience because it leads to a new animal. This is a classic redemption narrative, which tells how a negative experience results in a subsequently positive outcome (see McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001; Irvine, 1999; McAdams, Diamond, de St. Aubin, & Mansfield, 1997). Redemption narratives portray pain, hardship, or misdeeds as all for the best. The teller states or implies that she or he has learned, grown, or otherwise benefited from the misfortune. Saving money for college represents an especially powerful redemption strategy. One could dismiss cars and computer games as frivolous, but few could argue with the importance of a college fund. The 4-H’ers understand this. As one girl explained, “I still get kinda sad, but it’s for a good cause.” The emphasis on college stems from 4-H’s origins in universities. 4-H not only transmitted new technologies to farmers via their children; it also made college education seem more relevant and accessible. By turning the livestock project into a vehicle for college, 4-H established the discourse and the receptive audience for redemptive storytelling.

## Conclusion

Our research has analyzed how the 4-H program socializes children in the emotional skills needed for participation in a farming heritage. Through older 4-H'ers, younger members learn that only "little kids" cry when they sell their animals. They learn not to name their animals and to think of them as existing for "the market." They also learn that even the death of an animal is justified if it supports a "good cause," such as a college education. To be sure, life outside the group also trains the 4-H'ers in these skills. Family members, peers, and the culture at large enforce the message of human dominion. The consistency in the discourse and practices and the apprenticeship format of the live-stock program, however, underlined the group's role in socialization.

We see this paper as contributing to four areas of research. First, by highlighting how 4-H'ers learn to cope with moral and emotional conflict, this research supports existing work that analyzes how people who must inflict harm on animals protect their identities from damage (e.g., Solot & Arluke, 1997; Arluke & Hafferty, 1996; Arluke, 1994a, 1991, 1990, 1989, 1988). Like experimenters, the 4-H'ers adopt strategies that allow them to care *and* kill. For example, they point out that "market animals" exist to die; therefore, they are only doing what is normal and expected. In this way, the label of "market animal" functions as what Gresham Sykes and David Matza (1957) call a "technique of neutralization" (p. 667). In the agricultural context of 4-H, the label cloaks the reality of killing in culturally accepted terms. Consequently, the 4-H'er maintains his or her sense of self-approval while remaining involved in an activity that, in another context, would be morally abhorrent. The 4-H'ers retained the necessary level of concern for their animals, placing any harm within the context of what the animals were "created for." Our research differs from the work on animal researchers and shelter workers in one important way: in most cases, the 4-H'ers participated only in the caring side. Although a few were involved in or witnessed the killing, the majority sold their animals for slaughter elsewhere. Nevertheless, like the researchers and shelter workers, the 4-H'ers developed context-appropriate strategies to normalize and justify their activities.

Second, by contrasting younger 4-H'ers with older members, this research also makes a modest contribution to studies of moral development. We found that the younger 4-H'ers retained much of the empathy considered innate in children, which was revised as they matured. By the time they were teenagers, they no longer named their animals. Although one could argue that this was indicative more of a desire to protect themselves emotionally than of a sense of distance from the animal, we argue that both motivations are present, along

with a third. For the older 4-H'ers, the animals were essentially different creatures than they were for the younger members. Through the apprenticeship process, the animal as family member and best friend gradually became the "market animal."

This adds nuance to the research on development that poses the capacity to distinguish humans from animals as the criterion for maturity. As Myers (1999, 1998) explains, Western moral theorists from Aristotle to Freud have emphasized the distinction between humans and animals and, simultaneously, pointed to the dangers of blurring the boundary. Myers writes that Western conceptualizations of development assume that "the mature human has actualized its difference from other species. Although children may be like, or have an affinity to, animals, such connection is secondary or spurious in light of an especially human capacity that develops with maturity" (1999, p. 128). We agree that an acceptance of the human-animal boundary remains an important assumption, and our research suggests that the capacity to make distinctions within the animal category is also considered a marker of maturity, particularly for children from agricultural backgrounds.

A third area to which this work contributes is the literature on interaction with animals. By examining livestock, our research expands the limited work on relationships with animals other than those commonly kept as companions. The focus on companion animals is understandable in light of the omnipresence of dogs and cats, in particular, in human households. The existing research has revealed the role of animals in inculcating the virtues of kindness and the vices of cruelty. Yet only by expanding the scope of investigation to include interaction with animals in other settings, such as the zoo, the farm, and the wilderness, can we truly begin to understand the range of ways that animals matter for children's lives.

The 4-H project offers a unique window into emotional socialization because of the ambivalent status of the project animals; they receive care and attention that makes them *almost* pets, but the moment comes when they are sold and killed. Thus, the children who raise them must learn to establish and maintain an emotional boundary that need not exist in relationships with dogs, cats, and other companion animals. Although children often experience grief and sorrow at the death of a companion animal, their relationships with dogs or cats are fundamentally different from those with cows, pigs, or sheep. Among children whose heritage is agricultural, the difference is taken for granted. The tears of the younger 4-H'ers on sale day, however, show the emotion work necessary to maintain the category of "market animals." Cows or pigs could easily be pets; the human decision to consider them food means that we attach a different set of rules to our interactions with them.

Finally, by bringing young people into the research agenda, we shed light on the role of socialization in the ideology of dominion over other animals. In a special issue of *Society & Animals* devoted to the topic of children and animals, James Serpell wrote:

There can be little doubt that children, from observing and interacting with animals and nature, learn things and acquire skills that they probably cannot learn or acquire in other ways... The question now is what do they learn and what influence does it have on their socio-emotional and cognitive development? Thus far, we have barely begun to answer this question. (1999, pp. 92-93)

As it turns out, what children learn from animals in 4-H touches issues at the heart of human-animal studies. In particular, the program highlights the practices involved in maintaining dominion over animals, including language and emotion management. Understanding these practices can reveal how we justify our impact on other sentient beings. In itself, this is valuable because it can expose the many subtle ways we overlook, embrace, and benefit from speciesism.

Studying dominion in small-scale situations, such as 4-H groups, also provides insight into the large-scale social processes underlying other inequalities. For example, some scholars recognize that systems of oppression are interlinked. They argue that domination over animals involves the same abuses of power that produce hierarchies of sexism, racism, heterosexism, and other oppressions (e.g., Nibert, 2002; Adams, 1990). The practices used in slavery originated in our treatment of animals, especially those used for food (Patterson, 2002; Spiegel, 1996). As Marjorie Spiegel writes in *The Dreaded Comparison*, one need not equate the experiences of people and animals to see the commonalities in “the supporting systems of oppression” (1996, p. 28). Likewise, one need not equate people with animals to understand that “any oppression helps to support other forms of domination” (p. 30). In this paper, we have analyzed one of the ways that children come to see one form of domination—the use of animals for food—as natural, normal, and even inevitable. But the emotion management and language used in 4-H have implications that extend far beyond the domain of human-animal studies. By analyzing how traditions and institutions such as 4-H sustain the human oppression of other animals and make it invisible, one can view the world of 4-H livestock projects as the social universe.

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## Notes

1. Some groups allow children between the ages of five and seven to enroll as what are called "Cloverbuds." Statistics retrieved November 20, 2007 from [http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/about/4h\\_about.htm](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/about/4h_about.htm).

2. Statistics retrieved November 21, 2007 from [http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/2005\\_ES-237\\_stats\\_6-06.pdf](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/2005_ES-237_stats_6-06.pdf).

3. Just over 33% live in towns of under 10,000 and rural nonfarm areas; 20.9% live in towns and cities (and their suburbs) with populations between 10,000-50,000, 8.8% live in suburbs of cities of over 50,000, and 25.6% live in central cities of over 50,000. Statistics retrieved November 21, 2007 from [http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/2005\\_ES-237\\_stats\\_6-06.pdf](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/2005_ES-237_stats_6-06.pdf).

4. On the distinction between "pets" and "companion animals," see Irvine, 2004. We use the terms interchangeably in this paper, but we recognize the importance of the distinction.

5. The questionnaire is available from the authors.

6. This differs slightly from the most recent national 4-H demographics, which show slightly higher membership rates (52.5%) for girls. Statistics last retrieved December 20, 2008, from [http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/2005\\_ES-237\\_stats\\_6-06.pdf](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/2005_ES-237_stats_6-06.pdf).

7. Others kept their animals at farms owned by grandparents or noncustodial parents.

8. In the case of the one exception, the family had only recently moved to the country. Her parents came from farm backgrounds, but they had lived in the city during the girl's childhood.

9. Retrieved November 23, 2007, from [http://extension.usu.edu/cyberlivestock/downloads/Basic\\_Show\\_Pig.pdf](http://extension.usu.edu/cyberlivestock/downloads/Basic_Show_Pig.pdf).

10. Retrieved November 23, 2007, from [http://extension.usu.edu/cyberlivestock/downloads/Basic\\_Show\\_Steer.pdf](http://extension.usu.edu/cyberlivestock/downloads/Basic_Show_Steer.pdf).

11. A statement along the lines of "I let myself feel" would indicate a passive stance.

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