

chapter 1

The Human Point of View

The essential vocation of interpretive anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said.

— Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISTS have long argued that all meaning is a product of social interaction rather than a quality inherent in the objects themselves. Although animals have a physical being, once in contact with humans, they are given a cultural identity as people try to make sense of them, understand them, use them, or communicate with them. They are brought into civilization and transformed accordingly as their meaning is socially constructed. To say that animals are social constructions means that we have to **look** beyond what is regarded as innate in animals—beyond their physical appearance, observable behavior, and cognitive abilities—in order to understand how humans will think about and interact with them. “Being” an animal in modern societies may be less a matter of biology than it is an issue of human culture and consciousness.

Animals as Social Constructions

As social constructions, the meanings of animals seem to be fixed and enduring. The tenacious persistence and widespread acceptance of these meanings suggest that they are cultural phenomena—part of the normative order of the society in which they occur. Much like other cultural phenomena—love of country, motherhood, or the success ethic—the meanings of animals are passed from generation to generation.

Consider which animals are regarded as wild, and which as tame. At an early age, we learn by watching Disney movies, reading fairy tales, and listening to our parents that a “wild animal” can be a tiger in the jungle, an elephant in a **zoo**, a squirrel living in the backyard of a suburban home, an ownerless dog that roams the neighborhood, or a mean-spirited, raunchy person looking to pick a fight in a bar. As social designations, “wildness” comes to mean distance and danger with “tameness” its converse. Many learn what a “tame” animal is by owning one themselves. Parents often acquire pets for their children who themselves in turn attribute personlike qualities to these animals and protect them from the dangers that lurk outside in the world of nature. The result is that children come to view what constitutes a wild or tame animal as a hard and fast “fact” whose meaning is a given—external to human culture and social process. Yet we know sociologically that “facts” can vary because in different places and times people will assign them different meanings.

Place and Time

In contemporary American homes, for example, it is taken for granted that dogs will be regarded in a certain way. Lucy Hickrod and Raymond Schmitt (1982) have described the process by which a puppy is transformed from a novelty or toy into a make-believe or “pretend” family member that is named, fed, groomed, dressed, photographed, talked to, mourned, slept with, given birthday parties, and taken to “therapists” for behavior problems. This process

begins when a dog is taken into a home. Given the high value placed on pets in America, at this stage people are encouraged to accept the pet into their families. Naming the new pet begins its transformation from a generic puppy into a specific member of the family. The name affords the dog an identity and makes it easier to talk about and direct activities toward it as though it were part of the family. Acquiring a status in the family is contingent on family members' willingness to meet the pet's needs. Pets that do not obey "house rules" or that are considered "too difficult" may be given away or euthanized. If pets survive this probationary period, many family members develop intense feelings about them. During this "engrossment stage," personal qualities such as loyalty or humorosity are often attributed to pets, who are seen as being more consistent in displaying these attributes than are most humans.

After becoming engrossed in their dogs, most owners come to the realization that they are treating their pets as genuine family members. As they became aware of their feelings for their animals, owners often are amazed at how intensely family members care about the pets even though they are "only animals." Soon they begin to communicate their feelings for their pets to people outside the family so they too can participate in this definition of the animal as family member. This may entail introducing pets to newcomers by mentioning their names and discussing their personal histories, as well as nonverbally communicating this status through fondling, special dressing, or the like. These "tie signs" minimize the social boundaries between pets and humans, thereby demonstrating their special position to strangers.

Even after pets die, their intimate connection to families may be remembered when stories are shared about the animals' exploits or when later **pets** are given the same names. Since human emotional response to the death of a pet can be as intense as those precipitated by the **loss** of any family member (Carmack 1985; Cowles 1985), it is not surprising that there is a modest but growing interest in burying pets in animal cemeteries in order to maintain this connection (Cooke 1988). That dead animals are typically treated as kin can be

seen in the intense public disapproval generated by media reports that Roy Rogers stuffed his faithful steed Trigger so that it could be displayed in Rogers' living room. This negative reaction, no doubt, arose because the public regarded the horse as a pet or member of the Rodgers family. Presumably, for these people the stuffing of a pet, rather than a hunting trophy, seemed to deny an emotional tie by turning Trigger into an object.

However, Hickrod and Schmitt (1982), claim that a pet is still something less than a family member because of ever present "frame breaks." Bystanders, media presentations, and certain situations constantly call into question this definition of the pet as a family member and reinforce its definition as an animal or a toy. Signs reading "No Pets Allowed" or "Beware of Guard Dog," as well as instances when pets nonchalantly vomit in living rooms, eat their own excrement, or mate in public are reminders that they are, at best, make-believe members of families.

Yet dogs in another setting might be anything but adjunct members of the family. In the context of a dog track, they are racing machines (Cantwell 1993). This construction requires impersonal identities, and the dogs are assigned special names and numbers. Their official names appear in the programs but are almost never used, except when announced with their position numbers at the checkpoint. These official names, like the names of race horses, exist outside everyday human usage, and their meanings are clear only to those deeply involved in the race world. These names are not even anthropomorphized, but usually refer to abstract images or emotional states—such as Peaceful Darkness, Fine Style, or Surprise Launch. When names are humanized, they are almost always in the possessive form, such as Tara's Dream or Bob's Showtime, suggesting that the names apply to the owners and not the dogs. Transforming the dogs into machines reduces their identities to numbers that appear on racing blankets, starting gates, programs, handlers' armbands, and monitors displaying betting odds. The numbers are also used by track announcers when dogs pass through the checkpoint and during the race to indicate their position as well

as by bettors who shout numbers, not names, as they cheer on their choices.

Standard handling practice also helps to construct a numbered machine, suppressing the dogs' personalities. For example, when the dogs are presented to interested bettors in the paddock, steel bars keep onlookers about five feet from the thick glass behind which the dogs, handlers, and judges do their work. The distance and the glass muffle all sounds, although one can still hear the barking of unmuzzled dogs in cages turned away from the public's view. When in view, they are muzzled and tightly controlled. Muzzling partially covers their faces, restricts their barking, and gives them a badge of human dominance. Handlers rarely look at, talk to, or touch their dogs, and the exceptions only point to the more pervasive construction of these animals as machines. Occasionally, when handlers talk to each other, they might quickly pet or scratch a dog's head or neck. This touching looks more like a reflex or afterthought, because they neither look nor talk to the dog as they do it, nor do they try to solicit any response from the dog. For the most part, the dogs themselves make little response. No dog, for instance, responds by licking a handler's hand or jumping up on the handler. Indeed, the greyhounds rarely initiate any interaction with each other: they are trained not to do so, and the handlers will stop any attempt. For example, after one dog's muzzle was removed, it started licking the face of the adjacent dog. Showing a barely detectable smile, the handler instantly used the leash to pull the licking dog away.

At these rare times when people try to interact with the greyhounds, the handlers immediately restrain the dogs and ignore the people, almost as though nothing had happened. In one instance, two young boys broke through the wooden barrier separating the public from the dogs being led from the paddock to the track. The dogs looked startled but as they started to respond and turn toward the boys, the handlers instantly shortened the leashes on the dogs, pulled them forward, and pushed the boys outside the barrier, never losing a step in the process. Even when the dogs and the handlers were not busy, such interactions were prevented. One bettor, for instance,

stood very close to the paddock's glass while the dogs were in line to be weighed. She caught one dog's eye and suddenly reached out as if to pet it, putting her hand on the glass inches away from the head of the muzzled dog. With that, the dog became visibly excited, turned around and looked at her. As soon as its muzzle hit the glass, it was abruptly pulled closer to the handler and farther away from the spectator.

The meaning of social constructions can change over time. What a group regards as wild can at another time be regarded-as tame. For example, our conception of primates has developed dramatically in the twentieth century, so that their place in the modern order has changed from being exotic and wild to being tame and almost human. Anthropologist Susan Sperling (1988) claims that several factors account for this shifting view. As postwar America grew increasingly interested in the complex cognitive and social abilities of animals, images of primates in particular were remodeled to become more humanlike. Anthropological models of evolution started replacing "primitive" human groups, such as the Trobriand Islanders, with nonhuman primates—making the latter our "ancestors." These models along with observational studies of primates were disseminated to the public in magazines like *National Geographic*, nature shows on television, or in movies like *Gorillas in the Mist*, giving the impression of extreme similarity between the species. Baboon troops, for instance, were uncritically viewed as microcosms of human society because they too had social characteristics, such as a "division of labor." Compounding the effect of this research were field studies, like those of Jane Goodall's, in which chimpanzee subjects were given human names and their personalities described in human terms. Additional anthropomorphization came from researchers **who** studied the acquisition of language by apes and treated their **an-**imals like foster children who could talk and live in human settings. The consequence, contends Sperling (1988), was the "obliteration" of the border between humans and nonhumans.

With such boundary blurring, it is not surprising that what were once wild animals may now be regarded as pets. A case in point is a

project that allowed laypeople to assist with research and conservation efforts with wild orangutans in Borneo (Russell 1995). Some people had expected and desired to have a “cuddly” experience with these animals and, not surprisingly, experienced the apes as “children” in their interactions with confiscated infants, which were to be sold as pets but were being rehabilitated in a clinic. Although they were initially forbidden to have physical contact with the infants, many of the tourists expressed an intense desire to hold them. Russell reports that many “oohed” and “aahed” when seeing the animals and commonly described them as “cute” or as “sweet little ones.” When permitted physical contact, all the tourists felt very fortunate to have the opportunity, saying that it “profoundly” affected them. Some tourists even competed for the affections of certain infants, as they sought to “babysit” them or were reluctant to break off contact because they felt “needed” by the young animals. No longer seen as alien or strange creatures as they might have been years ago, these primates were related to in the only way that made sense to these tourists. They defined the primates as pets or as quasi-family members of human society.

In fact, some wild animals are literally transformed over time into pets, of a sort. Elizabeth Lawrence (1990) contends that this century has witnessed “a remarkable American social phenomenon” in the transformation of wild bears into fame and civilized stuffed teddy bear dolls that hardly resemble their natural forebears. Although the teddy bear is obviously an inanimate object, a doll, it is now often seen and treated as though it were a pet or “companion animal.” Indeed, Lawrence goes so far as to say that “teddy bears are animals that nearly, but not quite, become people” (p. 151). Child and adult owners attribute personalities, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to their teddy bears and, not surprisingly, report that their dolls make them feel comfortable. In return for the “spirit of caring and unconditional affection” provided by the dolls, owners cherish them (p. 152). This conversion of nature into culture, according to Lawrence, has resulted in a “counterpart of oppositions” between the teddy bear and the living bear. The former is “tame, dependent, dependable,

neutered, civilized, humanized and sanitized,” while the latter is “wild, unpredictable, uncontrolled, aloof,” and dangerous (p. 150). Lawrence’s analysis highlights the power of social constructions to alter what we think of as normal or natural—they do nothing less than shape our consciousness.

Normal and Natural

What are animals in zoos, for instance? They are animals that most of us will never see in their “natural” state, but can only read about or imagine. Taken from their “natural” context, these animals are put in a human frame while their natural habitat is transformed into **our** dream of a human–animal paradise (Sax n.d.). They become creatures of leisure—given food rather than hunting and fighting for live game among themselves. Even the “prey” is transformed so that it cannot be identified as a specific animal—meat is thoroughly butchered—and zoo animals are not allowed to eat fellow captives. Zoo animals also live in harmony, never struggling over territorial matters with other animals. They live in an environment built by humans: a constructed world that shrinks entire continents into acres and often combines different species in the same exhibit, even though they may live far apart in their normal climatic zone.

The artificiality of this zoological paradise, as Boria Sax (n.d.) perceptively observes, renders the traditional dichotomy of wild versus domestic animals invalid. There, symbols of captivity such as cages and cold cement floors increasingly are being eliminated, while animals in nature are being carefully observed and controlled through devices such as concealed cameras and radio collars. Because of modes of modern captivity, animals can be closely approached and admired in ways that are impossible in the wild. This proximity means that humans are not unobtrusive to zoo animals. Although it is not known exactly how their behavior changes, one study (Hosey and Druck 1987) found that, instead of ignoring **or** being habituated to visitors, zoo animals respond to and interact with them. In a study of captive bears (Forthman et al. 1992), for instance, these animals frequently

demonstrated stereotypic locomotor patterns and were often encouraged by the public to beg. What zoo visitors *see*, then, is a culturally falsified version of how these animals actually behave in the “wild.”

The result is often a captive wild animal that is regarded as a human in animal skin. Perhaps one of the best examples of this transformation is the giant panda. Many of the panda’s physical features — the round head, large eyes, and vertical posture — facilitate its anthropomorphization. The panda is not a distant animal but becomes a cuddly friend “imbued with a human personality, with human needs, and subject to similar emotions” (Mullan and Marvin 1987, xiv-xv). Once perceived in this manner, the distinction crumbles between what we regard as wild and tame. Thus, visitors often have a fondness for zoo animals, sometimes naming them, “adopting” them, giving them tea parties, or playing with and touching them in children’s zoos and aquaria petting tanks. For their part, animal handlers often form even closer relationships with individual zoo animals, treating them as typical companion animals.

If social constructions can tinker with actors’ consciousness of the “natural” order, they can just as easily toy with other basic distinctions that humans make including those between life and death. An example of this is the taxidermist who tries to make dead animals appear animated or “just as they were in life” (Bryant and Shoemaker 1988). Unlike those in real life or even the zoo, however, the stuffed wild animal can be examined closely and handled without fear. Some of these transformations into inanimate life are intended to be instructional, as in the case of museums that display animals faithful to their “natural state” in order to teach the public or stimulate interest in zoology. Other transformations symbolize human domination over nature as hunters do who display their trophy animals on walls or on floors. In contrast to the hunter’s trophy, some pet owners stuff and display a deceased animal as a memorial to its faithful companionship. This practice was common — though the source of some controversy — among middle-class Parisian dog owners during the nineteenth century (Kete 1993).

Stuffed animals or animal skins may also be used as product trademarks, home decoration, or fashion statements to project certain

images and capture attention. When used as fashion statements, they can, to some degree, transform their owners' personae. Fur coats for women, for instance, in addition to being used as status symbols suggesting affluence, can offer a reflection of animal spirit or passion by projecting an exotic or erotic image, while leather coats on men can convey a macho attitude. In this way, the distinction between wild and tame becomes sufficiently blurred to allow some humans to entertain the idea that they are a little "wild."

In some instances, humans may transform the "natural" order by reshaping the very disposition and biology of animals. For example, over centuries, the English bulldog was bred to be a one-hundred-pound, muscular fighter with a deep chest, powerful jaw, and a setback nose for the sport of bullbaiting. Breeders were unconcerned with beauty while giving special attention to such traits as savagery and insensitivity to pain. Despite the eventual outlawing of bullbaiting and bulldogs, dog lovers resisted the edicts and used selective breeding methods to preserve all the bulldog's traits except its ferocity. The result over a few generations was the exaggerated appearance and pleasant personality of the modern English bulldog (Nash 1989). What the human consciousness takes for granted as innate biology is, at least in the case of the bulldog, the result of decades of social (and genetic) construction.

Studying Constructs

In this way, then, people operating in the "real world" produce a construction of reality that influences their behavior toward animals. The method known in social science as ethnography, or fieldwork, is uniquely suited to studying the process by which people construct these meanings. We fieldworkers discover these meanings by immersing ourselves in unfamiliar worlds, or what anthropologists think of as the "exotic bush." Whether we are looking at cockfighting in the barrios of San Juan or dog walking on the streets of New York, we participate face-to-face with people in their natural settings and share in their activities (Bruyn 1966). For ethnographers

of human–animal relationships, our exotic tribes are pet owners, veterinarians, animal trainers, slaughterhouse workers, mounted policemen, and any other group that works with or cares for animals, and our “bush” is the pet store, circus, riding stable, and countless other settings where animals play a part.

For Arluke, this has often meant venturing into milieus where animals are killed, such as animal shelters, research labs, and medical schools, while Sanders has frequented places where animals are cared for, such as veterinary clinics and dog training schools. As ethnographers, we have both sought to document what is happening in these unfamiliar places and to unearth the meanings that animals have for people. This work involves taking an unsentimental look at what the world is like backstage to people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think, and act in ways that may be very different from our own. To do this may mean learning a new language, or argot, watching and participating in activities, and talking with countless “natives.”

The fieldworker’s most fundamental role, then, is that of a student who learns how other people see and experience the world, or what some call the “native’s point of view” (Geertz 1974). One learns by taking a phenomenological approach in the field—that is, considering what people say and do as a product of how they interpret the meaning of events, objects, and situations. For the ethnographer, meaning—including how animals are defined—is negotiable, changing, and context-dependent. The goal of the fieldworker is to document this process of interpretation through empathic understanding (or *verstehen*), reproducing in his or her mind, and experiencing firsthand, the feelings, motives, and thoughts behind the actions of others. In short, the fieldworker tries to grasp the meanings of the subjects’ behavior by seeing things from their point of view.

Into the Field

Fieldwork begins long before researchers enter their chosen worlds. The selection of a general problem to study may come from reviewing the literature, but it will be heavily influenced by the

prior sociological training of researchers and their personal experiences (Burgess 1984). What led us to study human–animal relationships? For over ten years, Arluke’s work largely focused on understanding the behavior of patients and health-care providers. His sociological skills made him quite comfortable in medical settings where he could speak the argot of medicine and follow the folkways of this social world. While at work on a study of the folklore of arthritis patients, some of the physicians with whom Arluke collaborated led him unknowingly into a dog laboratory as he trailed along with them, ostensibly to learn more about arthritis. As the physicians spoke with a colleague in this lab, Arluke noticed a lack of interaction between a lab dog and two technicians. He was struck by the seeming indifference of the technicians to the dog’s solicitations over several minutes. It was almost as though the dog did not exist for them, he thought, as they started to set up some equipment needed for an experiment. As he left the lab with the physicians, one turned to him and muttered, “I don’t want to be in here when they start the experiment.” Arluke wondered how the technicians could ignore the dog and perform the experiment while the physician couldn’t wait to leave? What was it about the immediate social scene of the lab that made it possible for workers to experiment on animals? This was one of many early questions that drew Arluke into this research area and, over the following years, into other aspects of the human–animal relationship.

Following the death of his long-time canine companion in 1988, Sanders acquired two Newfoundland puppies. Although he had, for some time, planned to investigate the unique relationship that develops between blind people and their dogs, his first foray into this specialized world of interaction convinced him that he needed a foundation of knowledge about the general process by which people develop relationships with companion animals. Unavoidably, as he was spending massive amounts of time with his new companions, Sanders decided to examine systematically the interactional process in which he was deeply involved. In the fall of 1988, Sanders, the

Newfoundland puppies, and his partner enrolled in an eight-week “puppy kindergarten” class, which met in a local veterinary clinic and was led by an academically trained animal behaviorist. The class included some ten dogs (ranging in age from twelve to fifteen weeks) and their owners. The purpose of the training was basic socialization—to accustom the animals to other dogs and humans and teach the owners elementary techniques for developing satisfactory relationships with their pets. As a direct participant, Sanders became interested in how the people in the class attributed motives to their puppies or excused their misbehavior or mistakes. He began to record his observations of the interactions within the class after each two-hour session ended. The next spring, with permission of the trainer, Sanders attended another class sequence and, from an unobtrusive location, systematically recorded fieldnotes detailing the interactions and activities observed. The puppy classes provided an excellent opportunity to see aspects of this developmental process in action.

Having established this basic grounded understanding of the canine–human relationship, Sanders then approached the administrators of the veterinary hospital and received permission to observe clinical interactions among the doctors, owner-clients, and animal–patients. During the next twelve months of participant observation, Sanders collected additional information on animal–human exchanges. He also developed an interest in the day-to-day occupational experience of veterinarians, which increasingly became the focus of his research.

Before entering certain settings, researchers must often obtain permission from insiders. While certain arenas of activity are public and therefore within the ethical purview of researchers to observe, talk, and participate without revealing their identity, many are not. Since it is rare for ethnographers to be invited into private settings, entering these locations often involves jumping a number of hurdles ranging from negotiations with powerful formal figures, or “gatekeepers,” to endless meetings and written statements explaining who fieldworkers are and what they want. In exchange for

being allowed to observe, ethnographers usually strike a research bargain promising confidentiality and no interference with activities (Bogdan and Taylor 1975).

Often this process of *entrée* involves trickling down the formal hierarchy of power and authority. This was typically the case in most of the laboratories Arluke studied, not only because these labs were usually part of a larger and more complex organization such as a hospital or a university, but because the research community has become increasingly suspicious of the motives of outsiders who may want to sabotage animal experimentation, hurt experimenters, or write tabloid exposés of cruelty to animals. For these reasons, the obstacles to getting into a lab seemed daunting to Arluke, and he almost abandoned the project. One after another, he met with a succession of gatekeepers—a hospital vice president, the head of the animal care committee, the director of public relations, the head of one of the medical departments, the chief technician of one of its labs, and lastly the lab's technicians and caretakers. It took him over three months *to* get permission to study his first lab.

Working in somewhat smaller, less bureaucratized situations, settings where there was little fear of an exposé, Sanders faced fewer obstacles. In both the veterinary clinic and the guide-dog training program, he was “sponsored” by members whom he already knew. At the veterinary hospital he was introduced and “taught the ropes” by a clinic partner he had known for more than a decade. Similarly, in the dog training program, Sanders was introduced to the staff and the setting by a trainer who had been enrolled in one of his university classes some years before.

Participant Observation

As fieldwork gets under way, ethnographers actively work to establish rapport and win the trust of their subjects. To this end, they conduct themselves in a nonthreatening and unobtrusive manner. A free and open exchange of thoughts and feelings will be more likely if the ethnographer is perceived as a neutral figure who has no spe-

cial alliances with groups outside the setting or with individuals in the setting that might harm subjects. No matter how neutrally they are perceived, most fieldworkers are never completely accepted by their subjects (Douglas 1976). Short of conducting covert fieldwork where their research identities are unknown, ethnographers become “marginal natives,” part member, part guest. Although not fully accepted, the ethnographer becomes member enough to share the symbols, language, and perspective of the people being studied, to be able to penetrate their defenses against outsiders, and to be seen as a “regular guy” who will “do no one any dirt” (Johnson 1975, 95).

Instead of trying to be a “fly on the wall”—a goal both impossible to achieve and profitless to pursue—we carefully monitor how participants come to regard us. Of course, during the first days in the field, it is common for fieldworkers to “stick out,” and for this to affect some or much of the participants’ behavior. After two weeks of observation in one laboratory, a technician took Arluke aside privately and told him quite directly that “Jim and the other guys here aren’t acting normal, and it’s because you’re here!” Arluke heard this as bad news, assuming that lab workers were behaving differently around animals. He wondered how many more weeks or months he would have to be present to see how these people actually behaved around lab animals. Sheepishly, and fearing the worst, he asked the technician what was different. She replied, quite happily, that the men in her lab had never treated the female technicians respectfully before, but were doing so now. Stunned and relieved, Arluke shared his fear with the technician that animals were being treated differently because of his presence, to which the technician simply shrugged and said, “Nobody cares about that.”

The impact of their presence on participants’ behavior and the normal flow of events is limited because field researchers typically are involved with people in their everyday settings. Group members have many things to concern themselves with that are more immediately important than changing their behavior for an ethnographer’s benefit. Especially in work settings, people have to do their jobs—clean cages, perform experiments, deal with clients and patients, train

animals, and fulfill their other occupational responsibilities—while, at the same time, being aware of the demands and evaluations of their superiors (Becker and Geer 1957).

People's initial curiosity and uneasiness **also** diminish over time as fieldworkers blend into the settings they study by building rapport with participants. Assuming the role of naive student expedites the process of establishing rapport. Like newcomers in any social situation, fieldworkers must also "learn the roles," a process of initial learning where they "attempt to master where things and people are, the niceties of rank and privilege, who expects him to do what, at what time, for how long; what the rules are—which ones can or must be broken, which followed to the letter" (Geer et al. 1968, 209). Especially in organizational settings, ethnographers are often taken under the wings of workers who act as though they were breaking in new employees. In one primate research lab, for instance, Arluke was warned about "which chimps would throw shit" at him and was given advice about "how to treat the mean ones," to which he nodded thankfully. Soon people let down their guard and increasingly invite fieldworkers to escort them, observe them, or simply hang out with them at work and at other places. The ethnographer moves from being a stranger or a new employee to being a friend as he or she is told gossip and secrets or is asked to join some employees after work for beer.

After learning these basics, fieldworkers immerse themselves in the activities and routines of those studied. This not only allows fieldworkers to experience directly what participants think and feel, but it also may enhance the rapport between them. In his research on animal experimenters, Arluke expected to come and go according to their work schedule, to hang out and socialize with them when permitted, and to help with small tasks such as carrying boxes of equipment or answering the telephone. Even such routine activities provided valuable information. In one setting, he was given the unpopular job of wheeling a cart full of empty mouse cages from the lab to a sterilizing room at the other end of the large medical complex. No one told him how to do this "obvious" task other than

telling him where the sterilizing room was located. As he wheeled the cart down the hallway he became increasingly uncomfortable when people, unconnected to experimentation, passed by. Some stared disapprovingly at the cages, some sniffed in a way that suggested repulsion, and some forthrightly said that they wished there were no animal experimentation in their building. More than once, someone sarcastically quipped, “**Here’s** another mouse killer.” Back in the lab, the technicians laughed at his account and said, “Welcome to the club!” He was told to “keep a low profile” and avoid the most direct path to the sterilizing room because it would bring him into contact with administrators, secretaries, and visitors who might give him a hard time. **He** was advised to take the cart through the empty subterranean basement instead, even though this took five minutes longer. This simple exercise taught Arluke a great deal about how technicians often perceive and deal with critical outsiders (Arluke 1991).

Arluke got more involved with the participants than he expected to, however, when he began his fieldwork; in some of the laboratories he studied, he found himself doing “scut” **work** that was part of experiments and that often involved close contact with animals. In one mouse lab, his scut work escalated from cleaning animal cages, which entailed handling mice, to carrying out experiments on them. He found himself shaving the hair on mice, punching holes in their ears for identification, measuring the size of their tumors, injecting them with experimental drugs, “sacrificing” them, dissecting them, and disposing of them. This degree of participation proved to be invaluable for both strengthening rapport and learning at firsthand how it felt to work with animals as research “tools.”

Self-Reflection

Not all data come from monitoring the activities of others, talking with them about their experiences, and participating in their social world. Researchers acquire the richest data by examining their own experiences, seeing how others react to their in-the-field perfor-

manances, and attending to the changes in their self concepts as the investigation proceeds. As Susan Krieger (1985,320) observes:

I think that often in social research, this is what we really do. We see others as we know ourselves. If the understanding of self is limited and unyielding to change, the understanding of the other is as well. If the understanding of the self is harsh, uncaring and not generous to all the possibilities for being a person, the understanding of the other will show this. The great danger of doing injustice to the reality of the "other" does not come about through use of the self, but through lack of use of a full enough sense of self which, concomitantly, produces a stilted, artificial, limited, and unreal knowledge of others.

A growing body of anthropological and sociological literature critically examines the rhetorical conventions fieldworkers commonly use in their writing. According to this critique, fieldworkers must abandon the idea that they observe the activities of "subjects" "objectively" and use these data to build an authoritative account of a specific social world. Instead, ethnographers are encouraged to recognize the central role they play as participants in the setting and to attend more closely to the emotional and self-shaping aspects of the research experience. Thus, as a source of data, ethnographers also turn inward to their thoughts and feelings that are prompted by their fieldwork.

Certain structural and symbolic features of the human-animal relationship may affect the self-concepts and emotions of those who study it. For example, one of the principal reasons people choose to share their lives with animals is that they perceive an animal's response to a caretaker, unlike the responses of fellow humans, as uniquely simple, honest, loving, and undemanding. Kenneth Shapiro (1989) speaks of the canine-human relationship as premised on the person's viewing the dog as a unique individual with a distinct personality and history.

History informs the experience of a particular animal whether or not it can tell that history. Events in the life of an animal shape and even constitute him or her. . . . [My dog] is an individual in that he is not

constituted through and I do not live toward him as a species-specific behavioral repertoire or developmental sequence. More positively, he is an individual in that he is both subject to and subject of “true historical particulars.” . . . I cannot replace him, nor, ethically, can I “sacrifice” him for he is a unique individual being.

Features such as these often create strong bonds between owners and their pets and may also emotionally engage fieldworkers who study them. Indeed, it is often noted how quickly humans can feel and show strong emotions for new animals they encounter, and that these feelings are sometimes as intense if not stronger than those felt for humans. We should, then, report and analyze these feelings, should they occur, just as other ethnographers commonly report their emotional involvements with their human informants (e.g., Ellis and Flaherty 1992; Johnson 1975, 155–160; Krieger 1985; Whyte 1955, 288–298).

We believe that these emotions — whether positive or negative — offer fieldworkers a unique opportunity for discovery. Ethnographers can learn an invaluable lesson about the nature of social relationships between animals and people by examining feelings prompted in themselves when in the field. These confrontations with emotion help to bring home, in a very direct way, the close connection between knowing one’s self and knowing the social world (cf. Gouldner 1970, 493–495).

In his own research, Sanders often found that feelings of delight, love, and fascination went well beyond the conventional pleasure of discovery he knew in his prior fieldwork. Here, for example, is an excerpt from Sanders’ fieldnotes at the end of a day in which he had participated in, and been deeply touched by, the euthanasia of three aged companion animals in the veterinary clinic. The joy of encountering new life overrode the experience of death and **loss**.

They anesthetize Pat’s shepherd in preparation for the caesarian. I help carry her into the surgery where we place her on her back propped **up** with a plastic brace. As Martha, Jim, and Linda stand by with towels, Martin makes a large incision and pulls out what looks to be a long, thick, lumpy length of translucent intestine. He

slits it and pulls out a tiny puppy and strips it out of the placenta. He hands it to Linda who puts a rubber bulb in its tiny mouth and sucks out fluid. Then she starts to rub it furiously. Then she holds the puppy's head down and swings it between her legs in a kind of hiking motion (I have been told that the centrifugal force of this move pulls more fluid out of the puppy's lungs). I stand with her as she resumes rubbing — trying to stimulate the puppy to draw its first breath. I am offering the little runty creature—eyes tight shut, wrinkled forehead and muzzle (Martha remarks at one point that the pups look like little manatees)—words of encouragement. Finally, the baby lets out a squeak and begins to move its limbs. We cheer. The same procedure is carried out successfully with two more puppies—two females and one male. The babies are put in a cardboard box in a pile with a heat lamp over it. Jim tells me that they are put in a pile like this because their mutual movements stimulate them. I am very moved. I realize this is a routine event for the rest of the people here, but to me it seems as if these little dead things have been brought back to life. I feel high.

Of course, the human ambivalence toward animals means that researchers may witness actions that leave them feeling uneasy, troubled, or sad. This is especially so when other humans are callous or just indifferent toward animals. At these times, researchers may engage in the same “emotion work” (C. Ellis 1991, 38–43; Hochschild 1983) that the observed do in order to understand their perspective toward animals and how that perspective is influenced by situational norms.

Arluke experienced this in his work on animal researchers. By taking the role of the (human) other, he occasionally found himself acting toward lab animals in ways that mimicked the behavior of those he studied. While this behavior was not blatantly cruel or even neglectful, for the most part, it was often high objectifying, at times involving treatment of the animals as though they did not exist. Caught up in the laboratory's definition of the situation, there were moments when he performed prosaic experiments on rodents. This participation, however, proved unsettling especially when he was away from the lab. Much like Stanley Milgram's (1974) subjects, he