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Puffins, The Charismatic Clowns Of The Sea: Examining The Relationship Between Community Identity And The Social Construction Of Animals

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by
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Abstract

This study analyzes the factors, internal and external, that affect the relationship between community identity and the social construction of animals, and the ways in which that social construction impacts the environment. Studied through the lens of the relationship between Atlantic Puffins and the human communities they live near, these questions situate our understanding of human societies as within, as opposed to above, the environment. Without this perspective, enacting environmental protections across the globe is ineffective. The study was conducted using ethnographic methods, including 11 formal interviews with community members and experts, along with observations in Iceland and Canada. Results indicate that human/animal relationships are interwoven with local cultures and social structures, so that models and definitions of conservation have to be based on the local context.

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Chapter 1: Introduction — Tóti the Puffin: A Cultural Icon

As I headed out to conduct research on Vestmannaeyjar — an Icelandic archipelago known for its geologic formations, golf course, and migratory seabirds — my last stop was Grímsey Island. Located off of the northern shore, the island is approximately a two-hour ferry ride from Akureyri, the largest city in northern Iceland. It was here on Grímsey Island that I saw my first puffin. I was at the tail end of a two-week trip around the entire country of Iceland — during which I never slept in the same bed for more than two nights — so the very fact that I *willingly chose* to go on a sunrise hike speaks to the magic of the island.

I was so taken with the view from the Icelandic cliffside that I almost missed the small bird sitting 10 feet away from me. Lying down, it looked like a football with feathers; standing up puffins are approximately 10 inches tall with white feathers on their stomachs and black feathers on their bac, almost like a miniature penguin. The puffin never moved or made a sound, and neither did I — I was entirely entranced by the bird. At this point I already knew that I was planning on spending the next month studying the relationship between humans and puffins on Heimaey Island, and my excitement grew as I sat there. I was experiencing first-hand the impact that these small birds can have on a person. It is important to note that there are three different species of puffins — the Atlantic, Tufted, and Horned — and while I simply refer to "puffins" throughout this piece, I am always discussing the Atlantic puffin.

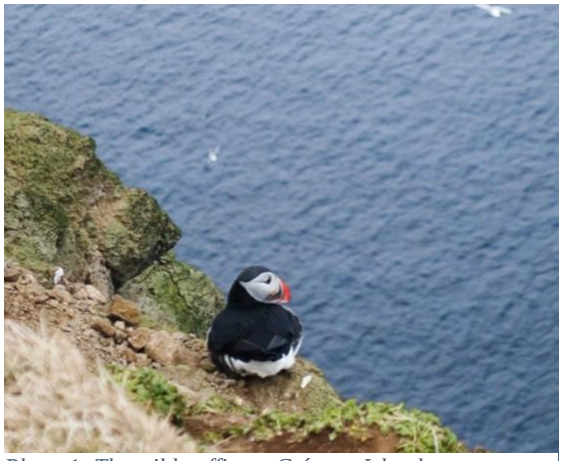

Photo 1: The wild puffin on Grímsey Island (source: Photo by Megan Tuennerman)

When I finally pulled myself away from the waves and the puffin, I walked back to the hostel where I was staying. Along the way back, I ran into my fellow college students playing football (or soccer, to American students like myself). As I was standing and chatting, a stranger walked over — a man around our age, but whom we did not know. As this was a small island with approximately 60 year-round residents, it was not surprising that the presence of our group of 20 college students on the island did not go unnoticed. As I was not playing in the game, I chatted with the man who introduced himself as Bjólan. He had grown up on the island and was working on fishing boats that took him across the world.

Through our conversation it came up that my next stop was Heimaey, and I asked if he had ever been. His response was quick, and he told me about going on a fieldtrip there when he was younger and getting to meet Tóti. I asked him who Tóti was, expecting to be told of a famous Icelandic musician or actor instead I was told that Tóti was a puffin. Bjólan incredulously explained to me that everyone knows of Tóti the puffin who follows people around the aquarium. Only in Iceland is the famous icon a puffin.

Although by this time Tóti had already been gone for a few years, the people of Heimaey spoke of Tóti with the same love and appreciation as Bjólan. I heard stories of Tóti sitting on shoulders and making people laugh. I also heard stories of Tóti wearing his own football jersey and “playing” soccer — fitting, as I learned about him for the first time while watching humans playing soccer. Without trying, I had gotten my first insight into the relationship between Icelanders and puffins — Tóti the puffin was inarguably a cultural icon.

Although Tóti was just one small bird, this anecdote stuck with me as I ventured on towards my research in Vestmannaeyjar. Ultimately, this experience prompted me to question the ways that human societies are impacted by their relationships with animals, and vice versa.

What are the implications of a puffin serving as a cultural icon across a nation, and what can we learn from studying the relationship? I had experienced first-hand the impact that a singular wild puffin can have on a person, and so it was a logical extension for me to investigate the impact that puffins had on society as a whole in Heimaey.

Across the globe we see different relationships with nature — some relationships are ones of mutual aid while others are not. Nearly every human society is impacted by, and has direct impact on, a species of animal, and yet, the relationship between humans and animals is rarely researched. What can we learn from an analysis of the different interactions that cultures across the globe have with animals? Before we can begin to speculate on what can be learned from human/animal relationships though, first we must analyze the way in which said relationships are formed. In this work, I will expand upon these ideas and analyze the factors, internal and external, that affect the relationship between community identity and the social construction of animals, and the ways in which that social construction impacts the environment.

OUTLINE

When conservation is understood from a human-centric perspective, it is almost as if we humans are not allowed to enjoy our interactions with the wild — we must atone for the sins that we have committed in destroying wildlife and must pay for them by not enjoying a moment of rebuilding it. Fortress conservation, the primary contemporary conservation style in the United States, is a prime example of this idea — humans and nature must not touch, humans must not interfere with the ways of animals in any way as only harm will come and at the base of any human/nature interaction is human selfishness. I have even witnessed individuals who take care of animals and feel a need to emphasize that the fulfillment and joy they find in helping animals

is not their primary reason for doing the job. Fortress conservation has become so widespread that guilt is felt by people who experience joy from helping others.

That thought process is illogical for more reasons than can be explained quickly, and as such, I will focus on one issue: not all human communities have contributed equally to the destruction of the environment and not all interactions of humans/animals incur negative consequences for nature. This difference in impact on the environment is the result of many factors, but my research has focused on one: the impact of different communities' understandings of what conservation is. As is the case with many cultural ideas, it is easy for individuals to get caught up and believe that their culture's methods of conservation are the only "valid" methods, when in fact, that is not true.

Chapter two, "Defining the Separation between Humans and Animals," begins the process of analysis by discussing sociological theorists and the ways in which human society has been constructed specifically as different from nature. The works of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and George Mead are used to create a framework for understanding the way in which animals have historically been perceived in relation to human societies.

Chapter three, "Impact of Othering on Human/Animal Relationships," uses previous literature on human/animal relationships to expand and explain the ways in which historical views on human/animal relationships impact current day communities and nature. Recurring themes throughout literature include human superiority and the unifying abilities of animals.

Chapter four, "Methods," explains the ethnographic methods I utilized to conduct this project, focusing on interviews and participant observation in Heimaey, Iceland and Newfoundland, Canada. Working from a grounded theory perspective, the interviews and

participant observation conducted directly impacted the research, helping to guide the researcher in focusing on the ideas deemed important by participants.

Chapter five “Results,” combines historical theory with contemporary findings and analyzes the conservation methods and relationships that the two previously mentioned communities have with puffins. The external and internal factors that impact the relationship between the communities and puffins were analyzed. Findings surround the themes of tradition and the impacts of change on those traditions, as well as on the joy that unifies the communities in relationship to the puffins.

Chapter six “Conclusion,” expands the findings out to a broader societal context and analyzes the ways in which acceptance of a multitude of different relationships between humans and animals, directly links to a myriad of conservation methods, and can lead to numerous societal benefits.

Chapter 2: Defining the Separation Between Human And Animals

In order to understand the contemporary place of animals in societies we have to look back at historical attitudes towards animals. The theories of Marx, Durkheim, and Mead are all central to this analysis due to their professional devotion to understanding society during periods of transition. In different ways, all three theorists define human society by distinguishing humans from non-human animals, a key aspect to ensuing societal relationships with animals. More recently, theories such as post humanism provide the promise of shifting our understanding of the human-animal relationship.

Two questions guided this work: what do we already know about the relationship between humans and animals? What is the framework and the research thus far completed that discusses community/animal relationships?

Understanding the social construction of animals in a human societal context is vital to understanding the relationship in general. Greider and Garkovich (2010) focus on that specific idea as they describe that "(t)he open field is the same physical thing, but it carries multiple *symbolic* meanings that emanate from the values by which people define themselves" (p.1). Fields of land and animals may appear the same to all, but each society's symbolic relationship with nature is largely defined by individual and cultural understandings of our place within the world. Nature, and animals specifically, play a significant role in collective self-definition. In order to understand the relationship between communities, animals, and the environment first it must be clear what the purpose of the relationship is. For this study, mainly symbolic understandings of animals and the environment will prove important, but discussions of other constructions of animals appear as well. Depending on numerous societal factors, animals tend to

be viewed in relation to some combination of economic/political gain, national identity, and/or a broader way to understand ourselves. The ways in which the concept of animals is constructed to fit into our societies dictates largely how they are treated within those societies. Key to that construction is an often unquestioned bias — inadvertent anthropocentrism — that has shaped our assumptions about nature more broadly, and animals specifically.

Too frequently societal relationships to animals are only looked at in the contemporary setting, without recognition of the historical and traditional foundation of them and evaluation of the way in which those roots impact current relationships. Understanding the role of animals in society over time provides us with a larger and more well-rounded picture of human relationships more generally, as the change in our relation to animals matches a timeline of societal changes as well

MARX AND OTHERING

Although most canonical theorists in the field of sociology did not overtly write about environmentalism, most included discussions of animals — and human/animal relations — as part of their work, highlighting the vital ways in which animals and nature are integral to, and interwoven with, society. This inclusion of animals frames the way in which traditional understanding of society was based on understanding what society was *not.* Traditional theories inadvertently focus on answering the question: what leads to animals being defined as *not human*?

Historically, the foundational works of Western sociology —specifically Marxism — have contained unexamined and often unconscious anthropomorphism and species narcissism, — centering humans and othering animals. The result has been a common societal bias that leads to the consideration of animals solely in relation to humans rather than in their own right. This

bias is found throughout both sociological literature and societal practice and has implications of inequality throughout society.

Much of Western culture has attempted to solidify animals as the general "other" to compare humans to. This comparison works to heighten humanity's level in the human/nature hierarchy, not out of animosity towards animals per se, but for the benefit of humans. In addition, the comparison works as a means of uniting unique groups of people against a unified "other" that is not based on their societal standings. Perlo, a philosopher (2002) stated that "Marxism defines its key values in opposition to animals other than human in order to uphold the lowest common denominator of the human within European culture" (p. 1). This is a clear definition of the paradigm that is the start of this theoretical understanding — animals are a symbol of an other that individuals across socioeconomic, racial and gender divides can unite over. Othering animals is the beginning of a process that moves on to othering fellow humans that hold different beliefs. This is especially important as Marxism is one of the most well-known and interdisciplinary sociological theories, meaning that with its acceptance and use of othering, the concept is used across disciplines and generations. Thus, perpetuating this practice not only in terms of the relationships between animals and human communities but also within human society.

Humanity comforts itselfabout our suffering by saying "at least I am not suffering like the one below me"— the Bourgeois use the Proletariat, the Proletariat use slaves, and slaves use animals. Marx describes it as:

> [t]he labourer here [the slave] is, to use a striking expression of the ancients, distinguishable only as instrumentum vocale, from an animal as instrumentum semi-vocale, and from an implement as instrumentum mutum. But he himself takes care to let both beast and implement feel that he is none of them but is a man. He convinces himself with immense satisfaction, that he is a different being, by treating the one unmercifully and damaging the other con amore. (1887:140)

Marx here is suggesting how slaves, holding no standing in human society, make themselves feel better with the knowledge that they were in charge of these animals. The irony is that while Marx critiques this system here, he does not realize that he is also perpetuating this same thought process in his writings. As Perlo explains, this form of othering simply offers a "moral ground floor for the lowliest humans," and that "[t]he behavior of the slave parallels the ideological violence done to animals by Marxism on behalf of oppressed human beings" (2002:304). Perlo is highlighting the fact that while Marx may condemn the treatment of humans in this way, he does not condemn or even seem to notice when animals are used in that same way. The lack of awareness towards this treatment of animals is paramount when considering the relationship of animals in human society.

By othering animals in this way, we are allowing othering to exist as a morally acceptable practice. Perlo goes so far as to emphasize how "the more tears Marxists shed for the child laborer, the more indignation they feel at any shed for the veal calf" (2002:1), as if it was impossible to shed tears for both at the same time. This parallels the way in which those of a lower socio-economic class are othered by those of higher socioeconomic class — like the under and working classes are made to blame each other, the working class is made to blame animals for taking away resources that may help them. Perlo describes how the laboring class views animal rights as a middle-class cause supported by rich people, as it has been presented as such by those of the upper class. But what is not seen by the laborers is how our society has placed animals on the same level as themselves (Perlo 2002: 311).

The way in which this hierarchy of humans above animals was reached is important when analyzing changes in human/animal relationships as it impacts the perceived morality of interactions with animals, and thus must be understood. Often it is assumed that the hierarchy is

reached via an emphasis on animals as lesser, when in truth, the focus is most often on the superiority of humans. This point is highlighted by one of the most analyzed and quoted statements from Marx dealing with animal rights:

> A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realizes a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will. And this subordination is no mere momentary act. (1887:127)

Those who feel that Marx is a symbol for animal rights movements read this quote as an example of the unity seen by Marx between humans and animals (Foster and Clark 2018:7), but it can also be seen as looking down on animals for a lack of foresight. Arguably it is neither, as a species-narcissist Marx is purely marveling at the wonder that is humankind's ability to imagine before they construct. He does not make a solid argument of proof as to how we know that bees and spiders do not have the same kind of planning as us, as for him, they are simply a sidenote, unimportant compared to the main focus that is man. The very fact that this quote is commonly analyzed and discussed, accepted as truth and not questioned for its comparison to animals, highlights the way in which species narcissism is the societal norm.

Perlo (2002) quotes Marx twice in ways that highlight his feelings of superiority over animals:

> 1. We are not now dealing with those primitive instinctive forms of labor that remind us of the *mere* animal. We presuppose labor in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. (177, 178, emphasis added) (2002:305)
>
> 2. In his consciousness of species man confirms his real social life and simply repeats his real existence in thought, just as conversely the being of the species

> confirms itself in species-consciousness and exists for itself in its generality as a thinking being. (Marx, quoted in Parsons, 1977: 212, 213) (Perlo:305)

Through both of these quotes, Perlo explains that a mutually exclusive definition of animals and humans by Marx is necessary in order for him to achieve his goal of proving human superiority. Perlo directly states in reference to the second quote, "Animals are not mentioned, but their status as negative foil is implicit in the concept" (2002:305). This touches again on reading between the lines of Marx's work and establishing that animals are indirectly being degraded by Marx through conversations of human superiority as well as evoking othering and continuing the implicit thought process of defining animals by what makes them not human.

The extent to which the humanization of nature is important to Marx is explained by Benton (1993) as he states that Marx feels that "[n]ature, it seems, is an acceptable partner for humanity only in so far as it has been divested of all that constitutes as otherness in so far in other words as it has become itself human" (p. 31). The fact that Marx feels that nature must be changed to reflect human creative intelligence, and that it is acceptable to humans only once those changes have been made, creates a perfect picture of the superior place that man deserves to hold over all things. It also establishes a framework for understanding the way in which society treats animals and nature — they/it are primarily there for our use.

Regarding speciesism (a version of anthropocentrism), Wolfe (2009), professor of English and a leader in posthumanist studies, further explains this idea, stating that "(t)his framework, like its cognates, involves systematic discrimination against an other based solely on a generic characteristic — in this case, species" (p. 1). In order to define and defend that the "other" is indeed *other,* and thus can be treated differently, it must be given specific *different* characteristics or lack thereof. In his evaluation of Marx, Elster (1985) explains how the characteristics deemed fundamental to the distinction between man and animal by Marx are "(i)

self-consciousness, (ii) intentionality, (iii) language, (iv) tool using, (v) tool making and (vi) cooperation" (p. 62). Elster has realized that throughout Marx's works, (primarily *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Capital I,* and *The German Ideology*) he makes clear that since humans have self-consciousness, intentionality, language, tool use and tool making abilities, and cooperation, they are not only different from, but superior to, other animals. Marx offers no biological evidence there, he simply asserts human superiority.

Specifically paying attention to tool use as a distinguishing factor in determining the hierarchy, Marx (1887) discusses Benjamin Franklin's description of humans as a tool-making animal and agrees that our tool use makes us unique and superior as "[t]he use and fabrication of instruments of labour, although existing in the germ among certain species of animals, is specifically characteristic of the human labour-process" (p. 128). Marx's works never even acknowledge or consider the idea that maybe the fact that humans need tools makes us inferior. This lack of consideration, and immediate assumption that tools define superiority, show Marx's unwavering feelings that humans, and our ways, are superior. In addition, it highlights the ways in which animals are mainly defined by ways they are not human. Especially when considering Elster's point that tool use is not necessary to show high levels of cognition since intentionality can be shown in other ways (1985:65). In his evaluation of humans and animals, Marx is only considering one way of thinking — the human way — and forgetting that evolution and advancement has different forms for every species. As we will see there, are many animals that do utilize tools, and in fact, today those animals are praised by society for that characteristic.

DURKHEIM AND THE HOMO DUPLEX

Like Marx, Durkheim explains animals in society as lesser through his theory of the homo duplex; the theory is largely explained in his book *The Dualism of Human Nature*

originally published in 1915 and highlighting civilization, body/soul, morality, and sorrow as the traits that separate humans from animals. As one of his last works, it is lesser known but vital to understanding the anthropocentric views that permeate all of his theories. It is in the connection of four quotes from his work that Durkheim's anthropocentrism is seen. To begin, Durkheim states that:

> ...in another aspect, it is civilization that has made man into what he is; it is this that distinguishes him from the animal. Man is man only because he is civilized. To look for the causes and conditions on which civilization depends is therefore to look, as well, for the causes and conditions of what, in man, is most specifically human. (2005: 35)

Here, Durkheim is setting up his argument as he explains that civilization is the trait that separates man from animals. But what counts as civilization? Durkheim has rigged the definition so that animals can never accomplish "civilization" because his explanation is that civilization is defined as "specifically human." Again we see circular reasoning, humans are unique because of civilization and civilization explains why humans are unique.

Next, Durkheim explains the duality that exists in human nature between body and soul:

> This distinctive feature is the constitutional duality of human nature. At all times, man himself has had a keen sense of this duality. Everywhere, indeed, he has conceived of himself as formed of two radically heterogeneous beings: the body, on the one hand, the soul on the other. (2005: 36)

This duality, according to Durkheim, is another uniquely human trait that explains human superiority. Combining the idea behind these two quotes, civilization represents human nature, and human nature is the duality between the body and the soul. Both of these are traits that are uniquely human, and as such, not only can animals not have civilization, it is also implied that animals do not have souls —without an understanding of duality, animals cannot have both body and soul.

Following those thoughts, Durkheim explores the relationship between personal needs and morality:

> Our sensory appetites are necessarily egoistic; they are concerned with our individuality and with it alone. When we satisfy our hunger, thirst, etc., without any other tendency in play, it is ourselves and ourselves alone that we satisfy. Moral activity, on the contrary, is recognizable by the sign that the rules of conduct to which it conforms are open to universalization; it pursues, then, by definition, impersonal ends. (2005: 36)

Here, Durkheim is discussing another uniquely human trait: morality. He explains that our senses fulfill our personal needs, while our morality is what cares for others. Adding this into our understanding, the body fulfills our personal needs, while the soul fulfills the needs of our society. All of this is to say that animals do not have a moral obligation to others, because they do not have a soul, and without those aspects, animals do not have society.

Finally, Durkheim delves into the idea of suffering:

> Our joys can never be pure; there is always some pain mixed in with them, since we cannot simultaneously satisfy the two beings within us. It is this disagreement, this perpetual division against ourselves that forms both our grandeur and our wretchedness: our wretchedness, since we are thus condemned to live in suffering; our grandeur also, since it is this that distinguishes us among all beings. The animal takes its pleasure in a unilateral, exclusive movement: man alone is obliged, as a matter of course, to give suffering a place in his life. (2005: 38)

Suffering, according to Durkheim, is explained by our duality — our ability to have body and soul, to care for ourselves and others. Without this clash of priorities within us, there would be no suffering or sorrow, but this suffering is also beautiful as it is what elevates humans above all else. Suffering is a unique part of civilization, we create myths and institutions to deal with our sorrow, and so, without civilization, we could not handle sorrow. Like Marx, here Durkheim is asserting ideas on the abilities of animals without scientific basis, yet we know that animals do in fact exhibit multiple of these traits and, as will be discussed in my findings, the exhibit of traits such as morality are what endear humans to animals.

For Durkheim, civilization is the foundation that sets humans apart and relies of the duality of body/soul; the duality of body/soul allows humans to have a sense of morality; morality allows humans to feel sorrow; sorrow can only be coped with through civilization, and thus returning to civilization as a uniquely human trait. The inability of animals to have civilization disqualifies them from all of these traits — and sets them as inferior to humans by human standards. Durkheim has created a web of traits that define humans that cannot be accomplished by any other organism because of its reflexive nature and specificity to humans, thus making it distinctly anthropocentric.

Ross (2016), criticizes this anthropocentric feature of Durkheim from a biocentric view writing that "(t)he homo duplex is simultaneously a working model of humanity and an anthropocentric, ontological device to set mankind apart from nature. The homo duplex is essentially the logical continuation of the aforementioned 'metaphysical dualism' (Purser et al. 1995:1057) elevating humanity from nature found throughout classical Western philosophy" (2005: 21). Here Ross makes a vital point: Durkheim uses the Homo Duplex as a means of placing humans above nature. Nature, following Durkheim's point of view, involves not only plants but animals as well, ultimately, anything living that is not human. Since animals lack the four human attributes mentioned above they are bound up with nature, which Western philosophy has treated as subordinate to humanity. This is an important idea because, as Durkheim is a foundational sociologist, the discipline of sociology is based on one group being in charge and above another group — an idea that is also the basis of inequality. Ross emphasizes the importance of this relationship through noting that this elevation of humans over other animals is not unique — for much of history women, slaves, blacks and the disabled have been placed below white land-owning men (2005:19). This is a clear example of how the

"inconsequential" othering of animals not only impacts how humans and animals interact but also human society.

Building upon that idea, Järvikoski (1996) states that "Durkheim concludes that an animal is almost completely dependent on the physical environment, which for human beings, particularly in developed societies, social factors become more important than biological or physical factors" (p. 80). This conclusion brings up issues of the development of societies and the question of whether developed societies are more human than developing societies, a hierarchical evaluation best seen in the concept of first and third world societies. In this statement, it is inadvertently implied that undeveloped societies live like animals, as animals are dependent on the physical environment and only developed societies place an importance on social factors. This assumes that developed societies are not impacted by the physical environment, something that we are all too aware is untrue in this age of climate change. Järvikoski also reminds readers that early humans (Neanderthals) did not possess language but still shared culture among themselves (1996: 76). In many ways Neanderthals also were completely dependent on the physical environment, yet we still consider them humans; Neanderthals did not display the homo duplex but are not considered lesser in the same way as animals. Thus we see, yet again, that the definitions of human and animals are far less fixed than theorists have asserted and are more a result of "othering" than of scientific or biological fact.

MEAD AND SIGNIFICANT SYMBOLS

Another place where "proof" of human superiority and differentiation from animals and nature is highlighted is our ability to use significant symbols, as described by Mead. This is most evident in his book *Mind, Self, and Society* originally published in 1934 (2015) and specifically in his theory of symbolic interactionism. The basis of this theory is that humans understand the

world not only through language, but also through the use of symbols to identify and understand the world. There are many examples of inadvertent anthropocentrism in Mead's work, but to demonstrate the idea I will focus on a section in chapter 16, "Mind and the Symbol." In this chapter Mead explains the way that humans use symbols to make sense of the world, with an example being the way in which a bear's footprint is a symbol of a bear, and thus incites fear, not because we are afraid of the footprint itself but rather because we are afraid of what the footprint symbolizes (2015: 121). This ability to select characteristics of things, differentiate between meanings and then make a choice is uniquely human according to Mead and is explained in a story of a man and a dog both trying to cross a chasm:

> The dog and the man would both try to find a point where they could cross. But what the man could do that the dog could not would be to note that the sides of the chasm seem to be approaching each other in one direction. He picks out the best places to try, and that approach which he indicates to himself determines the way in which he is going to go. If the dog saw at a distance a narrow place he would run to it, but probably he would not be affected by the gradual approach which the human individual symbolically could indicate to himself. (2015: 122)

The idea that humans can use symbols in ways that animals cannot is not inaccurate and human-centric in and of itself, as long as there is factual evidence to back that up though Mead offers no scientific evidence to back this up and indeed scientists would suggest otherwise. The larger issue at hand is that Mead is using the comparison of the way that the dog would decide to cross the chasm with how the human decides to cross the chasm, to establish a hierarchy, with humans at the top, based on unequal evaluation. Neither Mead, nor most readers, stop to evaluate the idea that while dogs may see the world differently, that does not inherently make them less intelligent.

Mead has a significant emphasis on language as a separating factor between humans and animals, yet never does he stop to contemplate if animals have a language of their own. After

explaining the way that the word “horse” creates a set of responses in humans (mounting, buying, selling, and so forth) and that the word itself is worked into the reaction as well, Mead states that “(w)e find that same sort of organization seemingly extended in the conduct of animals lower than man; those processes which go to make up our objects must be present in the animals themselves who have not the use of language. It is, of course, the great value, or one of the great values, of language that it does give us control over this organization of the act.” (2015: 13). Here, Mead accepts that animals may have the same organizational pattern as humans for identifying objects, but is quick to deny that this could be the result of a form of language, as it is in humans.

Looking at both sections of Mead’s work that have been analyzed we see two different aspects of anthropocentric thoughts. In the first quote, Mead is acknowledging that dogs and humans share an ability to both cross the chasm but he is establishing a hierarchy. In the second quote, Mead is making an absolute distinction — humans have language and animals do not.

We can follow this thought on the effects of othering to the logical end, thus seeing a very plausible example of how this problem could evolve. As stated, Mead uses language as a delineating factor between humans and animals. Animals do not communicate with language as humans do and therefore are lesser. But, among humankind there are thousands of methods of communication — which is the “superior” method? If communication is a characteristic of othering, then there is a basis for nearly every society in the world to look down upon other societies based on their linguistic skills. If one reads Mead’s point as spoken language is superior to animal communication (as spoken language is more complicated and not simply “instinctual”) then the people who are able to be othered using this same logic are non-verbal humans — sign language, for example, does not count as the language of “superior” humans. Evidence of this is

given by Ross (2016) in his analysis of Durkheim, explaining that "the deaf were placed especially low in the Aristotelian hierarchy because the ancient Greeks linked verbal communication with intelligence and value. Muteness, in particular, consisted of a combination of several conditions now commonly known as mental illness, autism, and learning disabilities—all conditions associated with reduced worth (Edwards 1997)" (2016:19). Today, discrimination against non-verbal individuals is widely viewed as unacceptable, so what makes discrimination of non-verbal animals acceptable? As long as discrimination against non-verbal animals is allowed (regardless of their abilities to communicate in other ways including, in some cases, symbolic interactionism), there will always be people who feel that discrimination against any living organism that is non-verbal is acceptable.

This argument has been constructed so that in order to prove Mead wrong, one must not only prove the hierarchy incorrect, but also prove that animals have language. This is complex, as our first thought of proving that anthropocentrism is prevalent in his writing would be to prove that animals have language, but that is buying into the bias that humans are the standard by which other animals should be measured – that somehow a lack of human language makes them inferior. To really get outside of Mead, and basing our understanding of animals on how they are not human, we need to stop viewing humans as the measure of ability. Altogether, this creates an idea of anthropocentrism that is deeply ingrained in society and that judges animals by human standards, making it impossible for them to be seen as equals. The way out of this inadvertent anthropocentrism is to recognize the implicit bias and reorder our thinking.

It is not surprising that anthropocentrism permeates traditional writings because, as stated, society is so heavily anthropocentric that another way of thinking never would have occurred to many traditional scholars. Young and Thompson (2013) in their work "The Selves of

Other Animals: Reconsidering Mead in Light of Multi-disciplinary Evidence" support this idea stating that "(f)rom the point of view of sociology, the primary impediment to understanding animal selfhood is not, we would argue, anthropomorphism but anthropocentrism" (p. 5). The issue is not that we do not understand animals because we are attempting to make them like humans (i.e., anthropomorphism), but rather that we are not giving ourselves the opportunity to see animals as anything but inferior because they are different from humans. In addition to Young and Thompson's writing on the matter, Irvine (2007) states that "the game has been rigged from the start. It is not about biological, social, or psychological deficiencies that prevent the acknowledgement of animal selfhood; it is anthropocentrism, or the belief that all things should be judged in relation to humans" (p. 11), while Sanders (1999) states it simply that "(n)ot thinking like humans is *not* not thinking" (p. 125). Animals have been used as a comparison to humans to emphasize our intelligence from the start, but implying that animals are inferior to humans because they do not view the world in the same way as us, is the same as implying that a fish is less skilled than a squirrel in terms of climbing a tree, and thus the squirrel is superior in every way. The problem is not that Mead and others think that animals and humans are different, the problem is that animals are measured by hierarchical, human based standards and this leads to othering, discrimination and a failure to see even humans clearly.

Many individuals dismiss animal rights work as worthy of only secondary importance, but it is clear how animal rights equate directly to human rights "because the discourse of speciesism, once anchored in this material, institutional base, can be used to mark any social other, we need to understand that the ethical and philosophical urgency of confronting the institution of speciesism and crafting a posthumanist theory of the subject has nothing to do with whether you like animals"(Wolfe 2009:7). To reiterate that simply: animal rights affect human

lives just as much as they affect animal lives, and misguided animal rights campaigns based on misunderstood cultural differences can cause significant social issues.

CONCLUSION

This acceptance of the flaws in traditional sociological theories has implications to both the livelihood of animals and of people. The separation of humans and animals has long-term impacts on how humans and animals interact and those interactions directly impact environmental action.

Ultimately, humans have created our own paradox — we have destroyed ecosystems and eliminated species because of our human-first attitudes and lack of foresight. Now we find ourselves wanting to right those wrongs, but can we? We see how the long-term othering of animals and nature has not only affected the animals/nature in question but also has deeply woven itself into the workings of western cultures. Are these same ideas represented in cultures around the world? And if they are not, what can we learn from the differences in how cultures define humans/animals? What are examples, if any, of cultures that have a mutually beneficial relationship between humans/animals? These are questions that must be answered, and will be addressed in the remainder of this work as we look at specific case studies on human/animal relationships

Chapter 3: Impacts of Human/Animal Relationships

Traditional understandings of human society have been based on defining what makes humans unique; the flip side of that is that animals have been defined by the ways in which they are not human. Understanding the effect that the comparison of humans and animals has on human/animal relationships is imperative to understanding the impacts of human/animal relationships on society. Historically, animals have played specific roles in human society, namely as entities to enforce superiority and control over, and more recently, as creators of unity and identity within a community.

OTHERING, HUMAN SUPERIORITY, CONTROL AND INTER-CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

The themes of control and domination are seen broadly in sociological literature relating to human/animal relationships — gender stereotypes, racialization and the practice of othering are all ways in which individuals in societies assert dominance. Since animals are living beings, they function in society as another vessel for individuals to assert dominance. It is important to understand how many relationships with animals are based on very racist, classist, and sexist ideas and in fact, in many ways animals are used as a method of normalizing these practices. Our control and domination over animals not only dictates how we care for and envision animals, but also directly leads to control and domination among humans. This concept reappears as a general overarching theme throughout human/animal relationships and will appear throughout this work in a multitude of ways.

Looking back through the years, animals have long been used by humans for specific purposes — Roman gladiators used animals in fights, animals have been creatures of worship and sacrifice for religious purposes, and animals are often used as mascots for sports,

representing a dominance and power beyond humans. The irony here is that animals also are seen as the "subject" to human "masters," and are used as a method of othering "lesser" humans. The fact that animals are simultaneously depicted as strong and powerful, yet also inferior to humans, highlights the way in which societies shape their understandings of animals to encourage a sense of superiority and power.

While not commonly viewed through this lens, one specific place that highlights this theme is zoos. As Anderson (1995) shows, animals in zoos act as a symbol for "nature," and the important part of that is that they are a symbol we can control (p. 3). The creation of enclosures provides a sense of nature that has been carefully cultivated for human enjoyment. One of our mostly common practices associated with animals are zoos: a place of economic gain, something that will be discussed below — a direct embodiment of nature contributing to the economy. That being said, the one of the only moral ways for zoos to exist is with the foundation of species narcissism where animals are viewed as less intelligent. Simply put, species narcissism is a worldview that disregards animals as potential competition to humans; this worldview is commonly held by individuals without conscious recognition of that fact — this is helped in part by the fact that foundational scholars from which we have learned mostly hold and teach this view.

In a different article, Anderson (1997) also discusses the ways in which the domestication of animals can be compared to colonization (p. 473). Domestication of animals showed that humans were above "animalistic instinct" and were in control of themselves and the world around them (1997: 472). In truth, domestication is a social symbolic process. The ultimate control is shaping animals to embody human ideals. An example of this can be seen in the way

wolves are villainized but dogs are championed and loved — humans love what we can control and shape to our desires (1997:478).

The theme of specifically masculine control appears as Emel (1995) discusses the ways in which the eradication of wolves was fueled by masculine stereotypes and the idea that sympathy for the wolves was weak. This went so far that the motto that wolf eradication in the U.S.A. was "by any and all means," highlighting how the eradication of wolves, and the display of power that presented, was more important than the lives of any other animals that may be caught in the crossfire (1995: 99). Emel discusses feminist writers who also "Saw the congruence of racism, sexism, classism, domination of nature, and use of animals" (1995: 91).

The curious aspect of this is that this sense of control and domination through the eradication of wolves also led to a sense of respect for the animals. In order for a kill to be worthy, the killer had to show some skill, some sense of mastery. After all, the perpetuation of the masculine stereotypes as well as the feeling of control over nature could only be accomplished if the wolf was a worthy adversary. This ability that humans possess to simultaneously hold multiple contradictory ideas of animals highlights the illogical aspects of othering — the "other" is simply a theoretical creation that society adjusts to fit our needs in that moment.

A clear example of changing definitions to fit our needs and the impacts of that change is found in the discussion of place-specific cultural identity by Lassiter, Griffith and Wolch's (2002). Their study of the Philippine practice of dog eating discusses the way in which misunderstanding cultural practices and attitudes can lead to misguided targeting of animal-rights campaigns. This piece analyzes the place-specific definitions of what is a companion

animal versus an animal that is eaten, specifically in regard to Philippine tradition. This place-specific definition epitomizes the way in which we define animals is culturally based.

The authors chose to conduct their research through the use of a small focus group with nine low-income, mostly native-born Filipina women who all lived in central Los Angeles. This choice of using a focus group is important because of the delicate nature of the topic at hand, namely dealing with issues of race/ethnicity. The majority of Los Angeles residents do not identify with the Philippine understanding of human/animal relationship, specifically the anthropocentric and utilitarian view of animals, and as such, do not accept the practice as valid. Interestingly, the racialization of Filipinas is accomplished through the use of animals, with people often referring to them as "monkeys" (p. 222). This is a fascinating dichotomy of the way that human/animal relationships are used — non-Filipinos use the Philippine tradition of dog-eating as an othering method and way to establish Filipinas as lesser, but also use the term "monkey" to degrade them, and so they are disrespecting animals in a different way.

Real-world impacts of othering are clear to see. Gunnthorsdottir discusses one such application in her study that finds that the physical attractiveness of an animal, as well as how human-like it appeared, greatly impacted respondents' drive to protect it (2015). This subconscious creation of a hierarchy of animals "worthy" of saving based on "ideal" human characteristics highlights how deeply othering is ingrained within us, as well as begins to brush the surface of the implications of the othering process. In addition, it shows the complexities that are involved in understanding the background of human/animal relationships.

Fine and Christofordies (1991) also discuss the implications of othering as they explore the link between invasive species and anti-immigration feelings in their work, thus also reflecting racial issues. In post-Civil War America, for example, a sense of nationalism and unification was

important for “true” Americanism and those feelings formed behind a hatred for the English Sparrow — simply because it was “English” and could function as a symbol for the country they just fought to leave. Interestingly, this anti-sparrow hatred went so far as to make it into laws as “The sparrow is one of the few songbirds not protected by Federal conservation legislation” (p. 378). The sparrow is still considered to be a nuisance by many, even though their qualities are not significantly different from other songbirds, highlighting the ways in which societal context is immensely important when considering present day interpretations of aspects of the environment around us. Also, the path between anti-immigration leading to a hatred of sparrows is not one way, as anti-sparrow feelings also led to increased anti-immigration ideals.

There is one more explanation for the use of human superiority over animals that must be examined in its influence on modern attitudes towards animals: economic gain. Marx’s perspective is one of dialectical materialism — the idea that the economy drives societies choices and conflicts. In relation to animals, dialectical materialism presents as humans viewing the worth of animals primarily on their economic worth.

One example of the application of this thinking can be found in Scarce’s (1997) work dealing with Pacific salmon, where he discusses the place of animals in the creation of status attainment and economic gain. Using comparative analysis of historical documents, interviews, and participant-observation, he found that societal pressures of economic gain influence whether animals are seen as for human use or as “natural.” By focusing on research biologists’ understanding and description of the Pacific salmon, Scarce found that there was a “case for more salmon research based on the fish’s political and economic importance. This only reinforces the place of the utilitarian construction,” (p. 124). Unlike other discussions of animal’s place in society, here Scarce is stating clearly that biologists do not see the fish as a symbol for

nature, but rather strictly with the utilitarian view that research on salmon brings economic gain. This relates to the place-specific cultural identity that animals play a role in, as each culture has different societal pressures and thus different definitions and uses for animals, be that symbolic or utilitarian.

UNITY AND IDENTITY WITH ANIMALS

In addition to the well-established use of animals to establish hierarchy, human society also identifies with specific animals as a method of unification. Othering is still very much present, but instead of utilizing that "other" as a symbol of something lesser, the "other" becomes simply a symbol to unite over. Animals unite societies in two completely opposite ways: through a connection in support of the animal and a connection in unified dislike of an animal. In both cases though, the fact that the animal is an "other" is important as it allows for humans to "morally" decide on the fate of the animals in question.

Both utilizations of the unification of animals can be understood through the lens of functionalism as described by Emile Durkheim — analyzing the way in which an aspect of society works. In this case, the aspect of society being understood is animal/human interactions. Animals work as a method of integration: bringing people together as a group.

One of the earliest and most well-known texts involving human-animal relationships is written by anthropologist Clifford Geertz's (1972). Through participant observation and interviews, Geertz is quick to establish that cockfighting is integral to the cultural identity of Balinese people, as well as the ways in which cockfighting represents masculinity. Both of those findings can be seen continually throughout future works and highlight a clear connection between humans and animals, as well as the ways in which animals affect entire communities.

Jerolmack (2007) advances Geertz's work in his piece while also showing the ways in which the human/animal relationship is strong enough that, even when removed from the original societal context, animals play a key role in identity. All 15 of Jerolmack's interview participants were Turkish men who lived in Berlin and were strongly involved in the community of domestic pigeon caretakers. Turkish tumbling pigeons are a unique species of pigeon that are known for their ability to tumble through the air, and for Jerolmack's participants, are intrinsically connected to the history and their understanding of Turkish culture.

Within the community of caretakers, the birds dictate social relationships. The coops are not only a place to care for the birds, but also are the place in which caretakers gather nightly, sharing tea and gossip. It was explained that Turkish men who do not care for pigeons often gather at teahouses, instead of coops. But, the ability to gather at pigeon coops gave caretakers a sense of heightened morality — they laid claim to a deeper and older connection to their homeland. The interviewees went as far as to describe keeping pigeons as "in the blood" emphasizing the immense role that the birds play in their cultural identity. The theme of masculinity being highlighted through animals also reappeared with the fact that every caretaker that was interviewed shared a story that their connection to pigeons was initiated by a male relative back in Turkey.

The pigeons not only allow for a deeper connection to Turkey, but to nature as well. Even though the coops were all in the city, one interviewee explained that he was so focused on the pigeons he did not see the buildings around him and thus, he was in nature. This highlights the theme that individual and societal connection to the environment is culturally defined. While an outsider may not view the coops as in nature, due to the function of the pigeon to the interviewee's cultural identity he defined the coop as part of nature. The definition of nature and

animal relationships are not unchanging, but rather is fluid and changes depending on the individual describing it. That same interviewee highlighted another theme as well: animals and religion. Part of the reason that these pigeons are so important is because they are protected by the prophet Muhammad. That being said, it is important to note that interviewees did not all self-identify caring for pigeons as a cultural activity. Participants connected the practice it directly to their homeland and an innate love for animals by all Turkish people, but did not define it amongst themselves as a significant cultural activity. This discrepancy is worthy of note as it highlights the juxtaposition of how individuals outside of a culture and those within define cultural activities differently in terms of their importance. Caring for pigeons was not seen by the participants as an immensely unique activity, as the majority of people in Turkey practiced it.

The fact that these pigeons are considered Turkish pigeons highlights Emel, Wilbert and Wolch's (2002) findings in their review of the field of animal geographers. In this article Elder et. al. consider the role of animals in the social construction of culture and "how animals and the networks in which they are enmeshed leave imprints on particular places, regions, and landscapes" (p. 409). The main takeaway from this piece is that place-specific breeds of domesticated animals are very specifically located in history and geographic place. This is important as it highlights the way in which domesticated animals also play a role in the place-specific cultural identity.

As mentioned, sometimes it is not the presence of an animal that is a unifying force, but the absence, as is the case in Alberta, Canada. McCumber (2021) used ethnographic interviews, archival data, and participant observation with Alberta's rat control program in his work that focused on the place of boundaries in sociology. Alberta claims to be the largest intentionally rat-free area in the world through systematic monitoring and governmental programs. The

importance of being rat-free is that it provides Alberta with the ability to create a clear delineation between their land and the land of their neighbors. One of the ways in which individuals are unified is through story-telling, and being able to tell the story of being rat-free is vital to Alberta. This absence of rats provides the people in Alberta a symbolic and physical boundary that is meaningful. The rats provide an "other" that the people of Alberta can agree upon, thus bonding them together against that other.

This narrative of rat-free and the unifying abilities of animals becomes more complex though when it is revealed that, unsurprisingly, Alberta is not as entirely rat-free as it sounds. In truth, at the border of Alberta there is a fluidity as rats are animals that reproduce quickly. Still, there is pride at the border surrounding being "rat-free" even if logically they know that is not 100% true. This highlights the way in which the symbolic aspect of animals or the lack thereof is more important for unification than distinct facts.

An interesting finding that is worthy of note is that individuals involved in the program who were interviewed mentioned a worry that people did not respect and support the program as much as in past years, even though being rat-free was still important. They attributed this change to the divide between rural Albertan life, which is where rats technically do get over the border and yet the belief in the program and being rat-free is clear, and the currently increasing urban population of Alberta.

A similar dichotomy between long-standing residents of an area and perceived newcomers also was important in Scarce's (2005) work involving the presence of wolves in Yellowstone. Similar to the rat-free Alberta, the need to protect farmland and livestock from wolves in Yellowstone created a sense of unity between neighbors. As "newcomers," as Scarce labeled them, bought land with the purpose of using it as "for-fee hunting", this unifying aspect

of the wolves disappeared. This suggests that the unifying aspects of animals is a learned trait and one passed down through generations.

Scarce's work with wolves in Yellowstone also exemplifies the extent to which communities largely define their environmentalism from within through the use of symbolic attributes, cultural expression, and with significant knowledge of the social context. Like previous literature, Scarce conducted his research through analysis of historical documents, interviews and participant observation. Written in the early 2000s, Scarce was conducting his research when wolves were being reintroduced into the Yellowstone area. "Oldtimers" could not understand why these animals, which were seen as a disease, were being brought back. It was the principle of reintroduction of the wolves that caused unrest among long-term residents. Residents claim that, if the wolves had been *reinvited* into the area, meaning that the wolves were encouraged to return but not transplanted there, their reactions would have been different. The principle of the reintroduction of the wolves as negative was maintained by old timers to such an extent that even when pro-wolf groups worked to provide compensation to the farmers whose livestock was harmed by the wolves, it did not make a difference. It was not about financial issues, although those issues were very serious, it was about ranchers' routines and way of life changing. This forced change of routine was truly less a direct response to the wolves themselves, but due to the fact that the forced reintroduction of wolves was a stand-in for governmental intervention.

In sum the "residents' constructions of the species in question… have a great deal to do with their reaction to any given management program: their resistance, acceptance, confusion, or ambivalence," all can be connected to their long-term traditional understanding of their connection to the land (p. 140)." While the old timers may appear from the outside to be anti-

environmentalism, as wolves are a keystone species which aid the health of the entire ecosystem, it is imperative to understand that they identify as environmentally aware and that "the meanings that residents give to plants, animals, and policies develop against a backdrop of social complexity," (p. 140). They live on the land and they maintain a connection to their land due to an intense love of the work.

CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDINGS OF NATURE AND THE ISSUES OF FORTRESS CONSERVATION

Current Eurocentric and Western (as those are also the perspective of the theorists discussed here) understandings of conservation and the relationship with animals and land is described as fortress conservation. This version of conservation began in the United States and spread across the world in the 19th century, making the term "conservation" synonymous with "without people" (Dowie: xvii). The U.S. Wilderness Act of 1964 perfectly encompasses the idea of fortress conservation as it defines wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain" (Dowie: xvi). This definition is important to understand because it functions as a clear example of how historical interactions with nature have evolved into the current relationships. 19th century conservationists recognized that humans in the U.S. had made mistakes and destroyed the environment, and so their response was to claim that *all* human interactions with nature are bad. This of course, is not accurate, and as part of understanding the relationship between humans and animals is keeping that U.S.-centric bias in check and recognizing that there are other forms of valid conservation.

It is imperative that as sociology continues to address and understand human/animal relationships that the place of cultural identity is respected. Due to the nature of animals and their place as sentient beings, it is easy for individuals to feel as if their understanding of animals in

relation to themselves, their culture, and nature is the only correct one. What has been made clear though is that idea is false — cultural identity is a key factor in every culture's definition of animals and nature.

Contemporary environmental writings show that the idea of fortress conservation is not being embraced by younger generations. In her piece "Post-nature Writing" Blair Braverman tells the story of a summer she spent as a nature guide in Aspen, Colorado. Braverman explains the struggle she faced that summer in showing tourists the beautiful valley which appeared "pristine" but actually was being destroyed by beetles. Within the story, she states that she was "an infant when Bill McKibbon declared in 1989 that humans had 'stepped over the threshold' to the end of nature, and nobody has ever apologized to me" (2016: 7). The apology she is referring to is an apology for creating a "threshold" so that people could not enter nature, and still nature falling apart. Braverman clearly expresses an understanding that the methods of previous naturalists, such as McKibbon, were *not* effective, and yet they have never acknowledged that fact.

POSTHUMANISM AND WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

The environment — land, animals, and general nature — bonds a community. Individuals living in the same geographic region experience the same weather events, face the same natural dangers, and interact with the same native animals. Over time, the traditions and understanding of how to live in a place work to connect generations of community. Even among individuals whose only similarity is the land on which they live, the environment works to connect.

One of the emerging theories used to understand this area is posthumanism, mentioned above by Wolfe (2009). Posthumanism is summarized by Wolfe (2003) as a theory that "calls into question the apparently obvious coherence of 'human nature' and aims to destabilize the

basic premises of human exceptionalism, i.e., the position that human beings are the most important species on the planet" (p. 52). Anthropocentrism is characterized as the establishment and maintenance of a rigid distinction between humans and other species, based on those species' lack of some trait or several traits that humans have (language, souls, civilization, suffering, morality…) and posthumanism aims to erase that distinction/boundary/border. Posthumanism covers a wide range of topics, from artificial intelligence to animals, but the main idea is, as Wolfe states, the acceptance and understanding that humans are not the only exceptional, untouchable species that we often consider ourselves to be.

Through exploring the "...boundary not just between human and animal but also between the living or organic and the mechanical or technical…" posthumanism reiterates the contradictions that human exceptionalism ultimately involves (Wolfe, 2009: xviii). The separation of early humans from animals is rife with contradictions — we accept Neanderthals as humans even though they did not use verbal language, yet we do not accept animals as humans, using their lack of non-verbal language as the reason. The boundary between human and artificial intelligence is the other side of the same coin; we do not consider artificial intelligence as human because it does not come from organic matter, but artificial intelligence shares the same intellectual capacity as humans. Mental capacity is the defining factor for animal recognition, but material is the defining factor for artificial intelligence. The fact that the definition of what constitutes human changes for each entity discussed is akin to changing the rules of a board game so that you always win. The issue with anthropocentric, humanistic thought is that it is based on an idea that it can never lose — it simply redefines "human" anytime something challenges its premise.

This same “redefinition” is what has been done by contemporary environmentalists in regard to what constitutes “wilderness” and what the best methods of “protecting” that wilderness is. As has been highlighted, the definition of animals and human/animal relationships differs greatly by culture. Posthumanism is beginning to recognize those differences and accept that differences in definitions are not bad or wrong.

IMPACTS IN ICELAND AND CANADA

Narrowing the analysis of human/animal relationships to studies done in Iceland and Canada, the locations that this study focuses on, the specific themes of tourism, hunting, conservation efforts and adaptation to change appear. The majority of the research on the societal traditions and importance of the puffin population on Heimaey focuses on tourism. Three students at the University of Iceland have conducted studies on this topic. Óskarsdóttir, G. (2014) researched the tradition of puffin hunting on the island through qualitative interviews, and found that current generations try to maintain and change in line with the changing society, while maintaining their traditions. Kolbeinsdóttir, K. Ó, & Davíðsdóttir, N. B. (2018) conducted ten semi-standard interviews, meaning interviews that had followed a general outline of questions but with deviations from the script, with residents of the Westman Islands with the goal of understanding the importance of puffins in terms of the tourism industry. This study found that there was room for growth of effective marketing of puffins. Jónsdóttir, Þ D. (2019) did similar work, conducting interviews with eight stakeholders in the tourism industry and found that the industry relies heavily on the puffins, but many companies are not taking action towards the conservation of the species. Together, these studies highlight the importance of tradition on the island, but also the importance of recognizing that tourism is a driving force of

economic growth for the town. What these studies do not discuss though, are ways of balancing traditions and tourism, while also doing what is best for the puffin population.

Bertulli, C., et al. (2016) analyzed the compatibility between whale watching and whale hunting in Iceland, thus connecting the idea of tradition versus tourism. The study was conducted through questionnaires being filled out by passengers aboard whale-watching vessels. This study challenged previous studies — i.e., Parsons & Rawles, 2003; Cunningham et al., 2012 — finding many whale-watching tourists would not boycott Iceland due to whaling activities. It is also worth noting that respondents noted that they visited Iceland mainly for some aspect of the environment, but also that interest in Icelandic culture was a factor.

As mentioned above, as a contradiction to Marx's distinction of animals from humans, a pertinent example of the use of tools by animals is highlighted in a study produced by scientists Fayet, Hansen, and Biro "Evidence of tool use in a seabird" (2019). The study documents Atlantic puffins in separate colonies utilizing sticks as tools to scratch themselves (1277). Not only was this study the first to show seabirds utilizing tools, it also garnered significant media attention — thus highlighting not only that animals do in fact use tools, but that human society is drawn to instances of animal tool use (Andrew, 2019; Guarino, 2019; Theisen, 2020)

Focusing more on the interaction of animals and conservation education, Bjærke, M. R. (2019) analyzed texts in Norwegian media that used animals as a bridge to connect readers to biodiversity loss. The study found that the narrative that was told by professionals varied based on the goal of the piece — depending on what the author was aiming to achieve, which species, which relationships and which issues were discussed varied. This piece begins to delve into the complexity of educating the public on environmental issues, specifically in regard to animals, and the many ways in which the truth can be told.

Focused in Canada, Wilhelm, S, et al. (2013) conducted a study that examined the work of the Puffin Patrol that works in the communities around the Witless Bay Seabird Ecological Reserve in Newfoundland, Canada where the two largest Atlantic Puffin colonies in North America stay. The researchers studied the environmental factors in their area that influence the light attraction of pufflings in coordination with weight data and information collected from their patrol. This study helps provide information of puffling patrols not in the Westman Islands, acting as a comparison for the culture around them. The study raises more questions than it answers, continuing the debate over the extent of impact that light pollution has on seabird populations.

These studies show that researcher assumptions on how tourists react to hunting, etc. are often not accurate. Given these studies of Iceland and Canada, it becomes apparent that not only are the relationships between humans/animals in these communities important, but also important are the individual *perceptions* of those relationships. These studies continue to reinforce the idea that cultural definition of animal related practices are vital to understanding the impacts of human/animal relationships.

Chapter 4: Methods

In order to understand the factors, internal and external, that affect the relationship between community identity and the social construction of animals, I conducted ethnographic research in two small island communities, functioning as case studies. This method was chosen due to the exploratory nature of the study and the emphasis on community involvement and opinions. Previously research on the relationship of animals and communities, for example Jerolmack's (2007) work on the importance of Turkish pigeons, was conducted in a nearly identical manner. A combination of interviews, formal and informal, and participant observation, provides researchers with the best possible opportunity to understand community relationships due to the open-ended nature of the data collection and opportunity for growth/change throughout the process.

This study focused on seabird populations, primarily Atlantic puffin colonies, around Heimaey, Iceland and Witless Bay, Newfoundland, Canada. Atlantic puffins are the focus of the study due to their prevalence in tourism literature and their recognizable attributes. In addition, Heimaey (population of approximately 4,000) and Witless Bay (population of approximately 1,600) are ideal as comparative case studies because they are both small island communities and are home to the only two large Atlantic puffin colonies in the world.

Due to the comparative case study format of research, and the use of grounded theory along with that, this project is high in validity but potentially lower in reliability. Threats to validity in this study present through the interview process — did the interview questions ask and measure what I believed they were? This was addressed through the

semi-standard format of interviews and allowing participants to guide the interviews based on what they felt was pertinent information. In addition, validity was increased due to the progression of my study — as is the case with grounded theory, I allowed my research to develop and progress as I conducted research; I did not plan to necessarily complete the case studies that I did from the beginning, I followed a natural progression of questions via participant observation and following the lead of participants. This method also allowed my participants to provide information that I, as an outsider, did not recognize as pertinent, and allowed for the information collected to be a more accurate representation of what the participants deemed vital.

The reliability slightly suffered at the expense of high validity in this study. Due to my positionality as an outsider in these communities, participants likely answered questions and discussed topics in a different way than they would have with a member of their community. In order to counter threats to reliability, I tried to speak to as many people as I was able to given time constraints to capture a variety of answers. To increase validity, I used participant observation and immersing myself within the cultures that I was studying to the best of my ability. This immersion was more in-depth in Iceland than Canada, due to time constraints.

ICELAND

The project began with a focus on the puffling patrol on Heimaey — the only inhabited island in the Vestmannaeyjar archipelago off the Southern coast of Iceland. The patrol is a specific example of community/animal interaction and thus was an ideal place to begin understanding the general connection between puffins and the community. I conducted eleven interviews with current and former residents of Heimaey, all of whom

had some connection to the Sea Life Trust Beluga Whale Sanctuary located on the island, and/or to the puffling patrol. My position on the island was tied to the sanctuary as I was volunteering with them in return for their help introducing me to participants. As native Icelanders are wary of outsiders, gaining the trust of the individuals at the sanctuary was paramount to reaching participants. That being said, utilizing the sanctuary as my gatekeeper led to potential positionality issues as participants required reassurance that this was not a study being done *for* the sanctuary and that I would not inform the sanctuary of any negative opinions the participants may have expressed towards the sanctuary.

Participants ranged in age from approximately 30 -70 years old, with a mix of professions, and involvement in puffin traditions on the island. I used a semi-purposeful sampling method, as I allowed the general manager of the sanctuary to suggest interviewees, as she knew the community. This method made the most sense as I was interested in interviewing people who were involved with the puffling patrol in some way, as they are the individuals who would have a deeper understanding of the origins of the patrol, and more importantly have opinions on its function in the community. My participants (with names changed for confidentiality) included:

- Alda — A resident of Heimaey since 1996, she moved to the island with her two horses. Today, she runs a business taking tourists and locals alike around the island on horseback.
- Gunnar — Born and raised on Heimaey, he works as a civil engineer on the island today. A passionate puffin hunter, he spoke of maintaining the tradition and teaching his children how to hunt when they are old enough.

- Einar — An Icelandic native who moved to the island in 2007. A well-known researcher, he was asked to work at the Knowledge Center on the island and study potential reasons for the decline in the puffin population.
- Helga — Born and raised on the island, she moved away briefly to attend university, where she studied to be a folklorist. She helps to run the puffling patrol social media page, as well as helps weigh and care for pufflings in need.
- María — The youngest participant, she was born and raised on the island. She has always participated in the puffling patrol as well as volunteered to help care for pufflings undergoing rehabilitation.
- Jón — A Heimaey native who was akin to the grandfather of the island. Full of stories and tall tales, you never knew what percentage of his stories were completely true, but it didn't matter because you were enthralled while listening to them. Jón knows the history of the island like the back of his hand, having lived through many of the island's historical events.
- Katrina — A U.S. native, she researches and cares for puffins. She comes to Heimaey during the puffling season every year to help care for birds in need of rehabilitation.
- Kristín — A native of Heimaey, she is vital to the formal puffling patrol, helping to organize and manage the social media and community aspects, as well as helping to care for the pufflings undergoing rehabilitation.

- Jóhanna — Not native to Iceland, she moved to Heimaey in 1978, soon after the eruption of the Eldfell volcano. She is known around town as someone who is always willing to take in and care for birds in need.

All the interviews took place during May of 2021 on Heimaey. The participants were able to choose a space that was most comfortable for them or I offered for interviews to be conducted in a quiet meeting room in the research center on the island. Some interviews were conducted via zoom due to distance. Regardless of place and method, all the interviews were conducted in quiet places where the participants felt at ease, as assumed through their choice of location. My consent form and questions (see appendix A and B) were developed with the help of professionals in the field, as well as reviewed by an institutional review board (Wooster's Human Subjects Research Committee.) In general, the interview method was semi-structured as I began with the same set of general questions, but allowed participants to focus on, and bring up, any ideas that were important to them. I chose this method to provide a base foundation for all interviews, but due to my position as an outsider, I wanted to make sure that the community members were able to express the opinions/experiences that were the most important to them.

In addition to formal interviews, I conducted informal participant observation through volunteering with the animal care staff at the sanctuary and taking up residence on the island for a month, observing the island's culture. This aspect of the study was meant to familiarize myself with the community in an effort to create more trust between myself and my interview participants, as well as get a personal understanding of the ways in which puffins appear in daily life on the island.

At the time of the study I had been in Iceland for approximately two months, and on Heimaey for two to three weeks. Multiple people mentioned to me that the fact that I spoke

English with an American accent identified me to local citizens as being an outsider. This aspect of my identity influenced my methods as far as it meant I had to first establish a place in the community; as well as having to analyze interviews while being actively aware that cultural differences could be at play.

Many of my participants were native Icelandic speakers, all spoke fluent English, but this language difference was another aspect of the interviews that I had to be aware of. Before any interviews were conducted, I met with an individual whose first language was Icelandic, but who also speaks English daily as part of their profession. This individual helped to format my interview questions in a way that individuals whose first language is Icelandic, and are fluent in English but do not use it every day, were most likely to understand. That individual determined that the consent form and questions were clear enough in English that translated versions were not necessary.

Although this is a low-risk study, there were, as always, ethical concerns to be aware of. The primary issue that I was cognizant of throughout the entire process was maintaining confidentiality for the participants. While my questions were not found to pose any personal risk, I was aware that there could be community stigma for participants who expressed honest but unpopular opinions. I worked to ensure that my participants felt secure in answering my questions honestly, with the knowledge that their names will not be shared in coordination with their responses.

The other concern to be aware of was my position in this community. Is it fair for an outsider to question traditions on the island? Through maintaining awareness of this question throughout the research process, and through meeting with almost all native Vestmannaeyjar

residents, I aimed to simply report their ideas without adding my outside opinion, and/or make clear when it is my opinion and not theirs.

NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

Throughout my time in Iceland I learned about another puffling patrol based in Witless Bay, Canada. Witless Bay is 22 miles outside of the larger city of St. Johns, Newfoundland (population approximately 114,000). I made the decision that completing a comparative case study would provide a larger and clearer picture of human/animal relationships across cultural boundaries and allow me to analyze similarities and differences.

I traveled to Newfoundland for 10 days. Due to the size of the towns, I had to stay in St. Johns and travel by car to Witless Bay. This impacted my study as the majority of my participant observation was conducted in the city of St. Johns, not Witless Bay directly. St. Johns is the base of tourism for the Eastern coast of Newfoundland though, and as such my research in Canada revolved largely around tourism.

I met with a wide variety of individuals in formal and informal settings. My sampling method was a mixture of snowball sampling and convenience. I began by interviewing individuals directly involved in running the puffling patrol in Witless Bay, and then through suggestions from participants, interviewed researchers, professors, and tourism industry professionals. In addition, I combined participant observation with informal interviews by asking shop owners and wait staff in St. Johns about their knowledge of the puffins in the area. My participants who I conducted formal interviews with (names changed for confidentiality) are:

- James — Owner of the first whale and puffin watching tour company in the St. Johns area, as well as a captain on the boats. He has experience releasing pufflings from his boats during tours.

- William — Owner of a different, newer, whale and puffin watching tour company in the St. Johns area. His company takes out smaller groups and has more of an emphasis on whales.

Through the use of these mixed methods of sampling I was able to gather a wide picture of the community interactions with seabirds, and puffins specifically, in the St. Johns/Witless Bay area. Since snowball sampling is notoriously problematic as far as finding a narrow set of participants, all with similar interests/feelings, the addition of my general participant observation helped to even that out. Similar to in Iceland though, any potential issues regarding the snowball sampling method (In Iceland the potential issues rose from connection to a specific organization) are not of immense importance because I was specifically searching for the opinions of individuals in the community who had opinions on seabirds, as this study is largely about the perceived symbolic function of animals in communities. I needed participants who could, in some way, comment on their importance to them and how they perceive the importance to the community as a whole.

This broad range of sampling methods also meant that my interviews were non-standard and ranged widely based on the individual. I conducted six semi-formal interviews, spoke with four individuals in a non-interview setting, and utilized another source of written communication. Since all participants came from a range of backgrounds — some natives of the area, some from other countries, with an age range of approximately 25-60, and a mixture of professions — the interviews all began by asking them to tell me about their life and how they felt they connected to puffins, and seabirds particularly. Many of my interviews from Canada are akin to conversations on life and the evolution of the community in general and how birds played a role in that evolution.

Again similar to Iceland, in addition to identifying myself as from the United States, all of my participants were immediately aware that I was not from the area due to my accent, or lack thereof. Unlike in Iceland though, participants were, largely, pleased that a “tourist” was interested in their community and seabirds.

Chapter 5: Results

INTRODUCTION — MEETING THE ISLAND

Off the southern coast of Iceland, the Vestmannaeyjar archipelago is the best-known secret among Icelanders and tourists alike. While the islands may not appear immediately in tourist handbooks, a few key searches will lead immediately to the islands. Visitors are drawn to the main island, Heimaey, from May- September to see the largest Atlantic puffin colony in the world. Looking around the town, it is clear that the presence of the puffins is important to both tourists and locals alike — with a four-foot-tall puffin statue prominently sitting in the harbor, as well as puffins used as the logos for many businesses.

This relationship between puffins and local individuals is what drew me to Heimaey in April 2021. I learned about the puffling patrol within the first week of setting foot in Iceland and I promptly declared that I had found my research project. My director laughed and said that I would not be there at the right time and it would not work. He was right that it was not tourist or puffin season (yet) when I first arrived, but he was wrong that it would not work.

I connected with the Sea Life Trust Beluga Whale Sanctuary and Puffin Rescue Center and set up a plan — in the mornings I would work hands on with the puffins (both resident birds as well as those currently being rehabilitated) and in the afternoons I would conduct research on the patrol. All I had to do was find housing and transportation to this small island with 4,000 residents in a country where I did not speak the language — easy.

I learned my first lesson about Heimaey in my attempt to get there— the ferry is of vital importance and can be almost as unreliable as it is important. While in a cab on the way to the ferry port (a 40-minute cab) I learned that, surprise, the ferry was canceled. After sitting on the side of the road for a time and some frantic calls, I finally ended up in an Airbnb, home to two

dachshunds who kept me sane as I booked a flight to the island the next day. The importance of this transportation saga (pun intended as the Icelandic Sagas are also very important) is that it highlights a lesson that was reiterated to me many times while on Heimaey — while the archipelago is only seven miles offshore, some days it might as well be 1000 miles away for all of the ability individuals have to get there.

As I sat on the plane heading to an unfamiliar place that would soon become familiar in all its ways that were unlike home, I was dumbfounded by the airport I had just been through and was saddened that I had given up my peanut butter for no reason. The Reykjavik domestic airport consisted of two rooms — the check-in room and *the* gate; I mean *the* gate as there was only one. This meant there was no security to yell at me for having liquids (the reason that I separated from my peanut butter before the flight) and barely a worker to be seen. I walked out on the tarmac and boarded the plane and hunkered down for my 20-minute flight.

Walking to the Airbnb that I was to share with six fellow college students conducting research on the island, I got my first view of the island — rimmed with two (dormant) volcanoes and some other 1,000 feet hills that had been formed, in part, by past volcanic eruptions. The island, which was all of 5.2 square miles, was breathtaking. The town was nestled in between the Eldfell lava field and volcano to the East, the harbor and Heimaklettur (translated to "Home Rock," the tallest point on the island) to the North, the famed Elephant rock and what is known as the most beautiful golf course in Europe to the West, and the airport and Helgafell volcano to the South.

After settling into our Airbnb, I went for a hike to explore the island. I first found my way up Heimaklettur — as it is a mile hike up, one may think it was easy, but think again. After multiple ladders, shimmying across a two-foot ledge, some general hold-on-to-a-rope-and-climb-

up-this-slope hiking, and a few moments of holding onto the rock and thinking “I cannot do this” I made it to the top only to be met with — a sheep. My first lesson on the island — never make assumptions. Across Iceland sheep and horses tend to graze freely in the winter, with fences placed more to keep animals *out* than to keep them in. True to their name, in the fall these mountain sheep scurry up the path that I had deemed nearly too treacherous to climb, as if it were nothing, and in the spring they are lowered back down the mountain onto a boat awaiting at the bottom (while I did not get to see the removal of the sheep from this point I am told that it involves tying a rope around their stomach and lowering them down slowly — a sight I would love to see). After I recovered from my amazement at finding sheep as my reward for this grueling hike, I sat and got a birds-eye view of the island. Once I had worked up the courage to head back down the path, I got up and started down, only to find another surprise — an older man with a walker, climbing up the path with the sheep following behind him. I passed him on the path and was promptly told “I can’t believe you missed the guestbook, I thought it was obvious” after I had told him it was beautiful here and he asked if I had signed in for reaching the top. I attempted to befriend the sheep that had been following him, but much like the man, they looked at me like I was crazy and walked on. In summary: always look for a guestbook and know that you will likely not find what you expect when you head out on a hike in Iceland.

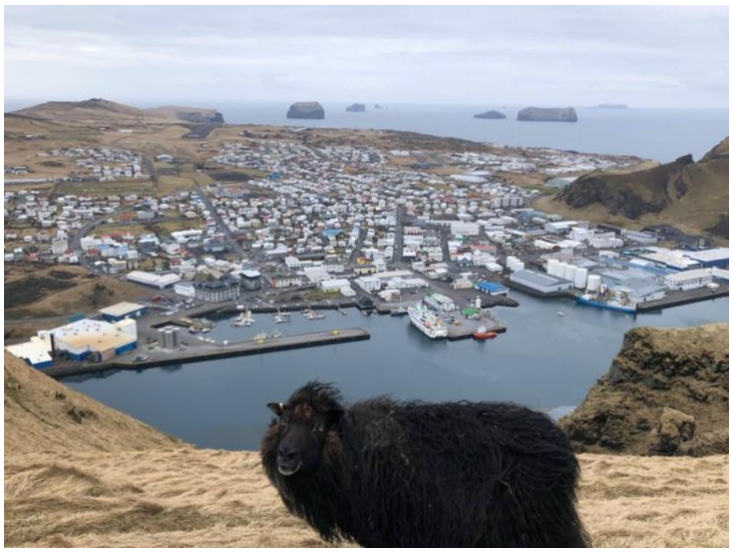

Photo 2: The view from the top of Heimaklettur — the town and the sheep (source: photo by Megan Tuennerman)

After my hiking excursion, I found my way to the lava fields. Walking through the lava fields on my own I noticed the signs that listed buildings that were buried 60 feet below. I was fascinated and intrigued but moved on quickly. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this lava field tells a much more in-depth story than meets the eye and tells the tale of the resilience and devotion to their island that the people of Heimaey have.

UN-CREDIBLE BUT TRUE

A few weeks into my time on the island, I was in the middle of conducting interviews — most of them had proven to be standard interview set-up: sit in a coffee shop, talk and record. My next interview though, I knew was not going to be like that. Jón is the grandfather of the island (or at least to me resembles the grandfather of the island as he shares many qualities with my own grandfather) — everyone knows him, kids run in and out of the sanctuary, where he works the front desk, and he scolds them for missing class in between sharing a few outlandish stories that have everyone captivated. As I told people that I was going to interview Jón I was commonly greeted with the response "good luck, he can talk alright." With that in mind, I scheduled out two hours for my talk with Jón, thinking that was plenty of time to give myself before my next interview. I was wrong, but luckily, due to Jón's reputation as a talker, all I had to tell my next interviewee was "Jón's interview is going long, can we reschedule?" and they understood. My interview with Jón turned out to be closer to four hours — but in those four hours I learned about the history, the wildlife, and in general, the people of the island.

Growing up, most parents tell their children "don't get in the car with strangers" but at this point Jón was not a stranger — he was a leader in the community. I knew that the moment I tried to turn on a voice recorder or make him sit down in a room to tell me his story, Jón would freeze up and I would miss the ability to learn from him the story of his life and the island. So,

instead, I got in the car with him as we drove around the island, stopping at spots around the island that were important to him.

We began by the harbor on the North end of the island. He pointed to the back side of Heimaklettur and drew my attention to the green patches — that was where the birds nested. As a boy, he repelled down the side of the cliff (much like the sheep are lowered down with ropes onto the boats) with his brother to collect bird eggs — "only the Fulmars' never the puffins." That was because fulmars lay two eggs — the eggs hatch with a few days in between so that if it is a year with low food availability, the smaller of the two chicks can be sacrificed easily to provide for the larger chick — while puffins lay only one. This was the first story I was told of how puffins are treated differently than the other seabirds that migrate to Heimaey.

As Heimaey is an island off the coast of a *slightly* larger island country, there are virtually no land mammals to speak of. Instead, Heimaey is the home to a host of migratory seabirds — guillemots, murres, fulmars, puffins and more. Before transportation to the main shore was reliable, this influx of migratory birds was the primary food source for residents of Heimaey. This reliance on the birds has ingrained a tradition of connection between the people and the birds, to the point that Jón was able to recite to me a timetable of when each species of birds come to the island, lay eggs, when those eggs hatch, and when the birds leave again, as well as tell me the way in which those dates have fluctuated over the years. It became astonishingly clear to me while living on the island that the majority of the residents were closely in tune with nature.

That being said, all birds are not created equal in the eyes of the residents of Heimaey. Jón described his dislike of the arctic Skua because they ate pufflings. While that statement may have seemed hypocritical to someone not from the island, as Jón also told stories and showed me

many photos of hunting puffins himself, the explanation for it shows that deep seated relationship between the islanders and the birds as their primary food course. Skua ate young puffins — meaning that they were preventing the puffin population from increasing. Islanders only hunted fully grown puffins that were not raising young — identified because unlike other birds, puffins bring back fish for their young whole, so puffin parents will have fish hanging out of their beaks as they fly back to their burrows. This is the first example of, potentially accidental, population and animal conservation methods — protecting puffin populations to ensure that they would be around to hunt in the future.

The next stop on the "tour of Jón" was his old home and the lava fields. Jón has always lived on the island, with the exception of a few months when he had to move to the mainland after the Eldfell volcanic eruption in 1973. On January 18th the volcano erupted — by a stroke of luck all of the fishing boats were in the harbor due to bad weather the day before, so all of the island's 5,300 residents were able to be evacuated from the island. The eruption continued until June and buried over 200 buildings in lava and ash. The harbor was protected by water guns, working to cool the lava before it engulfed the rocks. Jón's mother was the voice on the radio who instructed residents to evacuate on that January night — and her voice is forever memorialized in recordings and documentaries of that night. Some residents chose to move elsewhere, but the majority of the island residents returned to their island post-eruption and unburied and rebuilt where they could.

As we talked Jón picked up the rocks that someone had put under the bench that was beneath the sign that memorialized his old house. Jón's actions were reminiscent of the way in which people clear gravestones of old flowers and debris. In that moment I realized — this was not simply a lava field but was more akin to a graveyard of homes. Unlike a fire where people

can go back into their homes and perhaps salvage memories, all of Jón's childhood memorabilia and family heirlooms were buried under 60 feet of lava. He spoke of the way in which "[his] parents always wanted the kids to play here," on the green grass in front of the bench, and how "[he] planted [his] mom's favorite flowers," as a memorial not only to her, but also to the home itself. After a few minutes of quiet reflection, Jón's somber mood changed as he told the stories of a game: "we would run to the volcano, it was still hot, light a match on fire, and try to run home before it burnt out." I never looked at the volcano or the lava field the same way again — it told a story not just of a community uprooted, but a community devoted.

Jón and I continued to travel around the perimeter of the island: he showed me the "Viking baths," natural depressions in the rocky beachside that, when the tide is high, fill with water; walked past "private property" signs to show me his favorite hillside, and responded to my unspoken worry of trespassing by simply stating "you are with me;" and ultimately sat with me above an old field where he used to play football (American soccer) after school. From that spot we could see the spot where a friend of his died while collecting bird eggs — a story that Jón told sadly, but also in a matter-of-fact tone, as it was the way of life. We could also see Suðurey island, the location of his family hunting club (most of the small islands in the archipelago have hunting clubs with generational ties) and where his parents honeymooned. This was also where he told me the story of "The Little Puffling."

> It was around 2007 when the puffling population was down. I was visiting my dad and found the book. He had written it for the grandkids, worried that they wouldn't know what the puffling patrol was. I saw it and said, 'we have to do something' and we did.

Beaming, Jón explained how the book has been translated into multiple languages and can be found across Iceland. His cousin drew the pictures, his dad wrote the story, and he organized the publication. The book has become especially important to Jón due to the recent passing of his

father — the story of the puffling patrol is not simply one of saving birds, but a story of generational memories and relationships. Jón was insistent that I take not only a copy for myself, with a personal inscription “Kveðja frá Vestmannaeyum” (which translates to “Greetings from the Westman Islands”) but, ultimately, 12 copies to share and spread around the United States. He wanted the story that immortalized his father and was vitally important to him, to be shared across the world. I was glad that I had the room (and weight) available in my suitcase to accept the generous gift.

Throughout my time with Jón he would start his stories by saying they were “un-credible but true,” and was immensely thankful many times that I was not only willing but excited to hear his stories. I chose to take Jón’s stories for full value because, ultimately, the accuracy of specific details is not vital — what is vital is his memory and descriptions of life on Heimaey. I walked around the island with a new appreciation after my tour with Jón, beginning to see the island as he did — alive, ever changing, and worthy of the devotion shown by its inhabitants. My newfound appreciation directly impacted my research, as I was able to focus future interviews on island events and stories that I knew were of importance.

Tradition — Puffin Hunting (to kill)

The traditions of Heimaey are rooted in historical context. As societal needs and wants evolved, so have the traditions of the towns, and directly linked with that, the relationship between the residents and puffins. The history of Heimaey is brutal and bloody — with early history of slavery, murder, and abductions. Einar explained what he knew of the history of Heimaey sharing that the history of puffins on the island dates back to that time as well — as one interviewee mentioned knowledge of a quotation in the Icelandic Sagas (a culturally important set of writings telling the stories of early Icelanders) about puffin hunting in Vestmannaeyjar.

From approximately the 1300s to 1844 (although Iceland did not officially gain sovereignty until World War 1) Iceland was controlled by the Danish King — “This was the major harbor for the fisheries of the Danish king. So, on the boats and then the rather very lucrative business at the expense of the locals, which were basically dying from tetanus, filth and whatnot.” Continuing towards contemporary life, even in the early 1900s fisherman died from hypothermia on the small islands surrounding Heimaey due to rough waters and a lack of shelter from the storm. All of this is to say — life on Heimaey has historically been brutal and barren of many opportunities. The tradition of puffin hunting was integral to the early settlers of Heimaey not for sport, but for sustenance and thus puffins are interconnected with the infrastructure of the community.

It was not until World War II that Iceland’s economic status rose — the exportation of fish to England became immensely lucrative. It was at this time as well that transportation to the island became more reliable — fishermen still died, but connection to the mainland was more reliable. This ability to rely on imported food, “changed the emphasis from sustenance — the puffins are not anymore a key item on your food table. And they become a delicacy,” explained Einar. This led to a significant shift in the tradition of puffin hunting — from need to sport. Gunnar explained in a matter-of-fact tone that “ I think the main reason [that we hunt] is maybe tradition, but also like I just really, like puffin. I mean, they're delicious.” The link back to tradition was clear, but also a link to acknowledging that it was not a tradition done out of duty alone — it was enjoyable.

When puffins were being hunted as a food source, small hunting cabins and clubs were built on many of the smaller islands in the archipelago to be used as shelter on the island during hunts. Today, those cabins and clubs are still important to the tradition, with strong generational ties. Einar described the cabins with a tone of incredulity explaining that “They build these

houses which are like fucking, you know, amazing. And I mean, like the one in [intelligible island name]. It has the leather sofa from the parliament. The old parliament." The clubs and their cabins are vital to the infrastructure of the town — creating ties between families and a history to celebrate and share. From her research on the history of the hunting clubs, Helga explained that "it's a club, your club, it has its own song about the island; and there's always one club, [that is] hosting the festival, the dance and the [it is the] best thing that has ever been held. And then the next year, the best thing ever. So it's always bragging." Here is a clear example of animals providing a source of superiority to some humans — clubs that had more successful seasons felt superior over others.

More recently, as the puffin population has become endangered, puffin hunting has become controversial. Within recent years the government of Iceland attempted to enforce a full ban on puffin hunting — a ban that was not taken well. When I asked Gunnar for his opinion, he answered that "I mean, you can change it maybe to some degree, but if it's too drastic and too much at once, it's like it's not going to happen," potentially pinpointing the issue — a drastic change to tradition was not accepted. This is an example of the Icelandic government attempting to enforce fortress conservation, and the people of Heimaey, who hold a different social construction of conservation, pushing back against it.

The government amended their ban — now enforcing a short (approximately 5-8 day) hunting season. This was more widely accepted by hunters, implying that complete freedom to hunt is not what was important, instead it is more important that they *can* hunt as "If traditions fade they die, we want to maintain tradition," explained Gunnar passionately. Some years hunters will agree that the puffin population cannot support even those few days of hunting and decide *themselves* not to hunt, showing even further that what is important is the *availability and*

opportunity to continue the traditions because even if "they decide not to hunt. They still have the dance," said Helga with a knowing smile. This highlights a time in which fortress conservation *did not* work and instead, through allowing interactions between humans and puffins, *both* populations benefitted.

It is possible that the tradition of puffin hunting will slowly disappear by itself as, as Bryjnar sadly explained that "there is not a lot of, like, young people that are being taught how to hunt puffins, but it's a lot of old men that know it. But they're not like, I have no idea of any like women that are like today, young women that are hunting them. It's mainly young men. That I know of." Similar to previous studies, hunting is immensely gendered, with primarily masculine connections. The explanation for the lacking interest in hunting is potentially multifaceted — dealing with both the issues of gendered pastimes, and general shift in societal life.

Puffin Hunting (To Save)

Parallel to puffin hunting though, is the puffling patrol. The patrol is a tradition that nobody can remember the origin of — it simply has always been. Many individuals who hunt to kill puffins also participate in the patrol to save them. For most of my native participants, participating in the puffling patrol was their first memory of a puffin:

1. Yeah, it's going out with my father in the evening and hunting for them. Hunting. No, you know, finding them.
2. That would be like puffling Patrol as a kid, like rescuing puffins. That will be, I think, my earliest [memory] of puffins. Yeah. Just waking up late, well, trying to stay up, but I always fell asleep, so my parents had to wake me up and we went out and hunted, well rescued. *laughs*
3. Just from when I was a child having to go out, not having but going out with my parents and brothers to rescue them and then later like going with friends, I remember like catching my first puffling, like, properly, because when you're younger, you're not very keen on, like, picking them up. But I still remember, like, my first puffling.
4. I think it was just the first very clear memory is that I was rescuing puffling from a neighbor's cat.

For only one of my participants, their first memory of puffins was eating it, for which they apologized (unnecessarily). It is clear that the patrol is vital to the shared, lived experiences of the town.

The puffling patrol has existed informally from, quite literally, before anyone can remember. It was not until around 2003 when the puffin population significantly dropped, and as a result the number of pufflings stranded in town decreased substantially, that a formal patrol was put in place, led by community volunteers in tandem with the "old aquarium" Sæheimar. In 2019, Sæheimar was closed and enveloped into the Sea Life Trust Beluga Whale Sanctuary and Puffin Rescue Center. Community members and Sea Life Trust employees worked together to staff the intake side of the formal patrol — weighing, measuring, and rehabilitating when necessary, pufflings that were brought in.

The "formal" patrol proved to be interesting as so understanding the motivations of participating in it. Many times parents found the extra step of taking the pufflings to be weighed an unnecessary step, but the children pushed to do it for one main reason: photos. While some people may dislike the added stress it puts on the birds to pose for a photo, Kristín explained from her first-hand experience that:

> We have been handling pufflings since we were like this, so it was very normal for us, but we have had some people saying that we should not handle them so much… [but the kids] bring in like 20 pufflings. The people want to take some photos. And during this, because they come in to us and we talk to the kids and then we can teach them a lot about not handling pufflings, how to release them and as soon as possible… And we are teaching them so much more to try to put in a better way.

Every action has a consequence — while photos may add a little undue stress (to a bird that is already immensely stressed), the educational opportunity for the children is also potentially saving many puffin lives. This discussion of taking photos with the puffins though again relates

back to the theoretical understanding of human/animal relationships: children want to take photos with the puffins, using them as a way to elevate their standing within the community, but also, taking the photos is not seen as unnecessarily cruel or bad due to the life-long handling and consideration for the birds. From the outside perspective, as was suggested by the participant, posing for photos is “bad” conservation, but again, a different view of conservation from the residents of Heimaey, provides a different understanding: humans and puffins can interact in a way that is mutually beneficial without more gain on one side or the other.

Linguistically, participants' description of the patrol is interesting due to the repeated use of the word “hunting.” It is important to remain aware that English was not the first language of these interviewees, but this same word-use of “hunting” for killing and saving is fascinating. While the two acts are very different, this same use of words implies that for the people of Heimaey, these traditions are both so important and integral to the culture that perhaps the interaction with the birds is more important than the end goal. Nightly “catches” for hunters (to kill) and patrol hunters (to save) are counted and boasted about like a “Guinness record breaker.” These “hunts” both provide the community ways to connect and share amongst themselves, and with the puffins.

The relationship between seabirds and the community is palpable as Jóhanna succinctly stated “we cannot imagine the island without puffins.” She continued to explain that “we live so close together with the birds. And it's a lot of influence on our whole life.” When Jóhanna refers to “the birds” she was discussing all seabirds that migrate to the island and how “if you see a bird, you try to save the bird.” This close relationship with birds was echoed by another interviewee who mentioned that the community does not encroach on the birds’ habitats. On only a 5.2 square mile island, many communities would expand to fill as much of it as possible,

destroying ecosystems in their path, but Heimaey does not — an example of physical infrastructure being impacted by the relationship between the community and birds.

The coming and going of seabirds marks the seasons for many people in Heimaey, María included as she shared with a nostalgic contentment in her voice — “It's like the first puffin comes. It's almost summer, you know, and everybody's excited to get the puffins because everyone knows that that means that the puffling rescue time will come eventually. And it's just like it prolongs the summer. And it's just like because it happens at night and school has started.” It was expressed to me that on Heimaey it almost feels as if the seasons go winter, spring, summer, *puffing season*, summer. During the period of time when the puffin population severely declined, Kristín explained that “You could really feel it in the town. People were very sad when we had no pufflings. It was like no Christmas or something.”

Summer also brings an interesting puffin-central event: Thjodhatid, a three-day festival. Most of my interviewees were unable to relay specifics of the festival due to its main descriptor as “Icelandic Burning Man.” The origin of the festival reflects the historical difficulties that Heimaey natives had getting to the mainland; the festival originated in 1874 when individuals could not reach the mainland for the celebration of the millennial anniversary of Icelandic settlement, so they hosted their own (Kevin). This festival is the only time that puffin is sold and bought to eat on the island — unlike elsewhere in Iceland, puffin is not served at restaurants on the island — and the symbol of the puffin appears on flags around the event.

Ironically, there is one aspect of infrastructure that does not evolve around birds: lights. One interviewee expressed her confusion as to why they *did not* discuss changing this aspect of infrastructure; “So let's say let's not talk about puffins in terms of their numbers, but let's say it's like, OK, so we've changed the lights in town and we've actually had a community effort to turn

out all your all your lights or get that mitigation going. I don't know that they want that because it's this weird dichotomy of wanting to this feel-good sort of way to connect with nature and the birds." Another interview mentioned that "It's just this tradition. People just leave lights on." Similar to the apparent contradiction of the puffin patrol and puffin hunting traditions, here we see another dichotomy: a tradition of keeping lights on vs. the tradition of evident care for the survival of this species.

Seabirds are clearly important to the community of Heimaey — historically and contemporarily, many aspects of the community on Heimaey revolve and rely on puffins. The seemingly contradictory nature of traditions cannot be analyzed or understood with logic, instead they must be taken as fact and used to understand the underlying relationship and the impacts of said relationship on both the community and the birds. The relationship between puffins and the people of Heimaey may be confusing to outsiders, but to them, it is clearly a relationship of mutual dependence, respect, and care — but also unintentional disregard in terms of light pollution. María shared a perfect summation of this relationship: "it's something we've been doing since, like forever, like no one knows anything different than being surrounded by puffins or rescuing them as babies. It's just something that has been done in this community forever. And it's a very unique thing for this island. I believe this is the only place this is possible."

PUFFINS AND ELVIS

Not only is Heimaey known for the majestic wildlife and beautiful golf course — it also lays claim to the windiest spot in Europe (although, in my opinion, all of Iceland could come close to rightfully making that claim). At the southernmost part of the island is Stórhöfði; this area of the island is the windiest spot in Europe and the location of a NOAA C02 sampling lab. That lab was where I found myself one (not windy) morning with one of the prominent puffin

scientists of the world. Again, it is a small island — why wouldn't the puffin researcher also collect samples for NOAA?

Much like my tour with Jón, my interview with Einar took me out on the road and, ironically, back to the same Viking baths. This time around though, the amazement behind the stories was largely based in scientific wonders. Einar pointed out a hillside with rocks that were unlike any others that could be found on the island — a small detail you could easily miss — because they were not formed on the island, instead those rocks had traveled to the island by glacier from Greenland. Next up on this impromptu science lesson: lava bombs. These "bombs" are lava that exploded from Helgafell volcano 5,000 years ago and flew into the sedimentary rock near the water hard enough to become embedded in rock. Even though he is a respected scientist, Einar was not all work — he demonstrated the local sport of Heimaey, Spranga, which can best be described to an outsider as rope swinging in a semi-circle off a rock cliff. Yes, it is as mind blowing to watch as it sounds and no, I did not attempt it.

Of course Einar also discussed puffins with a similar amazement as he did to rocks and Spranga. His story about puffins though was not what one might anticipate:

> Initially, I did an honors thesis on them. And it was just because I ran out of time. I had no interest in them at all. I was interested in the other species. They're competing with the nocturnal ones. Uh, so like storm petrels, they all breed in the same areas. And so how do they divide the world between them? And I had studied the puffins because they were the key player and they were the most abundant. And so when I was up to one hundred and thirty some pages, OK, I'm going to skip the other guys. And so then it came later and people were everybody was worried. But there were so many dead chicks in 2003, four or five and five in particular, and wanted to know what the hell was going on. There was like people started getting real worried. And so I came here, gave a talk about what I knew about them, and then they offered me a job and which is basically being around been about answering what is going on. And that's what we trying to do for the last13 years

Serendipity — the preeminent puffin scholar only accidentally studied puffins. (This is not a unique story as another puffin researcher I worked with also did not originally intend to work with puffins). Yet, on that not-so-windy morning in Iceland, Einar also shared that:

> I was just blown away by the interest. So we were constantly being called. Like today I had four interviews just compiling all today from magazines, TV stations, film makers, whatever, that that media attention, whatever it is.… the best example is, um, we published a paper last year, which was the tool use with puffins. So they use a little root, which they scratch them. We saw it on the video and we see ourselves once…So, we get this paper out in Proceedings of National Academy America and. So the media frenzy was followed was we would just like wow. we stopped counting when it was over one hundred and twenty major TV, The Washington Post, New York Times and all of them just 'puffin uses a tool!' It was like it would have been similar coverage if Elvis would surface, and would comb his hair

Puffins and Elvis. From indifference to adoration, Einar admitted that "I'm convinced now they are the most cherished animal on the planet… it turned out to be the most charismatic critter around and actually worldwide." Again, Einar is not alone in admiring the charisma of these small, awkward creatures. Time and time again, the word "charismatic" appeared in my interviews when participants were asked to describe a puffin. That morning was filled with many lessons — the danger of rocks (both exploding ones from volcanoes and ones with ropes hanging off of them) and the importance of the attributes of puffins.

When Adults Become Kids Again

While the logic of the traditions of Heimaey surrounding puffins and other birds cannot, and/or should not, be analyzed — the emotion behind it is vital to the relationship. If logic is not driving these traditions, then something else must be. The construction of the puffin as an integral aspect of community infrastructure and understanding can be understood largely through the lens of speciesism and physical attributes of the puffins, and the lens of unity and identity through emotion.

The way in which the patrol is often perceived by outsiders, and occasionally even Heimaey residents, directly falls in line with the hierarchy created by Marx — humans are superior and must *save* these birds; also, it is implied that since this tradition brings joy to people it is only satisfying human needs — the patrol does not have an ecological significance, it is maintained due to tradition and human emotion that it is a good thing to do and thus is not a valid conservation method. But, when the outcomes of the patrol and the way in which it is discussed by natives of Heimaey are considered it can be seen that the outside interpretation of the patrol is incorrect and, indeed, it is a valid conservation method, simply *different.*

Within seabird populations othering can also be observed. It is the *puffin* patrol even though other young seabirds are also saved. One participant explained that if she sees a stranded puffin and a stranded fulmar on the street, she will always rescue the fulmar first, because she knows other people will rescue the puffin, while many people will not only ignore the young, stranded fulmar but in fact attempt to *hit them with their cars*. Fulmars are disliked because they have the (unfortunate) habit of throwing up on people when they are stressed — not a likable quality from a human perspective. This separation of puffins from other seabirds provides a clear opportunity to look at and understand what it is about the puffin that makes them a desirable bird and all other seabirds "others."

As previously mentioned, the word charismatic continually appeared throughout interviews as a descriptor of puffins. I can attest to the fact that they are personable birds — if you sit and watch a wild colony for long enough you will begin to see individual personalities emerge. Puffins are by far the most colorful of the seabirds — bright orange beaks and feet. Interestingly, the pufflings though do not have this coloring yet — only sexually mature puffins have the bright orange beaks and white faces, young pufflings have grey faces and dull beaks.

Yet, the very knowledge that they will *become* these attractive birds saves them. Nobody could put their finger on why puffins, these "clowns of the sea," are so widely adored but it is a commonly held truth — puffins are adorable. And that adorableness helps drive human society to save them.

From a lens of unity, identity and emotion, we may be able to understand why, even though pufflings are not as colorful as their adult counterparts, Heimaey residents feel so passionately about saving them: the emotion behind it. Time after time, I was told stories of how "adults become kids again," during puffling patrol hunts.

1. We went with my father and there was a fence and there was a puffin behind it and it was very high fence, tall, maybe two or more meters. He climbed over it. He's 50 years old
2. I remember one time my father was here and we went to find them. And there was one we found, my father, he went up first out of the car to chase the puffin before my son. I think it's more like older people are maybe. I don't know… they can, they're allowed to be a bit kids.

Overall, joy was the word and feeling behind descriptions of the patrols. For many interviewees, it was actually their parents who initiated participating in the patrol every night — not the children. Many people also have relatives and friends from off-island who come every year to participate in the patrol — meaning that the patrol provides an excuse for individuals to come together in many ways. The patrol links individuals from on and off island together and provides a unity that all involved can share.

The joy felt by patrol participants perhaps explains the reason for the long-standing tradition — yes, the patrol helps puffins somewhat, but it also brings community satisfaction and integration. This is an example of animal conservation practice in which aiding the survival of the animal is not in fact the driving force of the activity, rather human/societal impacts are. The puffling patrol when described by native participants is an event that brings community solidarity and joy. From a Durkheimian perspective, that solidarity raises the puffins to an almost

sacred level. That sacred understanding of puffins then leads to other conservation practices — not impeding on nesting grounds, community decision to not hunt and kill the birds. The key difference here is that natives of Heimaey do not necessarily think of those as "conservation" methods in the way that outsiders that follow Eurocentric conservation ideas do. The solidarity that the patrol brings, via integral appreciation and admiration of puffins specifically, means that the community of Heimaey, almost unintentional, has created a protected area for puffins.

PUFFIN CENTRAL

At the beginning of May the wild puffins began to appear on the island. By that point I had seen my fair share of puffins as I spent my mornings cleaning up after them (small birds, lots of poop) but still seeing them in the wild was different. I would spend my evenings sitting on the hillside by their burrows, watching as they flew home at the end of their fishing trips. Puffins are the one of (if not the only) flighted birds that do not have hollow bones; this means that while they are graceful swimmers, their flight is…. less so. Watching them land reminded me of the curve of bumble bees (another flighted creature that confounds physics and science as their wings are proportionally too small or the weight of their body) meeting the awkwardness of a child taking its first steps. Those nights were a gentle balance of wanting to get as close to the puffins as possible, while also not wanting to disturb them (the line was normally around 10 feet away).

The return of the wild puffins meant that the pufflings that had spent the winter growing and healing in the sanctuary could be released. Before their release though, they had to be banded. The "very scientific" tool of a PVC pipe is used to control the birds (the puffins are placed headfirst into the pipe while making noises akin to the sound of a lawn mower to express their annoyance) while their colorful band, used for identification within the sanctuary, was

replaced with a sleek silver band for identification in the wild. Then, into dog carriers they went as we drove to a cliffside that was chosen as the release sight, as other wild puffins called the area home.

I expected this puffling release to be a big community event — the news was told ahead of time and I had seen previous news stories on puffling releases, but not this time. That day there were six of us sitting there waiting for the pufflings to take flight — four people from the sanctuary, the partner of one of the sanctuary workers who was a professional photographer, and a man who happened to be on a walk and sat and watched for a while, before becoming bored and moving on. Hundreds of hours of work to rehabilitate and release these young birds culminated in six people sitting on a hillside, holding their breath and waiting for the birds to take flight… which they all refrained from doing for two hours. I can only assume it is how a parent must feel when after years of raising a child to be on its own and thrive — instead the child chooses not to leave. A bittersweet moment — we all wanted the birds to go off and return to their wild population, but also, we would miss them. So, every moment that they chose to stay in the dog carrier instead of running off into the wild was an internal battle — wanting them to go, but also wanting them to stay. Animal conservation and rehabilitation is not as simple as the media makes it seem, real emotions are attached to it, not only for the public, but also the individuals who care for the animals as they recover. Human instinct to care for animals and love them battles for the logical knowledge that we must release the animals or else their rehabilitation was for naught. Not to mention, sitting on a hillside for two hours watching puffins in a dog carrier does not make for the best media: don't believe every detail you see in the news.

That day, sitting on the hillside, showed me the conflict of human/animal relationships in a way that many interviews could not. What was best for these birds? And did we have the

resources to provide the “best” care? Some of these young pufflings would be killed within a month by predators, while some would go on to reproduce and raise young — one of those outcomes was more preferable to the humans who helped save them, but is either outcome correct? That question highlighted my research: the relationships between humans and animals, and if humans can possibly know what is “right.”

Tradition Meets Change

Making decisions on what is “right” is also immensely hard because society is always changing. The relationship between puffins and the population of Heimaey has changed drastically over time — from hunting for sustenance, to hunting for delicacy, to hunting being maintained mainly as a cultural tradition.; simultaneous with an unofficial patrol becoming official (an organized set-up of weighing, banding, and evaluating the health of the birds before being released) after a steep decline in the puffin population. Societies react to a multitude of influences — for Heimaey, some of those outside influences that have altered traditions are transportation and tourism. The community of Heimaey though has maintained their puffin traditions through these changes, as the changes around them and increase in outside perspectives has simply provided a mirror to help reflect how unique the residents’ relationship with the birds is.

As previously mentioned, transportation to the island has long been treacherous and, at times, impossible. Helga explained that “ the ferry runs seven trips a day during summer. When I was growing up, it was only two times a day. And on Saturdays, I think it was one trip. So it was hard to get to and took three hours to sail.” This change in ferry trips had a clear impact on tourism — with multiple ferry trips a day, more people from off-island could easily come for a day trip. With the influx of tourism, came a change in economy as well as new perspectives. It is

not that locals did not fully appreciate their surroundings but rather, as María explained “I think people are just more aware of how magnificent a bird that is. We just…realize the treasure that was in it before tourism came. And the tourists are so interested in puffins.” For many locals, the beauty of the island is their normal, the patrol and close proximity to wild puffins is normal, and so the influx of tourists seems to remind them that it is magnificent and something worth sharing.

Tourist infrastructure directly relating to the birds is surprisingly low — with one puffin watching hut, a few boat tours which take you around the island and show guests all of the seabirds, and one tour that goes behind the scenes at the puffin rescue center. This lack of infrastructure shows that tourists are drawn no matter what is offered, perhaps giving a peek into new ways of conducting eco-tourism.

COMPARISON TO CANADA

As I conducted my interviews in Iceland, the things that I learned all came together. My perilous journey to the island highlighted how vital the ferry is, and the struggles that occur when it is not available. My island tour with Jón set me up to understand and appreciate the history of the island and the formation of the traditions that still stood. My work with the puffins helped me to understand the intricacies of the puffling patrol and the issues that it faced. Evaluating the interviews together certain themes appear: the importance of tradition, the intricacies of the community construction of the puffins, as well as the impact of changing economy and interactions with different communities. By no means are these themes the only ones that could be unearthed from continued research of this deeply rooted community, but they are the themes that are most pertinent to understanding the relationship that has existed and changed over time between the people of Heimaey and puffins.

As I began to compile my data, I remembered that there was only one other location that was ever mentioned as having puffins: Witless Bay, Canada. As I did research, I realized that even though there are only really two large Atlantic puffin colonies in the world, and both colonies live in places with small human populations on island areas, Witless Bay and Heimaey do not communicate about their experiences. I decided that it was time to compare the two places — what potential similarities and differences could be found between these places which are culturally very different but have a similar geographic presence and seabird populations.

In my time visiting Witless Bay I noticed many similarities in themes — but differences in the way that they were presented. Witless Bay was near a larger town, St. Johns, which also has recently undergone an immense economic shift. There was joy and wonder at the puffins and the patrol — but just as much joy and wonder from the locals as the tourists, although the definition of "tourist" was different in Canada. There was appreciation of Puffins over other seabirds due to non-ideal characteristics of the other birds according to human ideas. Ultimately, there were also lots of people eager to share their stories.

Similar beginnings

The ideal tourist time to visit Newfoundland, Canada is not November (not only because the birds and whales are not there, but also because the weather is unpredictable, meaning that I had yet another ill-fated travel experience, this time my savior was not two dachshunds but an employee of an airline who re-opened a flight for us, handed us boarding passes and said "don't say a word, just RUN,") but that did not stop me as November was a great time to interview people. Since tourist season was over, all of the shop owners, tourist boats, and restaurants had plenty of time to talk to me about puffins.

St. Johns, Newfoundland and Heimaey, Iceland had similar beginnings as their populations' origins are tied to fishing. Along the Eastern coast of Newfoundland sit a number of small "towns," all easy to drive between today — St. Johns, the largest and capital city is the most Northern, Petty Harbor sits approximately 20 minutes south from St. Johns, Bay Bulls sits 10 minutes south from there, and Witless Bay sits five minutes from Bay Bulls. Before established roadways however, each of these small communities could only reach the other by boat, meaning that the connection that people had to their own hometown was both isolated and significant. Whereas to an outsider it may appear that Witless Bay could be considered a "suburb" of St. Johns, the local community strongly disagrees with that. This difficulty of transportation evoked a similar sense of pride for their home in Newfoundland as the people of Heimaey feel for their island. While I acknowledge that St. Johns is vastly different from the other small towns and local individuals do not consider it the "St. Johns area," I will refer to the eastern coast as a whole under that term due to ease of identification.

Newfoundland as a whole has an interesting background that directly impacts the people of the St. Johns area. It was not until 1949 that the province of Newfoundland and Labrador joined the Canadian confederation. This is important because the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 did not apply to the people of present-day Newfoundland until the confederation. Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, commercial hunting of seabirds was illegal, but it remained an important tradition to the people of Newfoundland to conduct their yearly Turr hunt (the generally accepted name for the Turr is actually the Murre, but the people of the St. Johns area refer to them as Turrs). Similar to Heimaey, the Turr hunt was subsistence hunting and as such, as part of their joining the Canadian confederation, an amendment was made to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to allow the people of Newfoundland to continue hunting the birds. Also similar

to Iceland, while the Turr hunt is still an important tradition to some, there is also what one participant referred to as “the lost generation,” — the generation of people who did not want to hunt the birds any longer, but also had not yet begun the bird-watching industry.

Newfoundland had a more established tourist industry for puffin and whale watching than Iceland. I spoke with the owner of the oldest puffin and whale watching company, who explained that “we’ve been doing this since 1984. At the moment that we started we were doing a project with Memorial University doing a project on the impact of seabirds and fishing gear… and they suggested that we should start a bird watching tour because it is such a great attractive so close to a capital city and that people would probably travel to see seabirds, even though that had not been in existence before.” The owner explained that people actually laughed at them when they started, thinking that it would never work. Today though, there are a multitude of different puffin and whale watching tours, an industry which provides significant income and jobs to the area today.

The influx of jobs and money from the bird/whale watching industry is vital as the St. Johns area, again similar to Heimaey, and it is especially important because this is a community in flux. In 1992 there was a cod moratorium in Canada due to the dangerously low numbers of wild cod. This was a drastic choice with dire consequences as cod fishing was one of the primary professions in the area. Many fishermen changed to fishing for crab, but this change had repercussions not only on the way of life for the humans, but also the birds. Cod is fished for during the day, whereas crab is fished for at night. This is important because it meant that light pollution increased in a significant way with the rise of crab fishing — and just like in Heimaey, the number of stranded birds increased, potentially due to that increase in light pollution.

Not all fishermen could make the switch, and the newest booming industry in St Johns, oil, is a major sector of the economy. Surprisingly, the very nature-based tourism industry and the oil-industry (which notoriously harms sea life) exist in seeming harmony — with the oil rigs willing to change their lights to less intrusive ones and work with conservationists in other ways as well.

Ultimately, we see similarities in the origins of these communities (fishing, difficult transportation) that led to similar current standings (importance of tourism, passion for the area, and hunting). For both communities seabirds are more than just birds, they are directly pertinent to every aspect of their lives.

Different Endings

As I was walking around town, over and over again I would mention that I was doing research on puffins and the immediate response I would get was "did you know that we have a puffin patrol? It is so fun!" One waitress even told me a story of participating in the patrol — "we were driving around and saw a puffin in someone's backyard. So we knocked on their door and asked if we could grab it and the homeowner said 'that is so kind of you. Of course!'" I could only think of the story of the father climbing over the fence in Iceland — the way in which the patrol functions in Newfoundland was clearly very different. Whereas in Iceland all social norms went out the window, if a puffin was somewhere it was free game, clearly that was not the case in Newfoundland.

The Puffling Patrol in Newfoundland was more formally organized — with online sign-ups and maximum number of cars of "tourists" (tourists meaning people not from Witless Bay, meaning that people from St. Johns count as tourists) that can patrol. This control means that fewer people are directly involved with the patrol and while it is a fun thing that is done, it is not

as vital to the infrastructure of the community. Another potential explanation for the difference in integration of the patrol to the community functions, is the proximity of the birds.

I stood on Ragged beach (a beautiful spot that could rival Heimaey's Stórhöfði as the windiest spot) with one interview participant as he pointed out each of the islands that the seabirds nested on. The islands could be clearly seen from shore, but only were accessible by boat, and the only people allowed on the islands were researchers. The offshore nature of the nesting sites meant that Witless Bay receives significantly fewer stranded birds, and also that community members had significantly fewer general interactions with the birds.

Photo 3: The view from Ragged Beach. The island shown is one of which the Puffin nests from Ragged Beach (Source: Photo by Megan Tuennerman)

Interestingly though, this participant shared the only story I heard of birds and whales learning to use the tourism industry to their own benefit. We were discussing the immense whale population that lives in the Bay in the summer and he told this story:

> I was on a tour and the Minke whales were coming up to the side of the boat very close. It was almost like they had learned from the penguins that these boats were not here to harm them, and instead worked as protection from the Orcas looking to hunt them.

Now, if you know geography and the location of penguin colonies you may be having the same thought as me "penguins? In Canada?" The answer to that is: yes, but not the penguins that you are probably thinking of. As this participant explained to me:

> The Northern hemisphere was explored first. So when people came and were naming things, they called all black and white seabirds (Puffins, Murres,

> Guillemots, etc.) penguins. Then they went south and found penguins as we know them today. But our penguins were the original.

This linguistic tidbit is not only interesting but common — later that same day I was at a museum when I heard a young child say to their mom "look at the penguins!" while pointing to a wall of stuffed seabirds. While the individuals who live in the St. Johns area may not have the same proximity and relationship to seabirds as the people of Heimaey do, they do feel a strong connection to their way of identifying them.

CONCLUSION

When the question "what is the community of Heimaey doing to conserve puffins?" was posed to participants, it was often met with a brief silence. As an outsider, my perspective on the relationship between the community members and puffins was incorrect and as such I was asking the wrong question — I was expecting a long list of conservation methods, when instead I should have been seeking to understand what their understanding of conservation is. The relationship between the community of Heimaey and puffins is not one of conservation in the Western/Eurocentric idea but one of mutual reliance. The puffins bring joy and unity to the community, and the community reciprocates by holding a reverence for the puffins that leads to a respect and appreciation for the birds' existence.

From an outsider's perspective that holds ideals of fortress conservation methods, some aspects of the relationship between puffins and the people of Heimaey appear to be hypocritical. They hunt and kill puffins, but also save the pufflings in a tradition so important it is not even seen as "special" it simply *is*, whereas under fortress conservation saving puffins should be the *only* important tradition. They put so much work into saving the pufflings, but do not make simple changes that could decrease the need to save them (i.e., decreasing light pollution). They

love the birds so much they forget that *other people* would be interested in them. But that supposed hypocrisy is precisely what many outsiders, especially those who do not have the same integral historical connection to wildlife, do not understand as the function of conservation is different.

The role of puffins in the culture of Heimaey is so integral and interwoven with every aspect of life — from infrastructure, to how changes to traditions are handled, to interpersonal relationships. All of the "hypocrisy" that exists in the relationship between puffins and the community only exists if you view it solely from a human-centric, hierarchical perspective. Instead, if you understand the relationship from a view that respects the ability of human/animal relationships to impact unity and identity, it makes sense. The human community of Heimaey is not separate from the puffin population, but they do not "trammel" (as used in the legal definition of wilderness) the habitat of the birds, instead the two populations exist together.

As expressed by natives of Heimaey, their relationship with puffins is one of mutual benefit— they respect nesting sites and do not encroach on the cliff sides, they recognize when puffins are caring for young and do not kill them, and they respect that sometimes they cannot hunt puffins at all in order for the population to survive. Simultaneously, they express a passion for the puffling patrol because it brings them joy — while helping to conserve the puffin population is one important aspect of the patrol, the pure joy and unity it brings the community is *equally* as important. Both populations (human and puffin) benefit from a shared living space.

Comparing the relationship that the people of Heimaey have with puffins to the one that the people of Newfoundland have, the primary difference is the reverence held for the birds. While puffins are important to tourism in both places, the tourist infrastructure in Canada is much more significant, as it was recognized that puffins *would* bring in money, whereas in

Iceland it was more of a happy coincidence. Both communities spoke about the puffling patrol with joy, but residents of Heimaey spoke of the joy as something innate to their personal and communal identity. The puffin populations in both Newfoundland and Heimaey are thriving — and so neither relationship between the birds and the community is better, they are simply different. These are differences that are important to understand and respect in order to understand and succeed in conservation methods.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As illustrated through the history of puffins in Iceland and Newfoundland, the trajectory of a region's native animal species and human development are symbiotic. The communities of Heimaey and St. Johns both have undergone significant changes over time due to external factors such as economic shifts (from dependence on fishing to tourism and more) and industrialization (leading to an increased reliability of transportation). The relationship between the communities and the puffins transformed alongside these external influences. The fact that the relationship changed rather than disappearing altogether can be largely attributed to the internal factors that impacted the relationship — namely the joy and emotional connection that the people held with the puffins. While the social construction of puffins changed over time, from primarily a food source to mainly a cultural symbol, the community identity that the relationship with the puffins created solidified their general importance throughout history. The impact of this established importance is that conservation of the birds is not done simply out of duty but out of love; the people of Heimaey enact "conservation" methods without consciously doing so. Conserving the puffins is not a duty, but an integral part of maintaining their cultural identity — without the puffins, the community lacks that unifying factor.

Within the discipline of sociology, work focusing on the relationship between human and animal populations has historically been viewed with skepticism. The area of environmental sociology is very young in the timeline of sociology in general; even within environmental sociology, a focus on animals is still in its infancy. That being said, the growth that this area is seeing is immense, and it is for precisely this reason that this project can aid in the continued growth in this sub-discipline.

The idea of individuals being "environmentally aware" has faded in and out of cultural focus in Western and Eurocentric societies for generations. Over time, environmental awareness has transitioned from the romantic and ideal view of nature that Thoreau writes about in "Walden," to a recognition of human impacts on the environment in Rachel Carson in "Silent Spring," and a contemporary feeling of frustration over inability to enact change as expressed in Blair Braverman's "Post-nature Writing," which was discussed previously. Thoreau and Carson discuss an environment in which humans are separate — a view that was clearly shaped by Marx's understanding of the formation of society and the hierarchical standing that exists among humans as well as between humans and animals. Braverman, though, highlights a shift happening in contemporary environmentalism: a drive to make change, a realization that we are part of nature and a recognition that nature is interlinked with our society in ways previously unexplored. Durkheim and Mead were approaching this frame of mind, but did not quite reach it.

Fortress conservation highlights the flaws in the hierarchical understanding of human/animal relationships. Humans are natural beings — even if fortress conservation is stating that people are ruining nature it is still holding that people are *outside of* nature — so it is continuing the separation of humans from nature/animals. We need to stop the idea that the only way we can "fix" nature is by removing ourselves — there is a way to be a *part* of nature and not destroy it, but have it be a mutually beneficial relationship. It is through case studies that we learn that the perception held by many United States' environmentalists, which separates humans and wild animals as the only solution, is incorrect. From case studies, such as this one on Heimaey, we learn to ask better questions — not to ask why the communities do not make

changes (such as my initial thoughts on light pollution) but instead to ask why they do not *need* to make changes.

It is vital that this area of environmental sociology continues to grow and become more widely accepted. As highlighted by Braverman, there is a significant percentage of the human population who wants to aid change, but feels unable to do so. Through case studies, such as this one, on community relationships with animals outside of the United States, options for environmental awareness and conservation increase exponentially. For years, fortress conservation has been taught as the primary method of conservation in many Western and Euro-centric schools. The mutually beneficial relationship held between the people of Heimaey and puffins shows that there are *other* methods of conservation that are just as, if not more, successful than fortress conservation. The relationship between the people of Newfoundland and puffins highlights that even areas that do utilize methods of fortress conservation, and that have been taught to idealize fortress conservation, succeed in human/animal relationships that are mutually beneficial.

Studies on human/animal relationships and the impact that they have on societies are uncommon. Individual case studies such as these highlight unique human/animal relationships and provide potential guidance for other communities on ways to adapt. There is so much to learn from inter-species relationships; not only is there a potential to understand the consequences of fortress conservation and transition towards new inclusive conservation methods, but studying human/animal relationships can also provide deeper understanding of human societies. Academic sociology has for years assumed that humans are superior to animals, without fully considering the ways in which inter-human relationships could improve through a deeper understanding of human/animal relationships. Are people who “other” animals more

likely to other fellow humans? Do mutually beneficial human/animal relationships lead to a generational conservation efforts and more general inter-community care? These are only a few examples of potential questions that could be answered through future research on human/animal relationships. This study was limited to two communities and a narrow question, but from this stem a multitude of potential avenues for continued work.

Human society has always interacted with animals. Over time we have domesticated animals, invited them into our homes, and formed communities around them. In response, animals have learned to adapt to human choices, alter their behavior to adapt to human desires, and utilize humans to their benefit. It is not new for humans to help young animals in need — the Puffling Patrol is not a new idea or practice. Instead, it is a method of conservation that has proven to be effective at both aiding the Atlantic puffin population and providing the community of Heimaey with unity and joy.

Appendix A

This form was presented to each interview participant prior to conducting the interview.

Participants reviewed and accepted the information on this form.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER

The Cultural Impacts of Puffins on the Westman Islands, Iceland
Principal Investigator: Megan Tuennerman, SOAN

Purpose
You are being asked to participate in a research study. I am studying the way in which puffins are integral to the culture on the Westman Islands.

Procedures
If you decide to volunteer, you will be interviewed by the researcher for approximately 30 minutes to an hour, discussing the ways in puffins have been viewed throughout your life, stories that you have heard/experienced about puffins, as well as discussion on the puffling patrol.

Risks
None.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits to you for your participation. An indirect benefit is that we learn more about how puffins are integral to the culture of the Westman Islands.

Compensation
None.

Confidentiality
Any information you give will be held confidential. Unique name/number codes will be stored on a password-protected Microsoft Word file. This file will be destroyed once all data is collected. Thus, all data will become anonymous at the conclusion of the study. Audio recordings will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and destroyed after they have been transcribed.

Costs
There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure described above.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw
You may refuse to participate in the study. If you decide to participate, you may change your mind about being in the study and withdraw at any point during the experiment.

Questions
If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have additional questions later, you can contact me by email at mtuennerman22@wooster.edu You may also contact my advisor, Heather Fitz Gibbon, at hfitzgibbon@wooster.edu].

Appendix B

These questions served as the basis for every interview. Only the interviewer had access to these, but generally all questions were addressed throughout the interviews.

Name, where you are from, how long did you live on Westman Islands?

*numbers are areas of interest, bullets are questions actually asked to get at those area

1. What is the place of the puffin in Westman island culture and life and what environmental dilemmas does that raise?
    - What is the place of the puffin in the culture and life on Vestmannaeyjar?
    - What would you say is the main thing that puffins bring to the island?
    - How does the place of the puffin in the culture affect the puffins themselves?
    - What are your opinions on puffins in relation to Vestmannaeyjar?

2. What is the nature of the Puffling patrol? Childhood experience? Adults desire to make money?
    - What is your earliest memory involving puffins?
    - Tell me the story of the first puffling patrol you participated in? And/or what is your best memory involving puffins?
    - What was the moment that prompted you to have an interest in puffins?

3. How does the community understand the conservation of puffins?
    - In your opinion what is the community already doing to conserve the puffin population?
    - Are there other potential ways to conserve puffins?
    - Has the community puffin conservation changed over time? If so, how?
    - If you had to choose between maintaining tradition and helping to conserve the puffin population through changes in tradition, what would you choose and why?

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