

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN RHETORIC AND COMMUNICATIONS

Perspectives on Human-Animal Communication

Intersubjectivity and Communication

Edited by
Emily Plec



Perspectives on Human-Animal Communication

Despite its inherent interdisciplinarity, the Communication discipline has remained an almost entirely anthropocentric enterprise. This book represents early and prominent forays into the subject of human-animal communication from a Communication Studies perspectives, an effort that brings a discipline too long defined by that fallacy of division, human or nonhuman, into conversation with animal studies, biosemiotics, and environmental communication, as well as other recent intellectual and activist movements for reconceptualizing relationships and interactions in the biosphere. This book is a much-needed point of entry for future scholarship on animal-human communication, as well as the whole range of communication possibilities among the more-than-human world. It offers a groundbreaking transformation of higher education by charting new directions for communication research, policy formation, and personal and professional practices involving animals.

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Perspectives on Human-Animal Communication

Internatural Communication

Edited by Emily Plec

First published 2013
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Simultaneously published in the UK
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group,
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Perspectives on human-animal communication : internatural communication / edited by Emily Plec.

p. cm. — (Routledge studies in rhetoric and communication ; 12)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Human-animal communication. I. Plec, Emily, 1974–

QL776.P47 2013

591.3—dc23

2012031660

ISBN13: 978-0-415-64005-3 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-203-08293-5 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by IBT Global.

For

Lila & Meisie

Rhombus, Rory, Porter, Tootie, Lou, and Feister

Charlemagne

Wil & Henry

Marley

Asti

Bronte, Toklas & Vita

Bodhi, Duke, Ginger, Minden, Babe, Bugs, & Ellie

Spot, MoDog, Nellie, Rolly, & Molly

Scooter, Zoe, Winkin, Pandora, S'okay, Zen, Moco, Star,

Smiley, Puppy, Mustache, Granny, Luna & Ruffles

and all the friendlies

and to our human loved ones, for their support and generosity.

And especially for our late friend Nick Trujillo, a wonderful person, scholar, and companion to humans and animals alike, who inspired this collection by affirming for a doubtful young graduate student that there was a space in the discipline for a paper on dogs.

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Preface

Over a decade ago, when I first began to consider human-animal communication from my disciplinary perspective, I found a small but supportive community of scholars who were interested in similar and related questions. For various reasons, we had come to communication studies and found a frustrating obsession with the animal-human dichotomy, often manifest in statements such as “What sets humans apart from other animals is their capacity to communicate using symbols” but also found in the common dismissal of human-animal relationships as insignificant interpersonal phenomena. We knew from our own experiences with animals that communication theories and methods could prove insightful, and we hypothesized that there was more to the communication relationship than ethologists or lay advocates of human-animal interaction might have already shown.

Many years after my first foray into scholarly examination of human-canine communication, I find myself back at the same point, seeking a communication discipline that is inclusive of all animals—indeed, of all life—and views the theoretical resources of our discipline as starting points for a greater understanding of how best to live together. I am grateful to the authors of this collection, as well as to my nonhuman and human teachers, for exploring these generous and insightful possibilities with me.

Emily Plec

Acknowledgments

This book is the collective effort of a committed group of scholars. Although dedicated to the animal companions who have exercised patience in teaching us about their worlds, this volume was made possible by innumerable other humans who put up with us and inspired our work, including our partners, children, mentors, advisors, colleagues and the many scholars of animal communication cited in these essays. Without such support, we rarely test the boundaries of our ways of thinking and theorizing. With it, the possibilities are as great as our imagination and effort.

I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewers of the proposal for this volume, whose cautious enthusiasm and advice helped to prepare me for the task of editing and warranted the publisher's faith in the project. I extend my deepest gratitude to the authors of the chapters in this volume, to Diane Huddleston for her editorial assistance, and to Liz Levine, Andrew Weckmann and Michael Watters, whose professionalism and support helped to make this project a labor of love.

The editor and publisher would also like to thank the following for granting permission to reproduce material in this work:

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1 Perspectives on Human-Animal Communication

An Introduction

Emily Plec

“Does every intelligent creature have to do things of which we can see the point and show its intelligence in ways we can recognize?”

—Mary Midgley (qtd. in McReynolds 157)

“We stand in community with other animals by virtue of our communication with them.”

—Douglas Anderson (190)

Many students of communication are drawn to the field, as I was, because of its inherent interdisciplinarity and because of its capacity to be inclusive of a wide range of perspectives and understandings of social interaction. Yet the academic discipline of communication has long suffered from a practical anthropocentrism that privileges human interaction and relegates the communication efforts of the more-than-human world to the margins of the discipline.¹ That many animals do indeed communicate—manipulating symbols, gesturing and even demonstrating a sense of self and other, has been argued at length by ethologists, zoologists, veterinarians, anthropologists, psychiatrists and biologists (e.g., Abram; Dawkins; Griffin; Mason; Midgley; Rogers and Kaplan; Sheldrake; Shepard; Zimmer). Gary Snyder puts it succinctly: “The evidence of anthropology is that countless men and women, through history and pre-history, have experienced a deep sense of communion and communication with nature and with specific non-human beings” (13).² As Jean Baudrillard points out, “animals were only demoted to the status of inhumanity as reason and humanism progressed” (29). Moreover, animals communicate in myriad ways that are, at least for most humans, either poorly understood or entirely unrecognized. Perhaps the gulf between some social and natural sciences and communication studies has contributed to the neglect of animal communication and human-animal communication, the subject of this book.

Our purpose in these chapters is to open up this area of investigation through consideration of a wide range of communication perspectives on human interactions with animals. We wish to do for communication studies what Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert did for geography in their insightful collection *Animal Spaces, Bestly Places*. More than this, though, we want

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to aid readers of all backgrounds in rethinking the role of communication in the construction and transformation of human relationships with the more-than-human world. Thus, the anthropocentric impulse holds fast in many of the chapters that follow, not to mention in some of our assumptions and understandings of animal communication. Bound in these pages by human language, that ancient art of rhetoric, we both recognize our limitations and hold them up for scrutiny. For example, some authors use the language of ownership to describe human relationships with companion animals while others make rhetorical choices that seek to challenge our ways of understanding interaction with other animals.³ As Tema Milstein points out, “Struggles over discourse . . . are a necessary and interrelated part of wider struggles for change,” including changes to human relationships with animals (1052). These chapters are but a starting point for consideration of the ways in which communication theories and methodologies can help us to broaden our critical horizons to include other species and, indeed, other worlds.⁴

Those approaching this volume with a foundation in the humanities and social sciences may recognize this call from the writings of several philosophers who have influenced the field of communication. Charles Saunders Peirce and George Kennedy, whose scholarship has been foundational for the study of rhetoric, offer invitations to consider animal communication. Their contributions are discussed briefly alongside an overview of extra-disciplinary scholarship that has also been influential in this area. Among the most notable semioticians to address the topic, for example, is Thomas Sebeok, whose various examinations of sign-based animal communication popularized the study of “zoosemiotics” or “biosemiotics” (Sebeok; Wheeler). Despite the ‘human’ bias in the communication field,⁵ a few scholars have succeeded in publishing articles that explicitly address the subject of nonhuman communication (Barker; Carbaugh; Hawhee; Liska; Neiva and Hickson; Rogers; Rummel). Richard Rogers, in his germinal essay arguing for a materialist, transhuman and dialogic theory of communication, summarizes much of the relevant ecofeminist literature, highlighting the need for “ways of listening to nondominant voices and nonhuman agents and their inclusion in the production of meaning, policy, and material conditions” (268). As David Abram writes,

To shut ourselves off from these other voices, to continue by our lifestyles to condemn these other sensibilities to the oblivion of extinction, is to rob our own senses of their integrity, and to rob our minds of their coherence. We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human. (Abram 22)

Critical theorists such as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari provide substantial insight into the larger question of how animals and humans might communicate with each other, as do several ecofeminist authors (Adams; Gaard; Haraway; Merchant; Warren). Donna Haraway’s *Companion*

Species Manifesto characterizes animals as “signifying others” (81); in it, she echoes anthropologist Barbara Noske’s suggestion that we think about (and communicate with) animals as “other worlds” (34). Noske further suggests that ecofeminists, “unlike many other animal advocates . . . value non-animal nature, animate as well as inanimate” (Noske 173).⁶

For a semiotician such as Charles Saunders Peirce, feelings can “function as signs” (Anderson 86). He argued that animals have an instinct for communication and that the capacity to feel with another is the basis for perception. Clearly, certain animals signify with each other and across species, which Peirce described as “forms of communication . . . made possible by the shared feelings of difference perceivers” (qtd. in Anderson 87–88). Because of this ability to share feelings with others, Peirce suggests, like Kennedy, that we can “study the semeiotic, or sign-using, habits of all animals.” (Anderson 87).

We are aided in doing so by expanding our understanding of communication beyond that very human obsession with the structure and substance of verbal utterances. Animals, including humans, speak not only via vocalization but also in scent, posture, eye gaze, even vibration. John Durham Peters describes communication as “the occasional touch of otherness” (256). For Kennedy, rhetoric is more than discursive; it is a “natural phenomenon: the potential for it exists in all life forms that can give signals, it is practiced in limited forms by nonhuman animals, and it contributed to the evolution of human speech and language from animal communication” (*Comparative Study* 4). Elsewhere, Kennedy argues that “rhetorical energy is not found only in language. It is present also in physical actions, facial expressions, gestures, and signs generally” (“A Hoot” 3–4).

Admitting that humans are generally inept at employing most systems of animal communication, Kennedy argues that we still “share a ‘deep’ natural rhetoric” with animals (*Comparative Study* 13). Through observation, we can “learn to understand animal rhetoric and many animals can understand some features of human rhetoric that they share with us, such as gestures or sounds that express anger or friendliness or commands” (*Comparative Study* 13). Kennedy’s understanding of rhetoric suggests that communication is as much an exchange of energy as it is a matter of symbolic interaction (26). In fact, in his general definition of rhetoric, Kennedy alludes to the importance not only of acknowledging animal communication as rhetorical expression, but of enhancing the human interlocutor’s ability to understand and take action.

Rhetoric, in the most general sense, may thus be identified with the energy inherent in an utterance (or an artistic representation): the mental or emotional energy that impels the speaker to expression, the energy level coded in the message, and the energy received by the recipient who then uses mental energy in decoding and perhaps acting on the message. Rhetorical labor takes place. (*Comparative Study* 5)

On this last point, Barbara Noske points to several examples of humans who made an effort, who expended the rhetorical energy, to learn the language of their animal interlocutors and to listen to what they were expressing.⁷ From a communication standpoint, such efforts demonstrate awareness of a point Noske makes shortly after addressing the question, “Is Animal Language not *Language*?”

The basic question should not be whether animals have or have not human-like language. In having to pass *our* tests as measured by *our* yardsticks, they will always come out second best, namely, as reduced humans. The real question to be posed is how the animals themselves experience the world and how they organize this experience and communicate about it. (143–144).

Some of Noske’s other arguments about human-animal communication are worth repeating here because, just as the subfield of intercultural communication has learned a great deal from anthropological studies of other humans, students of what I term *internatural communication* have much to gain from a critical anthropological approach to animal communication. Of particular note are Noske’s observations regarding “feral” children raised by animals:

In becoming one with the animals by virtually crossing the species boundary, these human beings not only have met the Other, they have almost become the Other. And by accepting this strange being in their midst the adoptive animals in their turn meet the Other. Indeed, animal-adopted children exemplify an animal-human relationship more than a human-animal relationship. . . .

Even though we may not succeed in becoming animal with the animals, we as humans may make the effort of meeting the animals on their own ground instead of expecting them to take steps towards us and making them perform according to our standards. . . . To do this one must try to empathize with animals, to imagine what it is to be a wolf, a dolphin, a horse or an ape. (167)

She goes on to say, “Good participatory observation is basically an exercise in *empathy* while at the same time one is aware of the impossibility of total knowledge and total understanding” (169). It is this empathic impulse that drives this collection.⁸

Deleuze and Guattari’s essay “Becoming-Animal,” published in *A Thousand Plateaus*, provides a way of thinking about communication that, in some ways, echoes Noske’s call for empathy and Kennedy’s definition of rhetoric as essentially “a form of mental and emotional energy” (*Comparative Study* 3). For Deleuze and Guattari, “becoming-animal” is about movement and proximities. “Becoming is to emit particles that take on

certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity. Or, it is to emit particles that enter that zone because they take on those relations” (122). They offer instructions for grasping this notion of human-animal compossibility, this “shared and indiscernible” proximity “that makes it impossible to say where the boundary between the human and the animal lies” (122).

An example: Do not imitate a dog, but make your organism enter into composition with *something else* in such a way that the particles emitted from the aggregate thus composed will be canine as a function of the relation of movement and rest, or of molecular proximity, into which they enter. Clearly, this something else can be quite varied, and be more or less directly related to the animal in question . . . (Deleuze and Guattari 123)

Later in the essay, the authors affirm the molecular nature of “becoming-animal”: “Yes, all becomings are molecular: the animal, flower or stone one becomes are molecular collectivities, haecceities, not molar subjects, objects, or forms that we know from the outside and recognize from experience, through science, or by habit” (124).

More than mimicry or reflection, though, this ‘becoming’ is a manifestation of corporeal dialogism, an “embodied rhetoricity” and perspective on communication that “forsakes oppositionality in favor of an all-encompassing perspective on the rhetorical act” (McKerrow 319). Emphasizing corporeality, Deleuze and Guattari suggest we must allow ourselves to feel, at a molecular level, the connection to otherness. In the process of becoming-molecular, becoming-animal, we humans might do well to attend to other sources of meaning and intentionality with the same scrutiny and care we give to the symbolic. As animal behaviorist V. Csanyi points out,

The “top-down” approach, which compares animal accomplishments to those of humans, is heavily burdened with ideology. . . . Of course, there are other avenues as well. We could examine, for example, how animals, or even humans, *understand* how one should behave in a small community. . . . A true evolutionary characterization would adopt such an approach. (Csanyi 167)

Drawing insight and encouragement from these and other theorists who see no reason *not* to consider communication as, at the very least, an interspecies enterprise,⁹ I offer this collection as a foray into the realm of *internatural communication*. It is a first step toward what I expect will grow into a more expansive set of questions about communication and the more-than-human world.¹⁰ Like intercultural communication’s emphasis on relationships among and between different cultures, internatural communication explores interaction among and between natural communities and social

groups that include participants from what we might initially describe as different classifications of nature.¹¹ Internatural communication includes the exchange of intentional energy between humans and other animals as well as communication among animals and other forms of life. It is at its core, as is the study of communication generally, about the construction of meaning and the constitution of our world through interaction. It simply extends the boundary line a little further, first to include other animals, so that we can test the veracity and capacity of our theories and methods in this new space.

Similar to Kennedy's approach to the 'rhetorical study of animal communication,' which focuses on the identification of principles and formal aspects of communication commonly used by both human and nonhuman animals, the authors in this volume approach animal-human communication questions from standpoints shaped by communication theories and research methods. Some of this work might elsewhere be termed "zoosemiotics," "biorhetoric," "communibiology," "ecosemiotics," "anthrozoology"¹² or even "corporeal rhetoric" or "transhuman communication." I choose the term *internatural communication* not to compete with these other labels but rather as a term that can be inclusive of their meanings as well as embracing the possibilities of human and animal communication with other life forms. I also like the term because of its capacity to capture a way of communicating with and about nature from a standpoint that is implicated in the very concept of 'nature.'

The organization of this book reflects a perspective on communication informed by a coherentist epistemology. Such an approach "privileges no one position at the expense of others because it begins with the assumption that all positions are interrelated and interdependent" (McPhail, "From Complicity to Coherence" 127). According to Mark Lawrence McPhail, inquiry into coherence begins with "a radical critique of duality" and moves toward an "emancipatory understanding of language and life" (*Zen* 5–6). In addition, it emphasizes the kind of "methodological and epistemic flexibility" characteristic of this volume ("From Complicity to Coherence" 127). We begin, then, by examining the question of our complicity in the rhetorical, ideological and practical subordination of animals and animal subjectivity to human interests and agendas.¹³ From there, we move along a continuum of essays in Part II that ask us to consider our implication in the lives of animal Others. McPhail describes implication as "the recognition and awareness of our essential interrelatedness . . ." (*Rhetoric* ix). Some of the essays in this section are aimed at extending communication theory to address the significance of human-animal relationships for the humans (and sometimes other animals) in those relationships. Other chapters focus on implication as the praxis for coherence, a process for coming to relate, listen and interact in ways that honor the integrity of animals and our relationships with them. Finally, in Part III, we explore the possibilities of a coherence theory of human-animal relations through explorations of

internatural communication in both domestic and wild contexts, as well as through arguments for repositioning our human ways of communicating and knowing alongside, rather than above, those of other animals. The book concludes by calling for efforts to expand our understanding of internatural communication by rethinking our anthropocentric grip on the symbolic and becoming students of corporeal rhetorics of scent, sound, sight, touch, proximity, position and so much more.

Following the introduction, Part I opens with a theoretical essay by Tony Adams in which he argues that human representations of animals mediate “personal and political human agendas” in ways that naturalize those agendas. Grounding his analysis in symbolic interactionism, Adams weaves together personal experience, textual analysis and ethnographic fieldwork to show how humans use companion animals to mediate interaction with other humans, how the Central Park Zoo’s purportedly gay penguin couple (and other popular penguin depictions) mediates public discourse on gay marriage and how invasive species displays at aquariums and zoos mediate human dialogues about immigration policy. In Chapter 3, Deborah Cox Callister examines the rhetoric surrounding beached whales in order to understand how the bodies and circumstances of the whales shape and influence human understanding and orientation toward particular policy objectives. At a time when the U.S. Navy proposes five years of testing and training of sonar and explosives that threaten millions of marine mammals in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, Callister’s analysis and materialist rhetorical perspective is especially significant. Elaborating the policy perspective, Joseph Abisaid takes on the primate research debate in Chapter 4. Abisaid conducts a framing analysis of the primate testing debate, arguing that appeals to scientific progress continue to counter the ethical arguments against experimentation on nonhuman primates, providing insight into “how individuals rationalize the human-animal relationship.” Moving away from questions of policy and toward the ideological orientations that undergird such decision making, Shana Heinrich’s chapter, which concludes the section, examines animal representation as configured in the history of American animation. Using a case study of the popular children’s program *SpongeBob Squarepants*, Heinrich argues that visual representations of animated animal bodies often “create, maintain, and render invisible speciesist ideologies.”

The essays in Part II move us from complicity to implication, a critical awareness and effort to understand and make our role as humans in communicative relationships and interactions with other animals more just and responsible. In Chapter 6, Carrie Packwood Freeman calls attention to the necessary connections between human values and food consumption in arguing for a vegan ethic. Like Wendy Atkins-Sayre’s recent essay examining how PETA seeks to overcome the human-animal divide, Freeman’s chapter notes that the rhetoric of prominent animal rights organizations works to overcome human views of animals as Others, especially animals

used for food. She illustrates how several groups advocate for veganism by appealing to primary human values and evaluates the campaigns in terms of how effectively they challenge speciesism and accomplish their goal of persuading consumers. In fact, the incongruity in humans' treatment of animals viewed as a source of food and animals viewed as companions is significant. Thus, our effort to become further implicated in questions of communication in human-animal relationships turns next to those animals known commonly as 'pets.'

Nick Trujillo takes his companion Ebbie on the road in Chapter 7 to learn about "dog culture" and the culture of "dog people." His essay illustrates the power of the canine-human bond and provides insight into the variety of human communication practices related to living with and serving those with such bonds. In Chapter 8, Mary Pilgram looks at supportive communication from the veterinarian's point of view, driving home Trujillo's point that many people consider their animals to be (and to be treated as) members of their families. Pilgram investigates veterinarians' perceptions of their social support efforts toward grieving human clients, suggesting ways that training in supportive communication could enhance professional practice.

Turning from companion animals to wildlife, the last chapters offer a unique perspective on humans' implication in environmental (un)sustainability. Leigh Bernacchi looks at the ritual interaction that unites birders and birds and suggests ways the relationship can be extended toward a conservation ethic in Chapter 9. Her argument is reminiscent of Kennedy's statement about bird songs: "Ritualization accompanied by epideictic utterance is a feature of animal rhetoric as it is of human life" (21). Concluding the section on implication and pointing the way toward coherentist perspectives, Tema Milstein critiques the contemporary "naturalistic" zoo in Chapter 10. She examines the zoo in terms of its institutionalized practices of reflection. She then explores possibilities for rhetorical refraction, introduced by the young visitors and inhabitants of the zoo exhibits who challenge the human-animal divide.

In Part III, our coherentist framework comes full circle, illustrating how communication studies can move beyond a focus solely on interactions among humans to be an interspecies and internatural enterprise, as is the world for which it seeks to account. The first chapter in the section uses ethnographic methods to study the techniques and outcomes of animal-human communicators, professionals who communicate (and train other humans to communicate) with particular animals. Even skeptics of animal-human communicators are likely to find Susan Hafen's evidence and argument for more affective and intuitive communicative processes compelling. In Chapter 12, Pat Munday looks at ravens and human hunters from the perspective of semiotics, arguing that ravens' relationships with other animals (including humans) as well as their communicative capacities can help us understand how to bridge the animal-human divide. Further legitimating

Munday's arguments, Stephen Lind makes the case for symbolic animal communication in Chapter 13, challenging Kenneth Burke's definition of humans as the only symbol-using animal and opening up consideration of the "complicated and fascinating ways" animal-human communication can function. The book concludes with Susannah Bunny LeBaron's rumination on the narrative elements of human communication with the more-than-human world, in which she argues for a paradigm shift in the ways we narrate the constitutive relationship between humans and other animals. Her 'meditation' reminds us that implication is a path toward coherence, both narrative and ideological, in our interactions with other animals.

Whether in the lab, the field, a zoo, at home, at the vet, in the garden, on the road or on the screen, we regularly encounter communicating animals and often direct our mental energies toward them. As these essays demonstrate, communication researchers should have a lot to say about the dynamics of human-animal communication. Even more importantly, we are well poised to offer new (and old) ways of listening and learning, internaturally:

/ Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their / tribes,
their families, their histories, too. Talk to them, / listen to them. They
are alive poems /

(Joy Harjo 40)

NOTES

1. Stephen Lind elaborates on this observation in Chapter 13, this volume. Like other authors in this volume, I borrow the phrase "more-than-human world" from David Abram, who uses it in reference to "sensuous reality" (x).
2. For a popular description of some of these communicative relationships, see Deborah Noyes's *One Kingdom*.
3. Consider, for instance, Donna Haraway's challenge to linguistic (and ideological) dualisms with terms such as "humanimal" and "natureculture."
4. Barbara Noske's *Beyond Boundaries* is a germinal volume for any student of human-animal communication. She points out how the "bias of human domination" contributes to "an ideological stake in a status quo: the object status of animals" (101). In contrast, she views culture as a "dialectical process of constituting and being constituted," a process that frequently involves relationships across boundary lines termed *species* (87). Looking at similar issues from a representational standpoint, Stacey Sowards draws upon Kenneth Burke's concept of consubstantiality to explain how identification with orangutans can "deconstruct the nature/culture divide and dualistic thinking that has persisted for centuries" (46). She argues that "animalcentric anthropomorphism" can provide a "profound interspecies event" that is inclusive of human-animal continuities as well as discontinuities (46).
5. Even Celeste Condit has acknowledged that rhetorical critics must move beyond our "ethnocentric assumption that only human-made symbolic codes matter to human action" (371).
6. Although this volume focuses exclusively on the human-animal relationship, nonanimal nature can also be understood within the framework of

internatural communication I propose. McKerrow gestures toward this possibility when he extends his concept of corporeal rhetoric to explain Randall Lake's description of "Red Power" rhetoric, which holds land as an "essential element of Indian identity" (324). By transcending the nature/culture dualism, corporeal rhetoric can enable an expanded notion of relationship and recognition; in short, corporeal rhetoric may serve as a powerful resource for internatural communication.

7. See Donal Carbaugh's essay "Just Listen" for a communication studies example of such deep listening.
8. Karen Dace and Mark McPhail, writing about interracial interaction, offer empathy as a communicative behavior that can lead to "implicature," or "the notion that human beings are linguistically, materially, psychologically, and spiritually interrelated and interdependent" (345–346). I argue that such implicature (or "implication," as I refer to it in this volume) can be practiced with the more-than-human world as well.
9. Noske also makes the case for interspecies communication (156). Carl Zimmer's recent *Time* cover story on "Animal Friendships" mentions "one of the most provocative implications" of recent research into animal friendships, namely "that friendships that evolved within species may sometimes reach across the species barrier" (38).
10. Actually, it is perhaps better characterized as a second or third step, as other communication scholars have helped to establish this trail (see, e.g., Michael Salvador and Tracylee Clarke's essay on "The Weyekin Principle" and Julie Schutten and Richard Rogers's essay on "transhuman dialog" [*sic*]).
11. Of course, the very notion of classification breaks down under further scrutiny. What lines of difference will matter at any given historical moment? Mammal or animal? Vertebrate or invertebrate? Flora or fauna? Skin or shell or fur? Animate or inanimate?
12. For a more detailed discussion of anthrozoology, see Susan Hafen's chapter (this volume).
13. For an extensive discussion of the sociological dimensions and development of human relationships with and use of animals in the twentieth century, see Adrian Franklin's *Animals and Modern Cultures*.

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Part I

Complicity

2 Animals as Media

Speaking through/with Nonhuman Beings

Tony E. Adams

Two days before Halloween and four days before the 2004 U.S. presidential election, I sit outside my favorite coffee shop and prepare to read the newspaper. I am quickly distracted by people walking decorated dogs, animals sporting costumes and political propaganda. I watch a Doberman in a miniature cowboy hat and a pumpkin-suited Chihuahua pass, followed by a Labrador with a John Kerry/John Edwards bumper sticker attached to its fur.

I notice that the decorated dogs and their owners receive more attention than owners of undecorated dogs; the decorated dogs seem to work as conversation starters, separating the animals and their owners from the mundane and boring owners and animals. The Labrador in support of Kerry/Edwards also functions as a vehicle to take the owner's political message into narrow alleys, sidewalks and dog-friendly venues.

In this essay, I describe how animals can function as media, as tools humans use to facilitate human interaction. In so doing, I add to existing research on human-animal relationships, research that tends to emphasize the dilemmas that arise when humans treat animals as people, objects or a combination of both (Francione; Sanders); ways humans speak for animals, ways animals communicate with people and ways humans can and should interpret animal communication (Arluke and Sanders); what animal behaviors tell us about human behaviors (MooAllem; Roughgarden); ways (human) representations of animals can influence human interactions with and communication about live versions of these animals (Berger; King); animal selfhood and the "shared intersubjectivity" of humans and animals (Jerolmack 655; Irvine); and the mutual, coevolving qualities of "companion species" relationships, meaningful endeavors created by all species involved (Anderson; Haraway, "Species").

Some writers have acknowledged ways humans use animals as media. For instance, Cain describes how humans talk "to their pet instead of to other family members" in ways "other family members could hear" (79); Messent refers to dogs as "social lubricants" (45); Williams frames dogs as "relational media" (103); Arluke and Sanders provide examples of people presenting a "virtual voice" of an animal to express their own "orientation,

desires, or concerns” (70); Robins, Sanders and Cahill demonstrate ways an animal can work as a “conduit” humans use to speak to other humans (22); and Ramirez illustrates how humans can use dogs as “props” in order to create “presentations of self” (375). However, the specific ways humans use animals as media and the implications of such use are tangential discussions in many of these projects.

Given my interest in understanding ways humans use animals as media in human interaction, tenets of symbolic interactionism ground this research. Interactionists concern themselves with what happens in moments of relating, in the time and space of interaction. In particular, interactionists work to discern the “taken-for-granted meanings” entrenched in interaction processes (Denzin 19), attend to meaning-making processes (Goffman, “Interaction”; Mead), conceive of personal accountability in interaction (Goffman, “Strategic”; Scott and Lyman) and demonstrate how meanings are used, by humans, to make sense of themselves, others and society.

Adhering to interactionist goals, I have two interrelated objectives. First, I describe what it means to make animals media, and specifically note how humans, *in* interaction, make animals meaningful *for other humans*. I use two case studies to formulate this animals-as-media theory: (1) the use of dogs by humans and (2) the use of penguins at the Central Park Zoo (New York) and in the film *March of the Penguins*. I then discern possible consequences of using animals as media by illustrating how the rhetoric of “invasive species” exhibits found at many zoos and aquaria can implicate humans labeled “illegal,” “invasive” and “nonnative.”

Second, following Irvine’s call for researchers to better understand “how” animals mean something for human interaction (15), I illustrate how the human use of animals can influence meaning-making processes and personal accountability. As I demonstrate, animals are not “neutral delivery system[s],” an assumption often held about media (Meyrowitz 15). Animals can, and do, harbor personal and political human agendas.

METHOD

A case study is a detailed account of an activity or a process. The purpose of the account is to provide insight into, advance theorizing about and attend to the social and political characteristics of the activity or process (Stake). Case studies utilize multiple methodological procedures and sources of evidence (Yin), and they are helpful because they refine theory and introduce complexities for future research (Creswell).

In this project, I use two case studies—the use of dogs by humans, and the use of gay and straight penguins—to provide an account of how humans can use animals as media. I use personal experience, textual analysis and ethnographic fieldwork to develop each case. I then use grounded theory (Charmaz) to inductively discern patterns—repeated words, phrases