

A Survey of American Sociologists

ASA Animals & Society
Section Survey 2020



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Highlights

- ❖ A brief history of the section and its demographic profile
- ❖ Trends in recruitment; recruitment insight
- ❖ Membership interests
- ❖ ASA in context

ASA Animals & Society

- ❖ Founded in 2001
- ❖ 2nd smallest section
- ❖ Diverse membership
 - ❖ Vegans, vegetarians, omnivores
 - ❖ Anti-speciesists **and** pro-speciesism/benevolent speciesists
 - ❖ Animals as research subjects **and** objects
 - ❖ Social movements, social work, pet therapy/healthcare, environment
- ❖ Recent collaborations with environment section (many dual-members)

Animals & Society Organizing Committee Members

Janet Alger - Siena College
Steven Alger - College of St. Rose
Dana Atwood - Western Michigan University
Bonnie Berry - Social Problems Research Group
Clif Flynn - University of South Carolina
Suzanne Goodney - Indiana University
Aileen Hall - Ohio University
Corwin Kruse - University of Minnesota
Helene Lawson - University of Pittsburgh
Brian Lowe - University of Virginia
Lisa Martin - Case Western Reserve University
David Nibert - Wittenberg University
Clint Sanders - University of Connecticut
Anna Williams - University of California, San Diego
Lisa Anne Zilney - University of Tennessee

ASA Animals & Soc. Survey

- ❖ Spring (pre-COVID) 2020
- ❖ Membership 118
 - ❖ Down from 149
 - ❖ Consistent with overall ASA decline
 - ❖ Recession, austerity, privatization of higher ed
- ❖ SurveyMonkey
 - ❖ Limit of 40, although 60 responded
 - ❖ Response rate 1/3
- ❖ Key limitation: commitment to section bias

Membership Durability

- ❖ 43% members of 5 years or more
- ❖ 33% members of 2-4 years

Membership Status

- ❖ 28% student
- ❖ 55% academic
- ❖ 8% independent researcher

- ❖ Some mention in comments coming from other backgrounds (environment, anthropology, etc.); section fulfills service not offered elsewhere)

Entry into Section

- ❖ 33% ASA membership
- ❖ 18% mentor
- ❖ 13% colleague
- ❖ 8% ASA promotional materials



Reason for Joining (Ranked)

- ❖ **Promote subject in sociology**
- ❖ Networking
- ❖ Stay abreast of academic opportunities
- ❖ Mentorship

Comments

❖ Building community:

- ❖ “I just want to reiterate that it is very important to me to have a group of scholars promoting animal studies and prompting each other. For my other interests, there are multiple active organizations, but for animal studies, this is really it.”

❖ Membership as Activism

- ❖ “Primarily [...] to keep animal advocacy viable in as many spaces as possible.”

❖ Legitimizing the Subfield

- ❖ “I was a grad student thinking about a dissertation on human-animal relations and many people thought I was crazy and told me it wasn’t sociology. When I found the section and attended the panel at ASA, it helped convince me I could do this work and be supported.”

❖ Mentorship

- ❖ “...being a sympathetic, supportive graybeard for the young scholars who are blazing the trail of this area.”

ASA in Context

- ❖ One of the smallest ASA sections
 - ❖ But large in comparison to other animal sections
 - ❖ More active any other sections, such as that of the BSA
- ❖ Stands to gain from similarly active sections such as TASA
- ❖ Difficulties in soliciting council volunteers, social media and newsletter submissions, etc.
 - ❖ Award submissions are relatively robust
 - ❖ Conferences often sparsely attended with insufficient paper submissions
- ❖ Overshadowed by environmental section

Conclusions

- ❖ Like many sections, divided over commitment to speciesism
- ❖ Most respondents indicate support of section for altruistic reasons
- ❖ Small section, but rich community for supporting students and validating subfield