



# Resonance of Moral Shocks in Abolitionist Animal Rights Advocacy: Overcoming Contextual Constraints

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## Abstract

Jasper and Poulsen (1995) have long argued that moral shocks are critical for recruitment in the nonhuman animal rights movement. Building on this, Decoux (2009) argues that the abolitionist faction of the nonhuman animal rights movement fails to recruit members because it does not effectively utilize descriptions of suffering. However, the effectiveness of moral shocks and subsequent emotional reactions has been questioned. This article reviews the literature surrounding the use of moral shocks in social movements. Based on this review, it is suggested that the exploitation of emotional reactions to depictions of suffering can sometimes prove beneficial to recruitment, but successful use is contextually rooted in preexisting frameworks, ideology, and identity. It is concluded that a reliance on images and narratives might be misconstrued in a society dominated by nonhuman animal welfare ideology.

## Keywords

abolition, animal rights, emotion, frames, identity, moral shocks, social movements

## Introduction

With the recent growth of the nonhuman abolitionist animal rights movement has come increasing debate over how nonhuman animal liberation can be tactically achieved. Jasper and Poulsen (1995) emphasize the importance of moral shocks in recruitment for the nonhuman animal rights movement. Building on this, DeCoux (2009), a legal scholar in nonhuman animal rights, posits that abolitionist nonhuman animal rights aspires to ending nonhuman animal use but lacks the necessary tools to achieve this goal. DeCoux points to a stagnation or possible decline in vegan recruitment to demonstrate the failure of abolitionism. However, DeCoux's argument fails to consider the possible inefficacy of moral shocks and the influence of framing, ideology, and identity over the interpretation of moral shocks. Moral shocks include

narratives, depictions, or situations utilized or highlighted by social movements to motivate participation (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995). The nonhuman animal rights movement relies heavily on this tactic in circulating graphic photographs, films, and stories that describe the brutal exploitation of nonhuman animals. The welfarist faction relies on moral shocks to motivate reform, while the abolitionist movement may incorporate them to motivate veganism. Vegan outreach, according to Francionian abolitionism, is the primary tactic of concern (Francione, 1996).

This article will briefly describe abolitionist nonhuman animal rights theory, goals, and tactics. The abolitionist movement will be the focus of discussion, though veganism will be highlighted, as vegan outreach is considered the primary abolitionist tool for achieving an end to nonhuman animal use. This article will also examine social movement literature regarding moral shocks and recruitment based on emotion. Media bias, countermovement framing, and identity of both activists and potential constituents will then be explored as important considerations in understanding the efficacy of moral shocks. It is argued that the use of moral shocks may not always be beneficial to recruitment. Further, the successful use of moral shocks is determined by social context. Specifically, the dominant welfarist paradigm within the nonhuman animal rights movement influences how moral shocks are interpreted. Given these constraints, abolitionism may not have much to gain from increasing its use of narratives and images depicting suffering. The results of this review could have important implications for shaping framing and tactical considerations for abolitionist vegan outreach. These results also speak to the impact of the rights/welfare divide on movement activity.

### **Abolitionist Nonhuman Animal Rights**

A discussion of abolitionism is warranted to explain abolitionist goals and how moral shocks are related to outreach. Abolitionism, as proposed by Francione, is an approach to nonhuman animal rights that recognizes a need to abolish the property status of nonhuman animals and their resulting use in human animal society (Francione, 2000). He argues that the mainstream nonhuman animal rights movement is primarily welfarist (Francione, 1996). Welfarism is distinguished from abolitionism in that it focuses on reforming use, rather than abolishing it. Major welfarist organizations include PETA, HSUS, Compassion over Killing, and Farm Sanctuary. Francione (1996) defines them as welfarist because they are unclear about vegan advocacy and, according to his critique, tend to collaborate heavily with nonhuman animal exploiters. They

also engage in single-issue campaigning, which fails to address the root problem of nonhuman animal use as defined by Francione: the property status of nonhuman animals and a nonvegan society. While some, notably Regan (2004), suggest that abolition can be achieved through legislation that bans specific forms of nonhuman animal use, the Francionian abolitionist nonhuman animal rights movement primarily strives to increase the number of vegans as a means to eliminate the exploitation and use of nonhuman animals. Francione (2000) argues that the move toward abolition and increasing the number of vegans will be achieved through nonviolent vegan outreach. Outreach generally occurs through presentations, tabling, books, pamphlets, and Internet websites, podcasts, blogs, and forums.

It should be noted here that Francione's framing of the nonhuman rights movement, which divides individuals and organizations into abolitionist and welfarist factions, is not shared by all movement participants. Indeed, many who might be defined as new welfarist according to Francione's theory might utilize reformist means but retain the end goal of abolition and thus be considered abolitionist. As DeCoux's argument operates according to Francione's framework, however, this paper will reflect the Francionian approach to abolitionism.

DeCoux (2009) suggests that the abolitionist movement has not been successful. Noting the stagnated growth of vegans in the United States, DeCoux examines abolitionist tactics and suggests that they are largely ineffective in soliciting the emotional reaction needed to encourage participation. As DeCoux rightly points out, abolitionist outreach is less reliant on graphic imagery and narratives than welfarist outreach is, focusing more on a reasoned and rational presentation of information. She suggests that abolitionists borrow from welfarist tactics, which are more successful in eliciting emotional reaction and motivating participation. A brief exploration into the limited sources of abolitionist literature will shed light on this concern.<sup>1</sup>

In selecting sources of abolitionist literature, I examined the Web presence of popular abolitionist groups. Only organizations and websites producing outreach material that also make an explicit commitment to abolitionist theory and reject welfarism were considered. Of the 12 groups who fit these criteria, half downplay moral shocks (graphic depictions) and instead rely almost exclusively on rational arguments. Francione's *Animal Rights: The Abolitionist Approach* pamphlet (Francione & Charlton, 2008), for example, contains no images and contains no depictions of suffering beyond merely presenting the numbers of nonhuman animals killed. And his *Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or the Dog?* restricts limited descriptions of suffering to the introductory chapter (Francione, 2000).

Of course the abolitionist movement does not completely shy away from this type of advocacy. Many do utilize disturbing imagery and unsettling descriptions. The Boston Vegan Society's vegan advocacy pamphlet certainly contains graphic images and several narratives of the suffering endured by nonhuman animals (Boston Vegan Society, 2009). Yet, the pamphlet provides these depictions within the context of a careful discussion of abolitionist animal rights. Peaceful Prairie Sanctuary, a nonhuman animal rescue center and abolitionist advocacy organization, also relies very heavily on narratives and images. Their pamphlet, *The Faces of "Cage-Free" Egg Production*, for example, includes eight graphic images and focuses entirely on depictions of suffering (Peaceful Prairie Sanctuary, ~2010). Like the images in The Boston Vegan Association literature, the depictions are in the context of abolition and veganism. Of all six major groups that do utilize moral shocks, only one, Igualdad Animal, depends on them heavily. Instead, most morally shocking images are carefully and sparingly woven into rational arguments for veganism and abolition.

Francione (2009) maintains that graphic depictions of suffering focus on treatment and do not necessarily call use into question: "[G]ory materials almost always tend to make the viewer focus on the *treatment* of animals and not their *use*. That is, show someone something that portrays terrible treatment and the almost automatic reaction is that the treatment should be improved and not that the use should be stopped altogether." Francione contends that utilizing depictions of suffering—a tactic heavily used by the welfare movement—even in the context of abolition, can be misconstrued as part of an overall message for reform.

For example, FARM launched a "pay-per-view" campaign in 2011 that paid one dollar to any passerby willing to watch a graphic, four-minute video on nonhuman animal use (Felsing, 2011). Uniquely for a welfarist organization, FARM explicitly urged viewers to adopt veganism. FARM contacted participants a month after watching the film to gauge the effectiveness of the program. Surveys indicated that considerable percentages of viewers had pledged to decrease their consumption of nonhuman animal products and had changed their behaviors accordingly. There was no data presented on changed attitudes or behaviors in regards to nondietary exploitation. The welfarist context of the film and the recognition of reductionist alternatives to veganism, typical of major welfarist organizations, is likely a primary reason for this limited behavioral change. Indeed, whether or not moral shocks are effective in recruiting new members has been debated within the social movement literature. FARM's success in only persuading a portion of viewers to reduce nonhuman animal consumption instead of going vegan is an indica-

tion that there may be difficulties in successfully conveying a vegan or abolitionist message within a welfarist context.

### **Efficacy of Moral Shocks**

Given the confusion surrounding the use of moral shocks, it is useful to explore the literature on their effectiveness and their appropriateness for abolitionist advocacy. Emotions are often utilized by social movements to effect change in society and to recruit and motivate members (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003; Jasper, 1998). Images that trigger strong, negative responses are thought to increase donations of money and time to charities (Burt & Strongman, 2004; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990). The research of Eayrs and Ellis (1990) supports this finding, noting the specific advantage of utilizing moral shocks over narrative descriptions. Jasper and Poulsen (1995) find that participants in the nonhuman animal rights movement were most likely to be recruited by moral shocks as opposed to preexisting social networks. Jasper and Poulsen define moral shocks as narratives, depictions, or situations actively created by social movements to cause outrage and, potentially, participation. For the nonhuman animal rights movement, descriptions of suffering are attention-grabbing. Jasper and Poulsen (1995) find that moral shocks are particularly beneficial to recruitment when a preexisting social network is lacking for a movement that is pioneering a new frame. The impact can be immediate or can materialize over time (Jasper, 1998). Indeed, Herzog and Golden (2009) found that the use of moral shocks in nonhuman animal advocacy were often successful in eliciting strong emotional reactions and feelings of disgust, which motivated activism. These findings are supported in a study that exposed participants to graphic videos depicting nonhuman animal experimentation. Participants experienced feelings of disgust and were receptive to attitude change (Nabi, 2009). Building on this, Freeman (2012) argues for potential in promoting abolitionism and veganism through welfare-focused imagery.

McDonald (2000) also suggests that moral shocks can be effective. She reports that information on cruelty often triggered a catalytic response among the vegans she surveyed. Supporting Jasper's (1998) findings, McDonald finds that some individuals repressed the information until it later resurfaced, while others either immediately decided to become vegan or chose to learn more and became vegan later. The process, she notes, can take years. Of the catalytic experiences reported by participants in McDonald's survey, not all constituted moral shocks. However, many generated negative emotional responses, such

as feelings of guilt, shock, or sadness: “Emotions seem to have been one of the major defining characteristics of the more memorable catalytic experiences” (McDonald, 2000, p. 10). Newsletters, brochures, or books regarding nonhuman animal rights often pushed individuals into the decision to become vegan. Based on McDonald’s findings, it would appear that emotional responses to depictions of suffering are an important catalyst in becoming vegan. Alternatively, the experiences of those vegans who initially repressed information after learning of nonhuman animal suffering might suggest that utilizing this tactic could be useful in initiating future veganism. However, why some individuals repress uncomfortable knowledge and why it resurfaces later requires further understanding (McDonald, 2000).

Others are unsure about the effectiveness of moral shocks (Cooney, 2011; Rothman, Salovey, Antone, Keough, & Martin, 1992) or have found that they simply fail to recruit new members. In general, many researchers are concerned that moral shocks can repel potential constituents or cause them to tune out rather than become empathetic (Joy, 2008). Mika (2006) studied the effectiveness of PETA’s advertisements on college students and found that reactions were negative to advertisements that either “shocked or challenged the participants’ deeply held cultural beliefs, or . . . lacked credibility with the participants” (p. 930). Overall, she found that reaction to moral shocks was strongly negative and respondents were not persuaded. Based on responses from focus groups, Mika suggests that audiences “desire more than an ad campaign heavy on imagery and shock value to sway them to the animal rights cause” (2006, p. 937). However, the moral shocks examined in this study were mostly patriotic, religious, or reliant on sex appeal. One advertisement likened nonhuman animal use to the Holocaust. There were only two advertisements included in the study that portrayed suffering nonhuman animals, and these were compounded by religious or other cultural overtones. Significantly, she found that advertisements that based appeals for nonhuman animal rights on vegetarianism invoked the least interest, if any at all:

[W]hen one is confronted with personal and aggressive attacks condemning meat consumption, it is one’s own behavior being condemned: the enemy is thyself. . . . Thus, it could be that moral shock campaigns are ineffective when promoting vegetarianism, because condemning meat consumption (as opposed to other violations of animal rights) inevitably forces people to confront their own behavior (as opposed to that of others), and they are less likely to join a cause that requires them to make fundamental changes in what is such a deeply ingrained lifestyle. (Mika, 2006, p. 932)

The social distance between the public and those the moral shocks are targeting is critical. The externality of the vilified persons or groups makes them

easier to “Otherize” and judge morally. For example, campaigns against those who conduct laboratory testing might be easier for the public to support, as nonhuman animal testers are few in number, are generally isolated from the general public, and work more or less in secrecy (Kilstein & Kilkenny, 2011; Mika, 2006). Jasper (1998) reiterates the need to place blame on others: if the emotional reaction to moral shocks involves a need to change personal behavior, he argues that feelings of dread can paralyze mobilization. Creating an “Other” for participants to rally against increases group solidarity, affective ties, inclusivity, and reciprocal emotions, and motivates participation. It creates a collective identity that is conducive to mobilization (Nepstad & Smith, 2001). So, determining “in” groups and “out” groups in the nonhuman animal rights movement could prove tricky. Indeed, Maurer (2002) reiterates Mika’s warning in regards to the delicate matter of “Otherizing” exploiters of nonhuman animals. Encouraging attitude and behavior change becomes complicated when potential participants are also involved in the exploitative system.

Furthermore, Maurer (2002) finds that vegetarians and vegans are most likely to be recruited through social proximity to other vegetarians and vegans in their personal networks. Indeed, Cherry (2006) argues that personal networks are the most important factor in vegan recruitment. This transition to veganism through personal networks is usually time-consuming, however (Maurer, 2002). Mika adds that those who are close to transitioning are less likely to be impacted by graphic images and might respond better to factual information. Innocuous messages and images generated little response at all: “[I]t is likely that the kinds of recruitment techniques, such as moral shock, which have been documented as effective recruitment tools for animal rights groups, are ineffective for vegetarians” (Mika, 2006, p. 939). These findings contradict DeCoux’s proposition that vegans could be increased in number if the abolitionist movement were to adopt the welfarist tactics of graphic imagery and narratives.

Furthermore, Blaxter (2009) suggests that increasing incorporation of morally shocking material in media today has diluted its efficacy. A vegan population that continues to stagnate or even decrease (DeCoux, 2009), despite increased coverage of suffering, calls into question the efficacy of moral shocks: “[I]t would seem that the bluff is being called on the idea that people would become vegetarian overnight if slaughterhouses had glass walls” (Blaxter, 2009, p. 9). Francione agrees, arguing that “we live in a society in which people are used to seeing extreme violence and gore all the time. . . . We should not overestimate the impact of videos and materials that we think are shocking” (Francione, 2009). Blaxter and Francione both argue that moral shocks are

dependent upon their social context for efficacy. Specifically, media portrayals, welfarist countermovement framing, and identities of activists and potential constituents are critical for the successful use of any tactic, moral shocks being no exception.

### **Contextual Constraints: Media, Framing, and Identity**

Given that the usefulness of moral shocks is unclear, it is important to recognize other contextual considerations that could influence resonance. DeLuca and Peebles (2002) find that the utilization of media to depict protest in the public sphere is a powerful tactic for enabling social change. Yet moral shocks do not occur in a vacuum but rather coexist with a number of complicating factors. Blaxter (2009) describes an unfortunate media counterrevolution in our conceptions of nonhuman animal use. Here, a biological need to consume and exploit nonhuman animals is framed as a glorified return to human nature. Further, he adds, there is significant bias and no counterbalance to the mainstream conception of nonhuman animals as nonpersons and resources. He points to government and media censorship and exclusion of nonhuman animal liberation as part of this context: “[A]nimal use and its defence belong to an unhealthy world of censorship, regression, fantasy, myth, symbol and death” (2009, p. 12).

Cole and Morgan (2011) also examine media representations and censorship of discourse regarding nonhuman animal liberation. They emphasize the difficulty of promoting veganism within a nonvegan discourse. Veganism, they find, is marginalized and often portrayed negatively. Their content analysis of nearly 400 national newspapers in the United Kingdom shows that veganism was often depicted as a fad, overly difficult, or aesthetic, while vegans were often depicted as overly sensitive or hostile or were outright ridiculed. Further, among the few articles that do portray veganism positively, the authors find little mention of the ethical foundations to veganism. Media misrepresentation and censorship, they argue, marginalize vegans, allow for public avoidance and dismissal of the ethical considerations vegans promote, and allow for the perpetuation of the status quo. Indeed, nonhuman animal rights claims-making is too often appropriated by mainstream speciesist ideology (Kew, 2003).

Freeman (2009) also found that the media largely supported the speciesist status quo and reinforced objectified perceptions of nonhuman animals. Freeman (2012), Cole and Morgan (2011), and Blaxter (2009) suggest more media involvement by vegan academics and organizations. Freeman, Bekoff, and Bexell (2011) specifically encourage a more balanced view of nonhuman



animals that considers context, meaning, nonhuman perspectives, and rejects objectifying language. An increased focus on media attention could help counter bias and improve public receptiveness for discourse regarding veganism and nonhuman animal rights.

While media portrayals and censorship are highly influential on public interpretations of veganism and nonhuman animal rights issues, how social movements frame issues is also critical to the success of particular messages and tactics. Collective action framing is utilized by social movements to facilitate and motivate action (Benford & Snow, 2000). It involves the production and maintenance of meanings. That is, social movements actively identify and construct problems, antagonists, solutions, and motivations: "Frames help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). Diagnostic, prognostic, and action mobilization frames are three core framing tasks that collectively define the problem, identify who or what is to blame, and urge others to act toward an alternative (Benford & Snow, 2000; Benford, 1993).

There is rarely consensus over frames, and this often creates division within movements (Benford & Snow, 2000). Here, conflicts emerge as to how to construct problems, solutions, and strategy (Benford, 1993). The nonhuman animal rights movement is certainly characteristic of this phenomenon. While abolitionists and welfarists both operate under the master frame of animal rights, they differ significantly in their diagnostic, prognostic, and action framing. Diagnostic framing involves focusing blame or responsibility. Welfarism, the dominant movement within the nonhuman animal rights arena, generally points to treatment as the primary concern regarding nonhuman animals. Abolitionists, on the other hand, blame perpetuated use and property status. The two factions also differ significantly in their prognostic framing, or how they propose to solve the problems facing nonhuman animals. Welfarism campaigns to reform use while abolitionists support vegan outreach in an attempt to eliminate use of nonhuman animals. Finally, it is action framing that highlights DeCoux's critique of effective advocacy. Action framing provides motivation and rationale for participation (Benford & Snow, 2000). Welfarism often relies on graphic depictions of suffering to motivate and recruit. Abolitionists, however, rely more heavily on the power of reason and theory. DeCoux (2009) sees power in the prognostic and diagnostic framings of abolitionism but argues that abolitionism could benefit significantly from the adoption of action framing that relies more heavily on depictions of suffering.

Not all frames hold the same resonance. Internal disputes over framing can impact the effectiveness of social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000). The

dominance of the welfarist framing within the nonhuman animal rights movement can stifle alternatives: “If considered at all, ethical questions... have always been overwhelmingly dominated by conventional animal welfare or neo-welfarist perspectives” (Yates, 2009). Further, when the dominant group is able to frame other factions negatively, their success is impacted: “When protestors’ actions backfire, it is usually because their opponents actively work to portray them in a bad light” (Jasper, 1998, p. 421). With the added support of negative media portrayals and censorship (Cole & Morgan, 2011; Blaxter, 2009), welfarism has largely framed abolitionism and veganism as difficult or radical:

Clearly, animal welfarism’s institutionalised status as the firmly-fixed orthodoxy is its greatest strength: from this assured position other perspectives can be authoritatively characterised as “extreme” and “unnecessary.” The widespread social orientation to animal welfarism means that any thinking about human-nonhuman relations is almost mechanically assessed within this long-established and entrenched paradigm. Animal welfarism, unsurprisingly, is all-pervasive, even in campaigns “for” nonhuman animals. (Yates, 2007)

Large nonhuman animal rights organizations generally fail to recognize the critical importance of veganism, choosing to focus on veg\*anism, vegetarianism, reductionism, and welfare reform (Freeman, 2010; DeCoux, 2009; Francione, 1996). Francione emphasizes that welfarist groups tend to portray veganism as difficult, superhuman, and not necessary:

The modern animal movement has *never* promoted a clear and unequivocal abolitionist/vegan message. On the contrary. Almost all of the large groups in the United States, UK, and elsewhere promote a welfarist approach, and to the extent that they even talk about the abolitionist/vegan approach, they present it as some sort of distant and utopian goal. They often pejoratively label veganism as “absolutist,” “fundamentalist,” or “purist.” (Francione & Garner, 2010, p. 214)

Vegan Outreach, a large welfarist organization, for example, has urged a shift away from focusing on veganism to protect their donation base, as veganism can appear “uptight” and “difficult” (Norris, 2009). PETA also denounces veganism as narcissistic and inconvenient (Friedrich, ~2010). Joy (2008) reiterates this concern, suggesting that insisting that potential participants go vegan is part of an unrealistic “all-or-nothing” approach (p. 63). Indeed, Freeman (2010) reports that many nonhuman animal rights organizations frame their goals in welfarist ideology to reduce conflict. Given this, abolitionists’ ability to appropriate welfarist tactics successfully, as DeCoux suggests, could

be difficult, if not impossible. Certainly, most of the nonhuman animal rights movement must contend with counterframing by institutional exploiters (Swan & McCarthy, 2003) and the media (Cole & Morgan, 2011; Blaxter, 2009). Yet, abolitionists in particular must also contend with counterframing from within the nonhuman animal rights movement and the pervasive association of welfarism with nonhuman animal rights.

DeCoux does recognize the popular misuse of nonhuman animal rights. She points to large nonhuman animal welfare organizations, scholars, the media, and courts in confusing rights terminology with that of welfare: “[P]hrases like ‘animal rights’ and ‘animal welfare’ seem to have entered some linguistic house of mirrors that distorts the words beyond recognition” (2009, p. 16). This confusion can influence interpretations of depictions of suffering. Francione (2009) and Hall (2006) argue that mainstream nonhuman animal rights organizations are the major proponents of suffering-focused advocacy and utilize it in a context of modifying use rather than abolishing it. So long as use is seen as acceptable within the dominant welfare frame, abolitionist action framing that relies on graphic depictions of suffering might be interpreted as a call to improve that use, rather than to abolish it. This type of advocacy, if utilized by abolitionists, is therefore likely to be interpreted in unintended ways.

Identity is another important factor that can impact the resonance of moral shocks in nonhuman animal rights campaigning. Gamson (2004) encourages movements to recognize the role of bystanders, public opinion, and media in enacting social change. This symbolic strategy, as he understands it, can resist marginalization, increase mobilization, and neutralize the counterframing efforts of other groups. Jasper and Poulsen (1995) recognize the impact of demographics and political beliefs, while Einwohner (1999) points specifically to the importance of gender, class, and potentially race on the effectiveness of nonhuman animal rights campaigns. Targeted audiences, she argues, are more or less receptive to nonhuman animal rights claims based on preexisting attributions: “Race, class, and gender affect the ways in which protesters are received, both by their targets and by other parties, and therefore affect protest outcomes” (Einwohner, 1999, p. 72). Einwohner explains that specific types of campaigns can increase the salience of these attributions. For example, she finds that hunting campaigns were more likely to elicit stereotypical preconceptions of activists based on gender and class than a circus campaign: “In the context of hunting, which is seen as a logical, scientific endeavor, emotional arguments are easily disputed” (p. 71). Here, claims are dismissed by potential constituents because they are deemed emotional and gendered. It is likely that moral shocks used to promote veganism and to end nonhuman animal

use could also be dismissed as overly emotional or feminine. In fact, nonhuman animal rights activists often downplay emotion in favor of rational claims to garner respect and legitimacy from potential constituencies (Groves, 2001). The public often views the use of nonhuman animal products as scientifically and biologically necessary (Swan & McCarthy, 2003) and concern with nonhumans is often linked with femininity (Groves, 2001). Further, the consumption and use of nonhuman animals is often aligned with conceptions of masculinity (Luke, 2007; Adams, 2006). Consequently, activists would be wise to recognize the impact of both their audience's and their own identity and its relationship to emotion when judging the appropriateness of potential tactics. Abolitionists, in particular, work to frame nonhuman animal rights and veganism as a matter of justice and moral rationality rather than of compassion.

Therefore, when considering the usefulness of incorporating welfarist tactics into the abolitionist repertoire, there are a number of contextual factors to consider. While media bias and identities attributed to activists are influential in shaping resonance, it is likely that framing conflicts between the abolitionist and welfarist factions are creating the most significant barrier. As mentioned previously, while abolitionists have incorporated emotional appeals to some extent, it remains difficult to appropriate welfarist tactics successfully to realize abolitionist goals. There may be promise in creating emotional appeals that highlight nonhuman animal issues in a much more affirming, positive manner. For example, Peaceful Prairie Sanctuary presents individual biographies and personality profiles for resident nonhumans. *Coexisting with Nonhuman Animals*, a New Zealand-based website, regularly updates with blog posts and podcasts that chronicle the lives of resident rescue hens. Exposing the individual personalities and histories of exploited nonhumans could motivate participation without the negative consequence of repelling potential participants or unintentionally pushing them to participate in the default welfarist approach. Again, context is extremely important for any abolitionist tactic that is to be used, as abolitionists are a relatively marginalized faction. Careful framing should be considered.

## Conclusion

Contextual constraints created by media bias, movement counterframing, and activist and audience identity are critical considerations when ascertaining the potential efficacy of abolitionist tactics. DeCoux criticizes the abolitionist approach for avoiding graphic depictions of suffering. However, a brief exploration into abolitionist promotional material shows that graphic depictions

are actually utilized to some extent. And, when used, these depictions are generally included within an abolitionist framework. Yet, a review of the literature regarding moral shocks shows that their effectiveness is in dispute. Specifically, asking the public to change individual behavior by becoming vegan could complicate the efficacy of moral shocks, as this tactic has traditionally been associated with the request to support welfare reform. Furthermore, in the larger nonhuman animal rights context, welfarism remains the dominant discourse. Abolitionism will inevitably struggle to overcome public comfort with reform, as a focus on suffering is a tactic normalized by the welfarist movement. Abolitionism's successful appropriation of suffering is also complicated by the welfarist movement's overall hesitancy to promote a vegan lifestyle, since welfarism generally portrays veganism as difficult and unnecessary.

DeCoux's critique of abolitionism focuses on the need for the movement to utilize depictions of suffering with images and narratives to build the motivational component of framing. However, Francione has insisted that graphic depictions are only seen within the context of welfarist constructions of nonhuman animal rights that focus on reforming use. Building on this, the media has silenced positive depictions of veganism and abolition. Welfare and abolition frames vary considerably, and the utilization of welfarist tactics by abolitionists can prove ineffective for abolitionist goals, given the dominance of welfarist ideology. Furthermore, welfarism often portrays abolitionist goals as radical and unnecessary, further weakening effective use of depictions of suffering for the abolitionist goal of ending use. DeCoux also fails to recognize the importance of identity. A focus on graphic imagery and narratives might tap into stereotypes of irrationality, ultimately alienating audiences who regard veganism and moral shocks as overly emotional and feminine.

The abolitionist movement must struggle to overcome media and movement counterframing and public assumptions regarding activist identity in order to achieve success. Blaxter (2009) and Cole and Morgan (2011) suggest a media campaign to challenge the exclusion of nonhuman animal rights agendas. Recognition of the role of identity in abolitionist advocacy could also prove beneficial to the abolitionist movement. Further studies into the resonance of abolitionist framing would be informative to the debate, as would further experiments and data collection investigating the effectiveness of moral shocks.

Several other conditions are probably impacting the effectiveness of abolitionist tactics. Political opportunities and counterframing by both the state and institutions that exploit nonhuman animals, for example, are other important processes that could affect the abolitionist movement's success. However, this article has focused on Francione's rejection of graphic

imagery and narratives based on the dominance of welfarist ideology and subsequent counterframing. This article has also focused on negative media portrayals and identity and how they might impact the success of abolition, as these areas have been researched specific to the nonhuman animal rights movement and speak to other contextual constraints experienced by the abolitionist movement. Further exploration into other areas of social movement theory in regards to the nonhuman animal rights movement could lend weight to DeCoux's critique or otherwise highlight important areas for activists.

## Notes

1. As of this writing, abolitionist outreach is primarily limited to material produced or hosted by *The Abolitionist Approach*, *Animal Emancipation*, Animal Rights Fund (India), The Boston Vegan Association, *Coexisting with Nonhuman Animals*, Igualdad Animal, *LiveVegan*, Peace Advocacy Network, Peaceful Prairie Sanctuary, NZ Vegan, *Vegan Freaks*, and VeganUK. Blogs and other sources that do not produce outreach material have been omitted.

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