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# Raising Animals to Die for Profit: How Corporate America is Changing Human Animal Relationships in Rural America

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## ABSTRACT

Corporate ownership of livestock operations for meat and animal by-products has had a dramatic effect on human-animal relationships in rural areas of the United States. This evolution mandates mass production of livestock in large concentrated animal feed organizations (CAFO's). In contrast, animal breeding for sport, such as hunting which also produces food, has not generated the same adverse effect on these relationships. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two rural Iowa women, one raising livestock to be sold for meat and by-products; the other raising livestock to be hunted. Ferdinand Tonnies' social groupings, *gesellschaft* and *gemeinschaft*, were used as theoretical concepts applied using inductive analysis. Findings suggest that, with corporate ownership, the human-animal interaction in these two groups are now very different from one another. The meat industry objectifies animals; they are a means to a financial end, a "product." Hunting, which remains culturally rooted, allows for a closer relationship; the animal is still thought of as a living individual. The world must be fed and as consumers of these products, it is important to understand how corporate ownership of animals is changing the relationship between human and animals while other relationships resulting in animal meat remain steeped in tradition.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of animal and human interaction in sociology is relatively new because many viewed it as contradictory to have "sociology" for nonhuman-animals (Jerolmack 2005). However, animals are so intertwined with human society that the two are not independent of each other (Irvine 2008). Humans live surrounded by nonhuman-animals in pet-ownership, work, food, products, and even language influences. Arluke and Sanders (1997:4) say, "studying animals and human interactions with them enables us to learn about ourselves as social creatures. It will show us, among other things, how meaning is socially created in interaction, even with nonhumans; and how we organize our social world." The relationships humans have with nonhuman-animals are greatly dependent on their attitudes toward animals. A large, influential factor on attitudes about the well-being of animals is the location where humans grow up (Stedman and Heberlein 2001).

Although those in rural locations are much more likely to be dependent on nonhuman-animals and be in closer proximity, they are considered to be less concerned with animal well-being. Those in urban areas typically have a higher concern for nonhuman-animal well-being (Kellert 1996). Kellert (1996) discusses not only the relevance of current residence but, more importantly, childhood experiences that are carried through life. There is a definite distinction between human and animal relations of those in rural versus urban areas. Urbanites are distanced from the

reality of where meat originates while those in rural areas are much more familiar with animal death (Plous 1993).

Animals are viewed either as having personhood or as objects. This distinction often stems from the hierarchy of animals as established by humans. Within this hierarchy, animals that are typically kept as pets are at the top, such as horses, cats, and dogs. The middle tier includes wild animals that are often seen as aesthetically beautiful or mysterious, followed by rodents (Arluke and Sanders 1997). Bryant (1979) discusses how the hierarchy is not based on the intelligence of the animals, nor are the animals at the top necessarily treated better. He refers to research where hundreds of Beagles were used to test poisonous gases. Although the Animal Welfare Act, the federal law that defines the minimum treatment standard for animals in research, exhibition, transport, or commercial sale, supports scientific research with animals, it does not support animal cruelty toward pets (United States Department of Agriculture 2020). Within itself, that is an inconsistency. In addition, it is legal for certain animals to be hunted or slaughtered for food. Several issues and discrepancies govern how animals are treated. This appears to come significantly from the dilemma of whether animals have personhood or not, and, if so, which animals have personhood. As a different author explains it, "Beat a cat and go to prison. Chase and kill a fox and become conceivably the Master of the Hunt" (Carson 1972).

The reasons for the hierarchal system seem to be vast and slightly inconclusive. Lawson (2005) conducted a

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study where she asked her rural-area students to do word associations for different types of animals. She concluded that rural children associate many of the livestock animals they raise with food to “construct an emotional distance in order to slaughter.” Stedman and Heberlein (2001) suggest that being raised in a rural environment allows children to desensitize themselves to what people in urban life would find cruel. An example of this is hunting, during which students are excused from school to participate in opening day (for examples, see Ericson 2014; Milazzo 2015; and Wire 2000). Ellis and Irvine (2010) discuss how many children from rural areas participate in the youth livestock program where they raise and bond with an animal for months for eventual sale at auction.

This caring-killing paradox highlights how these children must learn to manage their attachment to these animals. The same animals these youths nurture and earn trust from will be sold at the end of the summer to be slaughtered. There is no doubt that rural and urban people are brought up having significantly different relationships with animals. There is, however, even a further distinction within rural communities in their thinking toward animals, specifically among those who raise animals and gain money from their deaths. The industrialization of the meat, dairy, and egg industries has resulted in changes to how livestock are treated, maintained, and slaughtered. This change may then be related to the distinction in human-animal relations among those who raise livestock for hunting and those who raise livestock for meat. This study focuses on the human-animal relationships among these two rural groups. Three themes examine the distinction in human-animal interactions within rural business: animals having personhood vs. animals as objects; animals in the hunting industry vs. animals in the food industry; and animals that die en masse vs. animals that die individually.

## 2. GEMEINSCHAFT AND GESELLSCHAFT

That which is natural or organic for human beings has been juxtaposed with that which humans have created for hundreds of years. For instance, Ferdinand Tonnies (1887) used the terms *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* to compare social ties. *Gemeinschaft* refers to the natural or intimate social ties that unite people. *Gesellschaft* refers to superficial social ties in which individuals live alongside one another but are independent of each other. He also refers to social groups in this manner. Tonnies argued that *gemeinschaft* is a form of social association that comprises villages and towns, however, as urbanization increases, the ties become *gesellschaft*. *Gemeinschaft* groups may be connected by place, spirit, or blood (Tonnies 1887). They are not independent agents but feel responsible to each other for livelihoods, health, religion, and so forth. The closest form of this relationship is between a mother and her child, bonded at all three levels.

In *gesellschaft*, social groups are transient and superficial (Tonnies 1887). These individuals are only differentiated by wealth and only constrained by “fear of retaliation” (Tonnies 1887). That is, they follow laws, rules, and social norms not because of morals and folkways but because of what might be done to them if they do not. There may be sects of *gemeinschaft* within *gesellschaft* groups. For example, although a person resides in a city where the city is

the *gesellschaft* social group, that same individual may belong to the same church as preceding generations in that individual’s family. The relationship to that church thus creates a *gemeinschaft* social group for that person. Therefore, the church or parish may exist as a *gemeinschaft* social group within the larger context of the city, the *gesellschaft* social group.

*Gesellschaft* seems to be motivated by the spread of urbanization and capitalism. Occupations are created to benefit the rational goals of the social structure and individuals become workers motivated by individual success. This is in contrast to *gemeinschaft* in which decisions and actions are made to benefit the social group as a whole. However, with increased technology and manufacturing, there is no longer a place for the tradition of the small farmer. The small farmer must produce much more crop and livestock than the farmer working for a corporation in order to make a livelihood.

In contrast, the farmers who are raising meat animals for industry are no longer working for themselves but for one of the few major corporations monopolizing the market. Ultimately, these farmers are no longer governed by their farming community but by their contractual obligations to these larger corporations. Their only concern becomes that of profitability. Once livestock farming becomes a component of *gesellschaft*, and the only fear in this group is that of corporate retaliation, then it follows that there is no incentive to humanely treat a group that cannot retaliate as persons. Animals have no means to retaliate and thus, in this setting, are deemed no concern other than to optimize profit and to be treated as fairly (or poorly) as human authority sees fit (Winders and Nibert 2004). The farmers who work most closely with the animals have no ability to retaliate either. If they choose to retaliate by not abiding by the companies’ specifications, they lose their contract with the Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and thus their livelihood (Kenner, Pearlstein, and Roberts 2008). These farmers may have taken out initial loans for the buildings and invested more money to keep up with regulations; losing a contract will often leave the farmer without income and in debt (Kenner et al 2008).

CAFOs, or factory farms, confine many animals within a confined space where raising livestock on a farm operates as a business, optimizing profit (Wrock 2016). Although animals have been domesticated and raised for meat production for thousands of years, the way in which they are raised, treated, and slaughtered has changed dramatically. Momentous industrialization has taken place within the livestock industry, with a transition in production towards massive CAFOs (Ashwood 2013). In Iowa, the top hog-producing state, the number of large CAFOs has increased fivefold since 1990. There were a reported 789 large CAFOs in Iowa during 1990. These large CAFOs in the 1990s housed 1000 or more pig units. Large hog CAFOs today have a minimum of 2500 pigs, with the largest housing 24,000 animals (Konopacky and Rundquist 2020). Further emphasizing profit and efficiency is the term “pig unit” or “animal unit”. This can refer to more than one animal. For example, 33,334 piglets may be equivalent to only 1000 animal units (Ashwood 2013).

In the United States, a 2012 study conducted by the National Pork Producers showed that 83%, or

approximately 3.6 million, sows are kept in gestation crates. Gestation crates are used to confine animals in a relatively small space compared to the animal's size. The industry standard requires the crates to measure 2.0-2.3 feet by 6.6-6.9 feet. This is only slightly larger than the pigs within them. Hens face a similar fate, with 99% spending their lives in complete containment; the enclosures being so small the hens are unable to spread their wings. Although several investigations have discouraged keeping animals in confined or isolated crates, they have been largely ignored. CAFOs also support an assembly line style of slaughter, placing further emphasis on efficiency. In one Nebraska slaughterhouse, one cow is killed every 12 seconds, resulting in about 2,500 cows slaughtered per day. This fast rate introduces room for error under which many cows may still be conscious and aware during the "disassembly line" (Wrock 2016).

The trend towards CAFOs has been criticized for animal cruelty as well as for harming the environment, for reducing property values, for damaging local roads and for harming the health of surrounding citizens (Ashwood 2013). However, research suggests that many of these negative impacts are not being mitigated or addressed due to self-regulation and Ag-gag laws in the American meat industry. Ag-gag laws, coined in 2011, refers to laws that inhibit illegal or inhumane information in the agriculture industry from being exposed. Although the Humane Slaughter Act (HAS) was enacted in 1958 to decrease the amount of suffering to livestock other than poultry, there has been little evidence of it being enforced. For example, in 1998, a Texas beef company was cited 22 times for violations, such as chopping the hooves off live cows; however, the government took no action.

It should also be noted that because poultry are excluded from the HAS, it excluded 90-95% of farmed animals in the United States. Moreover, the HAS regulates only the animals' death processes; there are no federal laws protecting livestock during their lives. Ag-gag laws essentially prevent information from getting to the consumer. Without accurate information being disseminated to the public, the consumer does not have knowledge for proper input about animal treatment via purchasing or not purchasing those products. Within the states that have Ag-gag laws, it is a felony to obtain a job with the purpose of whistle-blowing (Wrock 2016). Illinois, for example, does require the county board to be notified and a posting in the local newspaper if a CAFO larger than 1000 animal units. However, the board may elect to not hold a hearing and postings in the local newspaper are often missed (Ashwood 2013).

Optimizing profit in these industrialized factory farms means animals are frequently treated inhumanely. In the film *Food Inc.*, a chicken grower reported losing her contract with Perdue Farms because she was not willing to acquiesce to the corporate mandates of, "dark, tunnel ventilated houses" (2008). These houses have no natural light, but rather one fan at one end that pushes air through the building and out an opening at the other end (Bucklin, Jacob, Mather, Leary, and Naas 1998). This farmer weighed humane treatment of the animals against optimizing profits and chose animal welfare over money. However, Perdue Farms is the final authority, allowing very little control over

the treatment of the animals by the farmer. This woman became primarily focused not on her individual wealth, but rather the traditional values of a farming community concerned with the animal.

Indeed, the *gemeinschaft* groups in rural areas, such as family and the community, already encourage a different relationship between humans and animals. Lawson (2005) showed that even the terms rural children associate with animals typically relate to food or hunting. Referring to animals as food allows emotional distance between animals and humans. Activities such as 4-H also encourage this distance (Ellis and Irvine 2010). These children raise an animal humanely and gain its trust, but in the end the child learns to justify selling it for slaughter. This thinking may come from the community and families, but its purpose, which may have been for survival at one time, is now a construct that allows for an increase in wealth. One may assume that this emotional distance exists in all rural people who raise animals for the purpose of gaining money from their death, but this is not true.

Lawson (2005) found that, although study participants usually associated chicken with food, deer were typically associated with hunting. Hunting communities do not seem to be *gesellschaft* in nature but rather form a community of tradition passed down intergenerationally, often times from parent to child (Elbe 2017). This form of kinship within the hunting community categorizes them as *gemeinschaft*. Although the animals are killed, the hunter aims to do it swiftly and painlessly. There is no fear of retaliation in this decision because it is a folkway. Through families, friends, and hunting organizations, these outlooks and behaviors are traditions that are passed down from generation to generation, person to person. The hunting community, being *gemeinschaft*, seems to allow for a different type of relationship between human and animal. In this relationship, the animal is allowed personhood. The goal isn't wealth as it is in a *gesellschaft* group (Tonnie 1887). Rather, they find it as a way to connect with their pasts and other members of their social group.

The relationship between the farmer raising conventional livestock for CAFOs and the actual livestock mirrors what Tonnie explains happens in *gesellschaft* social groups. The interactions become only a means to end, and serve to meet the goals of gaining wealth and avoiding retaliation from corporate authorities. These farmers, and the animals that they produce, cannot retaliate against corporate giants like Perdue Farms. The only barriers against animals being treated like objects are the laws and conditions created by people in corporate and governmental power. However, many of these corporate policies actually require maltreatment, such as having chickens live in windowless sheds or removal of beaks, testicles, tails, or horns without anesthesia; in most States, livestock are confined to small spaces in which they are unable to turn around (Farmed Animals). With mandates encouraging the mistreatment of animals, there is no reason for the livestock to be seen as animals having personhood.

### 3. METHODS

This study evaluated the difference in human-animal interactions among two specific groups of rural people who raise animals for the purpose of gaining money

from their deaths. Each group was distinguished by the intended purpose of animal death: as a meat product derived from CAFOs or as the goal of sport hunting. Because the goal was to allow participant thoughts and ideas to guide theoretical understanding, a qualitative study was designed that was based in grounded theory. Grounded theory was preferable because the study did not deduce a hypothesis from an already existing theory, but aimed at developing a theory from research that is grounded in data (Charmaz 2006). Grounded theory allows for discovery and emergence in an area where little research exists on the topic and has been successfully used in the past to assess socially-related issues (Jagiello 2019). Specifically, Constructivist Grounded Theory was used which is rooted in symbolic interactionism with the intent to co-construct experiences and meanings with each participant. This involves constant comparative analysis in which incidents are coded and then compared. These codes can then be collapsed into categories and compared with the aim to find similarities and differences while continuously refining concepts and categories. Memos are also written as to the thoughts and decisions of codes, categories, and refinements (Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis 2019).

This research entailed a mixed methods approach that included both in-depth interviews and short word associations. Participants were chosen using purposive sampling. Interviews were conducted with two women already known to the researcher who represented their respective sub-group. Susan raised deer that are usually intended to be hunted for sport in hunting preserves. Nancy raised and finished pigs to be sold for conventional meat and by-products, operating as a “middle-man” for larger CAFOs. Interviews were conducted using FaceTime. Face-to-face interviews were not possible because of geographical distance between participant and interviewer. However, FaceTime provided a greater level of participant comfort and social cue understanding for the researcher than an audio phone call. Participants were assured that their interviews would be anonymous and that the researcher would maintain their confidentiality throughout the study. Pseudonyms were given to each participant to ensure their privacy.

The interviews were semi-structured because, although the same initial questions were asked of each interviewee, there were additional questions asked in each interview, probing into the specifics of the sub-groups’ animals, purpose, and fate. Interviews were chosen over other types of surveys so that more detailed data could be collected. The interviews allowed for a more comprehensive perspective of the perceptions and experiences of the participants on both a personal and professional level (Berg 2009). These intensive interviews go hand-in-hand with grounded theory in that both are “open ended yet directed” (Charmaz 2006). This allows the participants to tell their interpretation of an experience that then can be coded for themes.

The questions also consisted of a short word-association section in which the interviewer mentioned a species of animal and asked participants to list the first two or three words that came to mind. The order of these questions was presented to the participants somewhat differently. The last animal offered to each participant was the animal that they raised, so they would be comfortable

with the process by the time they heard “deer” or “pig,” with the intention of provoking an unbiased, instinctual response from each. The rest of the interview included questions about their relationships with their pets and with the animals they raise. Some of these questions included: “Where does your pet sleep?” and “Have you ever named any of your livestock?” This was done so the individual owner-animal relationships could be compared as well as to the relationships amongst that owner and various other animals.

Once the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and coded. Coding consists of attaching labels to portions of data so that this distilled information can be compared (Charmaz 2006). The coding process identified themes in which animals were identified or discussed as persons, objects, negatively, positively, as food, or as entertainment. For example, the pronouns each participant used when referring to certain species of animals often changed between “it” and “he/she.” These were coded as seeing animals as objects versus as having personhood. The interviews were then compared with each other and patterns were identified. Coding is critical in Grounded Theory because it provides a link between collecting or generating data and developing a theory to explain the data (Chun Tie et al. 2019). Phases of coding were implemented as themes and categories arose. This resulted in three themes, each containing a categorical comparison. These themes consisted of animal personhood vs animals as objects, animals in the hunting industry vs animals in the food industry, and animals dying *en masse* vs animals dying individually. Later, additional questions were asked to one participant to gain clarity on the themes that were identified. The study was limited in that it only had two participants and that the interviewees chosen were both women. Although not traditionally perceived as women’s careers, both of these women are owners in their respective family operations alongside their husbands. These distinctions, and the sample size, make the data less generalizable, but do create the foundation for an exploratory study that examines differences in rural attitudes towards livestock.

## 4. RESULTS

### A. *Animal Personhood Vs. Animals as Objects*

Naming is a critical element in contrasting between animals having personhood or being viewed as objects. Naming the animals appears to be the first step in “doing mind” which Clinton Sanders (1993) refers to as creating self externally in his work. This is not only present in animals but also infants and disabled people. Owners, caretakers, or parents impart identity by projecting thoughts and emotions on the alingual animal or human, encouraging certain reactions. When people name their animals, they are bestowing on them a specific identity and will use “doing mind” to expand that identity. Susan had a puppy, Daisy, and referred to her as her “best friend” and praised her personality traits. Susan also did this for her deer. She talked in depth about one little buck, she had named “Toothless”:

We got him tamed. I, obviously, bottle-fed him because he was sick, and he came out of it. He retired on the

farm...There's Toothless, and we had several that we were pretty close to that we got to know.

As she refers to the buck as "him" instead of "it," she shows that Toothless is a special individual and not just an object. When she discusses pigs later in the interview, she refers to them as objects using the word "it" rather than "him" or "her." The labeling of "retired" is another reference to human behavior, not animal.

Nancy never mentioned giving a name to any of the animals she had in her care. When asked specifically about the pigs they raised, she admitted, "I've never named any of them. There's a lot. I just call them piggies." This is reminiscent of Ellis and Irvine's (2010) work that those who raise animals for slaughter must emotionally distance themselves. Not only did she not name them, but she distinguished them from each other only by how labor-intensive they are. When asked if she preferred to raise weened-pigs, very young pigs that are just ready to leave their mothers, or feeder pigs which are much larger, she said feeder pigs because, "the others [weened-pigs] are just a little more work." Baby animals are typically viewed as innocent and more physically appealing, however Nancy viewed these pigs not as individuals with personhood, but simply objects that require a greater level of labor. The only time Nancy acknowledged any sort of personhood for the pigs was when she referred to them as intelligent, curious creatures. She later described her dog in a similar way. When asked why then that dogs and pigs were treated differently, she paused for a long time. She then gave the reasoning "the makeup is different... pigs don't sweat." A possible explanation for this response is the thinking that humans are more sympathetic toward animals that have traits that mirror their own.

The two women regarded their own livestock entirely differently from one another. Susan admitted to naming many of the deer and elk as well as being additionally attentive to the ones with deformities. To her, if she could specifically recognize a deer, then she knew she would not be able to kill it. Nancy, at best, saw her animals as "piggies" but in no way as individuals. This difference could stem from the amount of time spent with the livestock. The hogs are typically raised in confined spaces and for a period of 7 or 8 months whereas deer are often owned for years, interacted with more often, and live in open spaces. Even though Nancy seemed to acknowledge the intelligence of pigs, she could not see pigs as individuals. Susan, however, was not entirely free from objectifying her livestock. That is, deer and pigs were both tagged and numbered which allows for deindividualization.

Carol Adams (1993) discusses how objectification of animals is oppressive and can be paralleled with the mistreatment of women and other minorities. Adams believes that animals and humans have the right to be free from oppression and the control of others (1993). It appears that even animals who are allowed a semblance of personhood are still oppressed. The deer, although accorded personhood, still live in a confined area and will die for the financial gain of the owner. This oppression has led both types of livestock owners to prohibit themselves from granting animals genuine personhood. The deer, which are allowed more autonomy and live in less controlled

environments, are given more personhood because the cognitive dissonance experienced by the owner is smaller.

This does not mean that animals raised primarily for meat have always been treated as objects, but that modern agricultural practices encourage it. Corporate ownership and CAFOs have created a system in which the farmer does not typically see the livestock through the course of their lives, rather only for a certain age period, such as weened pigs versus feeder pigs that Nancy raises. This industry is one of efficiency (Pluhar 2009) where the traditions are no longer passed from one generation to the next, but rather the corporation deems what is acceptable in its goal of profitability. The shifting away from *gemeinschaft* social groups and the introduction of urbanized *gesellschaft* into the meat industry has shifted animals into being purely objects—a product—to be sold for money. Tonnies discussed how in a *gesellschaft* structure individuals live alongside one another but are independent of each other (1887). These superficial social ties that are based on self-interest discourage bonding between humans and animals; without a bond, animals cannot procure personhood.

### B. *Animals in the Hunting Industry Vs Animals in the Food Industry*

Animals that die for sport have a higher likelihood of being attributed personhood by humans than animals in the food industry. Chickens are a species that not only die for food but also for sport. Cockfighting, often seen as barbaric and cruel, may actually offer a better quality life for the chicken. Herzog (2010:169) explains that chickens involved in cockfighting will live two years, live outside, have personal homes and plenty of exercise, and "eat better than some people." He contrasts this with the typical broiler chicken which will live for forty-two days in "unimaginable squalor, legs aching, lungs burning," eat the same processed food, never see daylight, and then "will be jammed into a crate onto an open truck and carted to the plant where it will be suspended upside down, electrocuted, and its throat slit" (2010:170).

The relationships that broiler chickens have with humans vastly differs from that of the chickens raised in cockfighting. The owners of these cocks are said to love the chickens and, much like the hunting industry, have a specific breeding program where each lineage is tracked for successive generations (Herzog 2010). Similarly, Susan described how she and her husband began their operation with very few deer and elaborated on the challenges and how "it took years" to find the females that would breed the best offspring. She went on to explain how knowing an animal through its life "created a bond," admitting that many deer that she grew attached to ended up "retiring" on the farm instead of being sold for the hunt.

The pigs raised by Nancy live a similar life to that of a broiler chicken. They are both bred to grow quickly and produce a lot of meat or product appealing to the consumer (Winders and Nibert 2004). The pigs are kept in hog confinement buildings with no windows, but Nancy did say that they "have room to walk around." Nancy works with the pigs every day and says she "concentrates on them while they are with [them]" but never really considers their fate or forms a relationship with any of them. The food industry's

cycle of growing animals quickly in confined areas and in large masses, quickly moving them off to slaughter, and then efficiently shuffling in the next rotation of new pigs creates an environment where the animals cannot obtain personhood with the farmer. The pigs are Nancy's "livelihood" whereas Susan refers to her deer as her "passion."

Susan doesn't necessarily spend one-on-one time with each deer, and yet she has a clear emotional attachment to all of them. Susan, who is also an avid hunter, admitted, that if she "had deer that were on [their] own land that [she] watched come in and feed every night and could identify that deer specifically" she would not be able to kill it. Although maltreatment of animals exists in both industries, individualization of the animal while being raised is attainable for the hunting industry, where each generation learns to consider the animals' individual needs rather than their economic value. Nancy does refer to her pigs as "piggies," but not once identifies any particular pig by name. Winders and Nibert (2004) have noted that animals classified as "food" have been increasingly oppressed, as demonstrated by the inadequate size of confinement buildings, poor diets, and assembly-line slaughter. However, meat consumption by the American consumer has been increasing, leading to the slaughter of more animals at an amplified rate. The increased demand for meat and by-products is causing this industry to become increasingly efficient as a means of meeting the consumer demand (Kenner et al. 2008). The outcome is that livestock are no longer viewed as individual animals with personhood but rather as products for mass consumption.

Susan had many deer whom she thought of as specific individuals. Returning to the example of "Toothless," the young buck she hand-raised who had no front teeth, Susan said she "got to know him," demonstrating that she took the time to know him as an individual. When Susan anthropomorphizes Toothless by giving him human characteristics such as being "retired" or commenting on his personality, she is giving him a "self." Susan's mindset toward her deer and Nancy's mindset toward her pigs were vastly different from one another.

The hunting industry, like the cockfighting industry, is bonded on tradition and kinship (Herzog 2010; Elbe 2017). In keeping with Tonnies' *gemeinschaft*, those that raise animals for hunting have passion and care for their animals but will ultimately let the animal be killed for sport. This is used as a lesson of death being, as Nancy says, a "part of life." Herzog notes that, although being shot or put in a ring is horrible, the animals are treated more humanely during their lives than are meat animals and their owners see them as individual agents. Chicken and pig farming are both a part of corporate America where the animals are merely a product generated for profit. The farms are part of a *gesellschaft* system wherein the animals are objects exploited for corporate gain, increasing wealth for the corporations, and providing lower priced commodities for the consumer (Tonnies 1887).

### C. *Animals Dying in Mass Vs Animals Dying Individually*

The animals used for food and animal by-products in the farming industry are thought of in mass terms and even

referred to as "meat," an objectified mass term in and of itself (Adams 1993). Adams (1993:201) defines a mass term as "refer(ing) to things like water or colors: no matter how much you have of it, or what type of container it is in, water is still water." The structure of the CAFO industry cultivates the use of mass terms because hogs are literally sold in the form of lean weight. Slaughtering hogs on an assembly-line results in total displacement of individualization. When the pigs are loaded in semi-trucks from Nancy's farm for slaughter, she "doesn't think it's stressful for [the pigs]." She usually doesn't participate because "those pigs are, at that point in time, 280 to 300 pounds." She feels no remorse when they leave: it is just the job. On the one hand, she describes the pigs as "incredibly intelligent and curious," yet she said the "pigs are not stressed when they leave." These inconsistencies are evidence of the distance she creates between herself and the pigs. When they are coming by the hundreds as feeder pigs and leaving at the same rate, but as lean hog *product*, it becomes a quick cycle that discourages attachment.

However, Susan "had to leave the farm" when they sold the deer. Furthermore, she explained that she and her husband chose not to "raise cattle because neither one of [them] wanted to put [the animals] on a trailer and send them to slaughter." In her mind, she drew a distinction between selling a couple of deer at a time to be hunted and loading all of the livestock at once to be killed. The emotional distance between livestock and the owner is mandatory for the owner to remain composed at the animals' death (Ellis and Irvine 2010). Susan bottle-feeds the young fawns to keep them "tame so that when they were fawning [she] could go in and handle them and not have any issues." This personal, physical interaction allows Susan to become attached and individually identify them. Even after the deer are sent to the preserve to be hunted, Susan said she would be "bummed when [she'd] go out to the pens and see that they're not there." Hunting is a part of a hunter's intrinsic identity, so even though she is sad the animals are gone she continues with this life to death process (Einwohner, 1999). When each deer is shot, they are done so strategically, one at a time, and by one hunter. This death process perpetuates their individuality whereas the process of pigs taken in for mass slaughter does not. These contrasting death processes alter the way those who work with the animals view them while they are alive as well as at the time of death.

Furthermore, Susan believes that hunting "teaches [kids] about conservation and respect for animals" and admits that this statement might seem "odd" because "you're respecting an animal when you're killing it." She went on to explain that it helps children learn how death is "a part of life." Tonnies says that "human wills are related by kinship and decent" (1887). The deer are playing a role in the *gemeinschaft* social structure; their deaths are a lesson taught from generation to generation. The consumer in the hunting industry is typically either the hunter herself or is someone who knows the hunter well.

Animals in the food industry live and die in masses, seen neither by the consumer nor by the corporate owners. Rather, the corporations look at the bottom line, and the consumer purchases packages of meat, which are typically marketed in ways to distance the consumer from the animal such as calling it ground beef or pork instead of

ground cow or pig (Pluhar 2009). Death of the masses simply creates masses of usable products for the consumer at a lower cost and more money for corporate pockets. This sort of exploitation that only benefits the individual is prototypical of the *gesellschaft* society where the goal is wealth, and the means to get wealth are not necessarily good but will not be retaliated against.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Animal-human relationship distinctions between rural and urban areas have already been studied among the social sciences. However, further study contrasting groups within the category of rural people is required, specifically among those who raise animals to profit from their deaths. The differences between those who raise livestock for meat and those who raise animals for hunting does not appear to come from the people or regions, but rather from the introduction of corporate ownership into the meat industry. The data shows that structural differences in how the animals are raised, how they are killed, and who owns them create radically different human-animal interactions. When the animals are kept for short periods of time, like Nancy's hogs, and are not part of a breeding program wherein the current year's animals are not the offspring of previous years' animals, the animals are more likely to be thought of as objects. As Susan noted, raising generations of the same lineage of deer creates a "bond."

When animals are raised and die in large masses, as pigs are, this data shows there is virtually no emotional attachment and therefore no remorse at death. As Nancy explained in her interview, she refrained from loading the hogs, not because of her emotions but because of the labor intensiveness of the act. Alternatively, in Susan's interview, she admitted to crying at the thought of the animals' fates and even "retiring" some deer so they would not be hunted. Emotional distance is ostensibly more prominent in those farm industries that raise animals to be slaughtered *en masse* because the livestock is objectified to a product raised and sold. On the other hand, rural people in the industries that raise animals for death by sport, such as hunting or cockfighting, tend to see their animals as individuals (Sanders 1993, Herzog 2010).

Lastly, most farmers who raise livestock for meat and animal by-products are under contract with corporations. These corporations own the animals and allow virtually no latitude to the farmer regarding how the animals are raised. The farmers who raise this type of livestock are "middlemen," contractually obligated to follow the mandates of the corporation who are, of course, under some regulations established by government for safe consumer products. This means that *gesellschaft*, typical of urban societies and advanced economies, has been introduced into the agricultural communities as a means of increasing profit for all involved, dramatically changing the way these farmers interact with animals. The animals in this group went from being raised and sold *as animals* by family farmers to being raised and sold as a *product*—meat—by corporate America. Ostensibly, meat has no rights, does not suffer, and feels no pain. Regardless of how intelligent the animal is, putting them in the factory-farming context immediately eliminates the individualization of the animal. The farmers who work for the CAFOs are using their skills

to make a living from an opportunity provided to them. Raising livestock in the traditional manner no longer provides a living for an individual and family.

Farming livestock was once rooted in traditions passed down from generation to generation (Elbe 2017). But when corporate farming took over agricultural output in the United States, the effects of an urbanized *gesellschaft* took over. The farmer became the middleman, contractually obligated to follow the mandates of the CAFO culture. This resulted in requirements to produce a certain amount of "meat" product, rather than pride in growing a certain number of healthy pigs. As Nancy noted in her interview, "There's just too many to single any out." The data does show that those in the food industry do care if the animals get "sick, [or] hurt" or if they end up dying, but there is no concern for the animal beyond that. Rural areas have a closer relationship with death than their urban counterparts causing them to create some emotional distance between human and animal (Kellert 1996). However, even with this distance, rural children are still able to form a bond with an animal before selling them at 4H fairs (Irvine and Ellis 2010). This relationship is one-on-one and has no large corporation involvement putting demands on the human regarding the animal.

Analysis of data in this study shows that the ability to create a relationship with animals also exists with people raising animals for sport resulting in the death of the animals. Again, no corporation is in place within these groups directing how they raise their animals and at what capacity. It is left up to the individual farmer, such as Susan, to decide which animal needs more attention and whether or not it will be "retired" or hunted. When farming livestock shifted from family-owned small organizations to middlemen working for corporations, it shifted from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*. This shift meant that the farmers' relationships with their superiors and with the animals are superficial; the farmer's goal is to make a living and not lose her contract. This farmer no longer sees what she does as helping her community but as an opportunity to earn money as long as contractual terms are met. As Nancy stated in her interview, the deaths of the pigs "are just part of [her] job".

It appears that animals in the food industry are moving further down the animal hierarchy. The question now must be posed, is it worse to be a rodent at the bottom of the food chain, thought to be ridden with disease, or a livestock animal in the farming industry treated purely as a product that makes money for someone? Society continues to increase its awareness that animals, such as pigs, are sentient creatures; however, the treatment of food industry animals is worsening. Nancy described how her husband's parents, who are also pig farmers, once kept their pigs outside but they are now kept in windowless hog confinement buildings. This category of animals, how humans have changed their interactions with them, and what this means for the future of human relationships with animals demands further study. The introduction of *gesellschaft* social groups in rural areas seems to take away a level of necessary caring for other living creatures, humans and animals. If all businesses that were once *gemeinschaft* become *gesellschaft*, what does that mean for those at the bottom of the hierarchy? Further study would hopefully



determine if these effects can be minimized within some groups and, better yet, eliminated in some or all.

This study serves as an introduction to what differences and similarities exist within rural society groups regarding human-animal interactions. By taking in-depth interviews of two women who raise animals for the purpose of earning money from the animals' deaths, it allowed for initial themes to present themselves through inductive analysis. The diminutive number of interviews conducted certainly could not create conclusions that are representative of the entirety of each industry. The lack of existing literature on this particular topic of human-animal interaction in the food and hunting industries also limited the ability to draw conclusions; therefore, the research took on an exploratory design.

Additional research about human-animal interaction, specifically in the food livestock industry, is required. A study that compares the history of food livestock farming versus the present corporate involvement in the different species of livestock such as cows, pigs, and chickens might allow for more insight on the way these industries are shifting and how the treatment of these animals has been impacted. This study also encourages more research on the increasing regulations on the hunting community and if it is causing them to shift from a *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*. Did the introduction of bureaucracy in the early 20th century impact the human-animal relationships in the food livestock industry, or was it the introduction of the corporations in that industry? Will the traditions of hunting outweigh the changing of codes and laws? Is there a possibility that corporations will become a part of the hunting community as they have the agricultural community? Changes in the human-animal relationships in the livestock industries have been devastating and radical, so research in these areas must be conducted to give a voice to the voiceless.

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