

“An Angry Cow Is Not A Good Eating Experience” How US and Spanish media are shifting from crude to camouflaged speciesism in concealing nonhuman perspectives

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Recent developments in the ideology of speciesism (meaning bias against members of other animal species) within the media deserve analysis. Such discussion is important because speciesism is a major ethical concern. Nonhuman animals suffer massive harm within the industrial farming complex, confined throughout their lives and a high proportion killed while still infants or juveniles. The joint efforts of material institutions, cultural narratives and embodied affects conceal this from the public. As research on this topic is scarce, this study aims to provide tools to improve the quality of journalism regarding ethical issues that concern our relationship with nonhuman animals. We hope to help to formulate an emerging critical animal studies perspective on journalism studies. This article explores the role of news media in constructing perceptions of nonhumans used for food and their treatment. We compare 60 articles from *The New York Times* (United States) and *El País* (Spain) over a two-year time frame (2011–2013) using a critical discourse analysis. Our results show that, while both newspapers play a major role in concealing the nonhumans' cruel reality, a distinction can be drawn between the crude speciesism of *El País* and the camouflaged, more deceptive style of *The New York Times*.

KEYWORDS agribusiness; ideology; language; media; nonhuman animals; oppression; speciesism

Introduction

The 2009 episode “Dealbreakers Talk Show,” from the US sitcom *30 Rock*, provided a telling quip about how often print journalism spares its readership the truth. Head writer Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) has fallen victim to panic after getting her own talk show. Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) coaches network executive Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) in how to deal with Lemon's insecurities:

Jenna: You've created two Lizzes, writer Liz and performer Liz. Performers need to be coddled, to be protected from the real world.

Jack: I get it. I must treat her like *The New York Times* treats its readers.

When it comes to the treatment of nonhuman animals used for food (NUF), do global media like *The New York Times* coddle their readership with human-centered narratives or do they provide a neutral point to view?¹ Do global media uphold ideologies that render oppression invisible or challenge them, making oppression apparent?

The question whether NUF are oppressed is empirical, not discursive. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAOStat 2013), in 2011 around 70 billion land animals were slaughtered worldwide for human food (excluding

the 150 billion aquatic animals captured in oceans or grown in aquaculture facilities). As this indicates, the animal farming industry breeds, fattens and sustains billions of animals for their meat, milk and eggs. Nowadays, the live farmed-animal population is nearly four times the size of the world's human population. The vast majority of these nonhumans are reared in intense factory farm systems. Many suffer greatly in transport and on farms, where they are caged and crammed, selectively bred, genetically manipulated to grow abnormally fast and pushed to their physical limits in the quest to increase meat, milk or egg production. The FAO estimates that 80 percent of today's growth in animal agriculture comes from industrial production systems, showing the intense degree to which nonhuman bodies and lives are cloned and manipulated, down to the genetic level via science and technology.

Supported by state institutions—traditionally subsidized, and recently protected by a wave of “eco-terrorism” and whistleblower suppression laws in the United States and Europe—animal farming aims at “absolute maximization of profit without hindrance” and “routinely causes animals massive harm in the form of suffering, confinement and death” (DeGrazia 2008, 221).² Agribusiness is driven by profit and productivity, not motivation for animal well-being, which has resulted in denying scientific evidence about the mental states of nonhumans and their experiences of pain (Rollin 2008). By sheer numbers of affected nonhumans, factory farming is the largest animal welfare concern in the world and the reason why over the past 30 years, more and more activists, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and scholars (e.g., Almiron and Zoppeddu 2014; Freeman 2014) have rejected the right of humans to confine, exploit, shorten the lifespan, genetically modify, mutilate, and cause systematic physical and psychological pain to billions of nonhumans. Western philosophers pioneered a critical ethical reassessment of these practices (Singer [1975] 1990; Regan 1983; Gruen 2011), while psychologists and sociologists only recently started to explore how we block our empathy for nonhumans by “denial, routinization, justification, objectification, de-individualization, dichotomization, rationalization and dissociation” (Joy 2011, 19).

This mechanism of emotional numbing is a psychological process shaped by dominant ideological assumptions rooted in the long genealogies of all societies since the advent of agriculture 10,000 years ago. The media are among the top disseminators of such assumptions. Ethicist Peter Singer pinpointed this fact in 1975, stating that media “coverage of nonhuman animals is dominated by human-interest events like baby gorilla births at a zoo ... but developments in farming techniques that deprive millions of animals freedom of movement go unreported” (Singer [1975] 1990, 216).

This study focuses on how global media reflect the ways in which we envision NUF and their treatment. We do so by comparing language and discourse in *El País* (EP) and *The New York Times* (NYT), two newspapers of record whose editorial and newsgathering routines are considered an authoritative and professional reference for the Spanish- and English-language markets. Results show that, while both play a prominent role in concealing NUF's cruel reality, a distinction can be drawn between the crude speciesism of EP and the camouflaged style of NYT.

In the following section, we review speciesism as an ideology and the application of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to nonhumans used for food in news media.

Ideology and Nonhumans

Speciesism is a type of anthropocentrism that denies nonhuman interests any moral consideration equal to humans (Dunayer 2004; Horta 2010). The term was coined by

Richard Ryder in 1970, and popularized by Singer's ([1975] 1990) classic definition in *Animal Liberation* to relate speciesism to better-known bias-based ideologies such as racism and sexism. Speciesism is institutionalized so humans can profit fiscally, socially, culturally, and spiritually by exploiting nonhumans (Noske 1997; Torres 2007). It is also a corpus of oral and written stories that represents nonhuman interests as inferior and justifies using nonhumans for human ends (Dunayer 1995; Joy 2011). Speciesism allows humans to participate in animal oppression organized in a vast network of material institutions, discursive regimes and embodied affects because of denial mechanisms that justify participation and its consequences. The samples of NYT and EP articles we discuss below apply a speciesist ideology, including in their use of language, which we accurately represent but do not condone.

Today, the idea that human interests are above those of other animals is no longer defensible. Particularly, the assumptions that hold the symbolic core of speciesism in place are no longer deemed scientific. Charles Darwin's ([1872] 1965) classic *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* pioneered the field and, after a century-long gap, evolutionary biologists, cognitive ethologists and social neuroscientists joined in to show that the lives of nonhumans are richer than ever understood before. Zoologist Donald Griffin (1981) was among the first to discuss animals' intellectual lives; while Masson and McCarthy (1995) provided the first comprehensive and compelling argument for nonhuman animal sensibility by describing their emotional lives. Since then, scientific evidence continues to increase. More recently, Bekoff gathered ample evidence in support of nonhumans' rich emotional lives. His research shows that emotions have evolved as adaptations in numerous species, serving as a social glue to bond nonhumans, as catalysts and regulators of social encounters and as a measure of protection (Bekoff 2007, 2013). Now it is commonly agreed that consciousness in nonhumans is "real and significant" (Griffin and Speck 2008, 132), and that emotional awareness is an old common quality among all animals, human and nonhuman (Dawkins 2008, 124). Therefore, denying nonhumans the experience of pain and, therefore, moral consideration is scientifically incoherent (Rollin 2008). Recent research has also shown that there is no moral gap between humans and nonhumans, since "animals have a broad repertoire of moral behavior" and "their lives together are shaped by these behavior patterns" (Bekoff and Pierce 2009, X).

Ideology, Power and Discourse

Our theoretical framework draws upon news discourse theories: CDA, Van Dijk's (1998) theory of ideology, and Fairclough (1998, 2010) and Van Dijk's (2008) theories of power.

As Van Dijk and Fairclough stress, CDA is "a cross-discipline" interested in "critical analysis of the discursive reproduction of power abuse" in society (Van Dijk 2008, 1–2). CDA authors analyze discursive power abuse to excavate "opaque [and] transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" regarding topics such as gender, race, ethnicity, class or religion (Meyer and Wodak 2001, 2). However, they have only rarely applied CDA to the study of nonhumans, despite the increasing evidence of parallelism between the oppression of humans and nonhumans (Spiegel 1996; Ascione and Arkow 1999; Nibert 2013). A noteworthy exception is Stibbe (2012).

As Stibbe reminds us, because of CDA's Marxist roots, studies that employ it focus on hegemony, where a group is oppressed ideologically rather than coercively. The power exerted on nonhumans is fully coercive, yet "it depends completely on a consenting

majority of the human population” (Stibbe 2012, 20). As a significant number of authors have shown, social consent is constructed through language and discourse. The bulk of content analysis in the social sciences has traditionally focused on humans. Nonetheless, there is a substantial body of research on how language affects humans’ perceptions of nonhumans in independent studies on language, such as Dunayer’s (1995) *Animal Equality: Language and Liberation*, and within the fields of “animal studies,” or “human–animal studies.” These new academic orientations include the paradigm of “critical animal studies,” invented by philosopher Steven Best (2009, 50) as a critique of speciesism and a “catalyst for radical change” in the industrial–academic complex. This body of research analyzes the discourse of speciesism but does not apply the methodology of CDA as articulated by Fairclough and Van Dijk. As Stibbe has shown, the theory of ideology and power behind CDA is of much help in understanding the issue of human domination over nonhumans.

By adopting the CDA framework for nonhumans, we add to the research on nonhuman oppression within critical animal studies. We also add a new subfield focused on nonhumans within the social science research on oppression. In the following section we review what we already know about how the media represent the domination of nonhumans used for food.

Critical Discourse and the Media

In his book *Why Dogs Hump and Bees Get Depressed*, Mark Bekoff stresses that to confirm that nonhuman animals are such “smart, emotional, and moral beings that they care about what happens to them” one only needs to look at the *New Scientist* journal (Bekoff 2013, 55). A simple truth any human with a dog or cat companion already knows. Yet, is the current media coverage of nonhumans enlightened by the increasingly ample knowledge provided by cognitive biologists, ethologists, neuroscientists, psychologists, sociologists and philosophers, among others? More consequentially, how about the coverage of nonhumans on farms—the largest portion of nonhumans affected by humans?

The media’s role in manufacturing human consent for the oppression and exploitation of nonhumans is only a budding research topic. Kellert’s (1985) pioneer study of general attitudes toward nonhumans in twentieth-century US newspapers is an example of how the interest in this topic has been restricted mainly to the English-speaking world. He reveals that news overwhelmingly reflects the status quo attitude nonhumans are valued more instrumentally than inherently, in opposition to animal protection attitudes showing moral concern. Despite studies like Kellert’s, the first consistent textual analysis of media representations of farmed animals only appeared in 2009. It is Freeman’s (2009) study of US print and broadcast news discourse from 2000 to 2003 that shows how US news media largely support the speciesist status quo by favoring elite viewpoints and failing to provide balance. Freeman concludes that news media often objectify nonhumans discursively through commodification, failure to acknowledge their emotional perspectives and failure to describe them as inherently valuable individuals.

Freeman’s conclusions laid the foundations for a later collaborative study (Freeman, Bekoff, and Bexell 2011). It argues that a fair balance to animal-industry sources and the anthropocentric biases traditionally inherent in news requires that journalists select less objectifying language and more appropriate human sources that do not have a vested interest in profiting from nonhumans. Our study is rooted in the framework and arguments of these two seminal studies.

Additionally, recent studies address how media coverage of NUF affects meat demand. For instance, Tonsor, Olynk, and Wolf (2010) found that, as a whole, media attention to nonhuman welfare has significant negative effects on US meat demand. The media discourse on NUF has also been studied through the correlation between eating meat and climate change. Neff, Chan, and Smith (2008), Kiesel (2010) and Almiron and Zoppeddu (2014) show a weak dissemination of this correlation; the two later works reveal a discourse pattern that perpetuates the dominance and invisibility of a carnist belief system. Although not focusing on NUF, Molloy (2011) also critically addresses nonhumans' coverage in popular media by reflecting on how (in)humanity is perpetually constructed through our relations with other animals.

Objectives, Data Criteria and Methodology

This study contributes to the literature on media and journalistic representations of the "other" and to the new field of media representations of NUF initiated by Freeman within the emerging field of critical media and animal studies. Regarding the latter contribution, this study has two main objectives: first, to check how US media representations of NUF have evolved after 10 years (since Freeman's 2000–2003 sample); second, to compare the current media representations of NUF in two Western democracies that differ in cultural backgrounds.

Our sample includes the two most-widely circulated general information newspapers in the United States and Spain. In 2013, NYT had an estimated 731,000 print subscribers and 34 million monthly unique Web visitors, while the paid circulation of EP was 304,000 copies with 12 million monthly unique visitors (Alliance for Audited Media 2013; OJD 2013; ComScore Media Metrix 2013). The USA and Spain were chosen because they belong to different media and political system models and have not been previously compared on this topic. Thus, this study adds an update on Freeman's work and new significant comparative data from different cultural backgrounds.

Articles were collected from Factiva and the newspapers' websites using a search string of 30 key words (such as chicken, cow, hen, farm animal, hunting, etc., in English and Spanish) over a two-year period from July 1, 2011 to July 31, 2013. Selecting the stories to analyze was problematic because nonhumans used for food are mentioned frequently whether or not they are the story's focus. The first key words search produced 40,000 hits for NYT and 10,000 for EP, already revealing a meaningful difference in the frequency with which nonhumans appear in each newspaper. From this first search, only stories on nonhumans exploited for food that mention them in their live state were selected. Articles on NUF in their dead state were collected only when the end of their life was the focus of the article (accidents, pests, nonhumans slaughtered due to major diseases, etc.). Excluded were stories about animal-based food products, diet-based health issues, meat-recalls or gastronomy, and all articles merely mentioning NUF incidentally. Such exclusion allows us to focus on how journalists refer to NUF as living beings so we can assess the degree of their coverage from an ethical perspective. All informative and opinion-based genres were searched, to capture the global representation of NUF. This generated 141 articles for NYT and 127 articles for EP. From this sample, 30 stories were collected from each newspaper under the criteria of devoting significant attention to NUF's life. In spite of the relevant number of hits produced by the first search, the number of stories focusing on NUF in their live state in a non-incidentally way was small for a two-year period.

CDA was applied to this 60-story sample to examine the language, discourse, sources and ideological factors affecting NUF's news coverage. From the different methods that CDA offers, we have applied a grammatical analysis of narrative including a lexical

analysis (the choice of words used by the text producer), a semantic analysis (the intended meaning of the chosen words) and an analysis of suppressions (what is missing) and presuppositions (what is assumed as given). These tools help us to identify the explicit and implicit values and opinions in the stories and, most importantly, the nature of their “common sense” assumptions. As Weitzenfeld and Joy (2014, 22) point out, the invisibility of “common sense” is precisely what impedes us conceptualizing or challenging it, and therefore denies humans the freedom to participate or opt out.

We are also consistent with Van Dijk’s definition of critical discourse studies, as we are not neutral, but commit ourselves to what he calls an engagement in favor of dominated groups:

Relations of domination are studied primarily from the perspective of, and in the interest of the dominated group ... the discursive actions of the dominant group are illegitimate and viable alternatives to the dominant discourses can be formulated that are consistent with the interests of the dominated group. (Van Dijk 2008, 6)

Thus in this study, we deal with the discursive reproduction of speciesism, and a critical analysis of such practice presupposes that, at least from our point of view, the exploitation of nonhumans is wrong because it is morally indefensible.

The research questions are:

RQ1: To what extent does news media coverage reinforce speciesism?

RQ2: To what extent is speciesism challenged?

RQ3: To what extent are there differences in the media coverage between the two newspapers?

Findings

Regulation of animal agriculture (drafting or passing laws, consequences of rules) is the main topic in EP and NYT where NUF appear, and the most frequent topic (37 percent of all articles or 22 stories; 40 percent in EP and 33 percent in NYT). Articles on regulation include animal welfare laws. Alternative agriculture is the second most addressed topic but it only appears in NYT (seven stories). The Spanish sample has no substantial second topic. In both samples, animal welfare is the most important explicit and implicit topic, yet this does not mean that articles are framed from the animals’ perspective. Whatever the topic, the dominant frame (i.e., the main perspective used to explain the topic) is business—mainly as profit, costs/benefits and damages, followed by human health concerns.

A second substantial finding is that both newspapers share two discursive key features. First, they systematically appeal to readers’ fears; second, they carefully reassure readers that nothing damages speciesism. Fear-mongering is a typical strategy for what we term here “crude” speciesism—the neglect or outright denial that nonhuman suffering exists. The tenacious reassurance of speciesism is what we term here “camouflaged” speciesism—portraying animal farming as an industry with an ethical veneer. Each newspaper, however, approaches the issue differently: while crude speciesism is dominant in EP, camouflaged speciesism is prevailing in NYT.

Crude Speciesism: An Appeal to Fear

In the EP sample, fear goes hand-in-hand with the business perspective—a main, or relevant, frame in more than 60 percent of the articles understood as the utility humans derive from nonhumans. Thus, nonhumans are mostly defined by human interests.

Alarmist Language

One EP strategy to invoke fear is negative, alarmist language. Readers are targeted twice. First, their fear is invoked with depressing portrayals of the economic harm farmers suffer, which threaten an imminent economic downturn. Second, readers are alarmed with reminders that struggling farmers will transfer added costs to food retailers and consumers. Articles blame farmers' plight and consumers' potential costs on enhanced animal welfare. The majority frame the story around a suffering underdog victimized by government, animal rights advocates, and current or expected regulation. This fear-mongering strategy applies a slippery slope fallacy, inasmuch as it is assumed that one animal welfare regulation will inevitably lead to another until animal industries collapse, retailers go out of business and consumers are deprived of meat, eggs and dairy.

The EP's alarmist vocabulary is present in all articles addressing regulation. Negative over-lexication walls in the economic impact of animal welfare regulation: "causing the disappearance" of companies and animals ("provoca la desaparición"), "paralyzing" business ("paralizar"), "harmed" farmers ("perjudicados"), "unable to compete" ("incapaces de competir"), "loss of competitiveness" ("merma en su capacidad competitiva"), "handicap" ("handicap"), "deterioration" ("deterioro"), "negative impact on the pocket" ("impacto negativo en el bolsillo"), price "increase" ("incremento," "elevar," "subir"), "getting expensive" ("encareciendo"), etc. Two lexical choices require special mention due to high occurrence: animal welfare laws are not portrayed as an outcome of social consensus but as a "requirement" ("exigencia") underwritten by the European Union authorities, thus depicting animal welfare changes as impositions from the ruling elites. Also, the articles do not simply expect regulation to have some consequences in the future; instead, they "fear" ("temen") them at present.

Another fear-mongering strategy that the EP discourse analysis identified is the employment of hyperbole and false presuppositions. For instance, one story states that failure to comply with animal welfare regulation may result in "nothing short of risking inability to market a product" ("ni más ni menos que la posibilidad o no de comercializar un producto"). This statement assumes that the industry is subject to an exceptional process ("nothing short" implies an abnormally serious issue). By contrast, in other businesses companies that do not comply with the law are not allowed to market their products. Another article quotes the association of producers of chocolate, biscuits and candy, stating that, as a consequence of the welfare regulation of hens, egg shortages threaten the survival of their business. The journalist promptly reminds readers that eggs are "essential ingredients" ("ingredientes esenciales") for biscuits, chocolate and candy, in itself an exaggeration. The article implicitly denies plant-based alternatives and thus perpetuates the myth that eggs are indispensable, while creating fear in consumers.

Suppression of Suffering

The appeal to fear discussed in the above section only works if readers are distracted from the real issues, such as NUF's suffering. Three strategies that achieve it—objectification, suppression and hedging—recur the most in the Spanish outlet. While

all three are endemic to utility-based arguments, objectification is ubiquitous: nonhumans are considered merely units of production with commercial value for humans. Articles refer to them as “units” (“unidades”), “specimens” (“ejemplares”), “captures” (“capturas”) and “heads” (“cabezas”). Cows “produce” (“producen”) milk; other nonhumans are “unique genetic material” (“material genético único”). They are referred to in collectivized ways: “herd” (“cabaña”), “flock” (“rebaño”), “cattle” (“ganado”), “colony” (“colonia”) or with idioms characteristically applied to inanimate objects, as “animal motorcade” (“parque de animales”). Further, four stories (two as main topic) address biodiversity and report research on breed recovery. In all cases, protecting nonhuman biodiversity is solely justified on the basis of business and human food safety. Biodiversity is funded because it is “useful” (“útil”), it produces “competitive advantage” (“ventajas competitivas”) and some breeds are “a gold mine” (“un filón”). Within the articles’ framework, biodiversity makes sense only because “it produces economic wealth” (“produce riqueza económica”).

Suppression is employed in two ways in EP. One invokes business reputation. Instead of appealing to ethics to stop unethical practices, two articles discuss how to protect the reputation of businesses in jeopardy of being associated with nonhuman suffering. The other uses false dichotomies, such as factory versus family farms. For instance, one story describes factory farms as powerful lobbyists that try to manipulate regulation in their favor, despite being unsustainable. By contrast, smaller, family farms are described more empathetically as sustainable, yet struggling under the boot of factory farms. This dichotomy is false because regulation does not aim at sustainability but at reducing nonhuman suffering. When readers are distracted by this false dichotomy, the real goal of regulation—reducing nonhuman suffering—is fully suppressed.

Another discursive strategy that distracts EP readers by casting doubts that nonhuman welfare is a serious issue is hedging (evasiveness that creates strategic ambiguity). A particularly salient example states that the law banning foie-gras “considers” (“considera”) feeding methods to constitute cruelty against animals. The journalist carefully avoids labeling the feeding methods as cruel; it is the law that deems them such. Hedging allows the journalist to create a distance that protects her from portraying forced feeding as cruel. Another story illustrates a similar point. It reports how an animal advocacy organization sued a foie-gras producer for their feeding practices and sacrificing animals without previously stunning them. The article frames the cruel practices as merely the opinion of the advocacy organization by stating that it “didn’t agree” (“no estaban de acuerdo”) with these practices.

In sum, the EP sample distracts readers from NUF’s suffering and the discourse on nonhumans as individuals who have their own interests. As a result, the discursive suppression of a nonhumans’ viewpoint and their moral consideration goes unchallenged. In the rare cases when the outlet does mention the cruelty inherent to the animal farming industry, it is always incidentally.

False Balance, Naming, War Language

Hedging is also a common strategy of false balance practices. Journalists use false balance to misrepresent an issue as more balanced between opposing viewpoints than the evidence supports. An example is to give science deniers as much space as an opposing position that represents the overwhelming scientific consensus. For instance, one story states that experts are uncertain whether measures demanding that animals live in groups actually benefit them. No legitimate source is provided to back this controversial claim.

Finally, the EP sample follows the same speciesist approach in naming NUF that Freeman reported 10 years earlier. Metonymy is commonplace in defining nonhumans, naming them by their use: “milk cows” (“vacas lecheras”), “poultry farming for eggs” (“avicultura de puesta”), “poultry farming for meat” (“avicultura de carne”), “laying hens” (“gallinas ponedoras”), “acorn-fed pig” (“cerdo de bellota”), “reproductive specimens” (“ejemplares reproductores”), etc.

EP uses a discursive strategy—war and sexual metaphors—not reported by Freeman. For instance, a bird is “taken down” (“abatida”), “brought down” (“derribada”) or “captured” (“capturada”) by hunters, while fishermen “battle” (“se baten”) against an “army” (“ejército”) of tuna fishes in a “fight” (“batalla”) depicted as “hand-to-hand combat” (“cuerpo a cuerpo”), with the “climax” at the moment of death. When fishes exceed the quota, they are returned to the sea in what fishers call a “bleeding” (“sangrá”), or “coitus interruptus.” Tuna fishers are labeled “fishing warriors” (“guerreros de la pesca”) while a fish’s tail resembles “a Prussian soldier’s mustache” (“mostacho de un military prusiano”).

NYT shares all the above strategies with EP. NYT articles exceed in alarmist linguistic choices suggesting human monetary and emotional suffering, as “struggling,” “hardship,” “neighbor against neighbor,” or describing humans as victims of NUF—“eating-machines” and “menace.” Objectification foregrounds framing nonhumans, as in “she saw chickens more as an outdoor activity and teaching tool for her kids.” Suppression is another used strategy, e.g., suppressing human guilt for introducing foreign species to an environment that has not evolved to protect itself from these species, labeling them “invasive.” One article describes pigs introduced to the Hawaiian habitat by Europeans as “not the gentle, pink cousins of Wilbur from ‘Charlotte’s Web,’ E. B. White’s children’s classic” but as “the most destructive animal out there” who “rototills the planet.” The columnist concludes that if he kills enough pigs, “perhaps then the pig would grasp the horror of what its species had done.” NYT also uses crude speciesist strategies in naming, as collective names and names signifying the function NUF serve for humans, e.g. “their only redeeming trait’s that they are delicious.”

More importantly, there is a great imbalance of sources in both samples, with sources related to the industry exceeding those related to animal advocacies by three-fold in EP and four-fold in NYT. This bias is present in the whole sample, regardless whether the articles belong to informative or opinion-based genres. It is worth noting that the number of opinion columns in the EP sample was 4, and 15 in NYT.

Camouflaged Speciesism: Industry with an Ethical Façade

While crude speciesism, with its overt alarmist language, is the norm in EP, NYT approaches nonhuman suffering from the perspectives of crude and camouflaged speciesism. In this section, we focus on the latter, covert perspective, which is more insidious because it hides the full magnitude of institutionalized nonhuman oppression using a slew of euphemisms. Camouflaged speciesism generates stories framed as happy, promotional pieces (47 percent of the sample) of two types. The first praises big business for recent regulation. No credit is given to the arduous battle animal advocates have waged to create circumstances where big business is pressured to accept minor regulation rather than continue to oppose it. Blaming animal advocates for farmers’ economic situation is a feature of crude speciesism; yet writing them out of the story is a characteristic of camouflaged speciesism. The latter conceals continuing practices of animal exploitation, so central to big business, and markets such deception as a new development free of cruelty. Examples of this type are “OMG: McDonalds

does the right thing!,” or describing Smithfield, McDonalds’ chief supplier of pork, as “a sustainability leader” despite the company’s decades-long and on-going resistance to regulation that “has cost it dearly in public relations,” or calling Walmart “the true pacesetter” despite the company’s troubling record of bottom-barrel pay, poor benefits and active discouragement of its employees from unionizing, as The Huffington Post (February 14, 2013) calls it, “one of the most virulently anti-union conglomerates ever to exist.”

While the first type praises specific developments as free of cruelty, the second extols a whole industry—alternative agriculture—as fundamentally compassionate. Alternative agriculture describes a variety of methods spanning from organic to urban animal farming, to the genetically modified organism industry (contrary to popular belief)—touted in one article as perhaps “the most virtuous entity on the planet.” Below we describe how NYT shapes readers’ impressions of an “increasingly intimate relationship” between humans and nonhumans to affirm the discourse of cruelty-free alternative agriculture with powerful strategies like hyperbole, metaphor, over-lexication and hedging that camouflage its economic, speciesist rationale.

Tradition of Personal Names

Inventories of personal and collective names can classify individuals and create an array of ideological effects. NYT stories about alternative agriculture use personal names as part of a bait-and-switch tactic to represent nonhumans as happy individuals. A personal name given to a nonhuman is assumed evidence that the nonhuman is treated as an individual, and the name-giver is guided by respect and care. That is why journalists and columnists bring up the tradition of naming nonhumans (the bait) as a plus to the story, apparently in an attempt to contrast alternative agriculture to factory farming, which never names NUF.

The protocol differs, however. Humans are portrayed as individuals by their appearance, emotions, hopes and struggles. Articles would bait readers by calling a NUF by a personal name, thus leading readers to believe that the NUF is portrayed as an individual, then turn a switch and end with statements like this quote from farmer Bob showing a name’s redundancy: “I know most of my cows both by the head and by the udder. You learn to recognize them from both directions.” The udder, a symbol of the cows’ productivity, reveals the reason for recognition.

The bait’s also used to imply that if a nonhuman is mentioned by name, her feelings are automatically considered; thus, she is always portrayed as happy, “The next time you drink an Organic Valley glass of milk, it may have come from one of Bob’s cows. If so, you can bet it was a happy cow. And it has a name.” Combining the boast that Bob’s cow is considered an individual with the impersonal neuter pronoun “it” to designate her does not bother the columnist. Rather than portraying the cow as a subject, this strategy ensures that the farmer’s own subjectivity as compassionate is upheld.

This tradition involves a specific type of personal names. Most are nicknames that signify food, plants, or objects used by humans, such as “Peaches,” “Pesto,” “Pasta,” “Hazel,” “Hosta” or “Kimona” (translucent blouse; name of a movie about a prostitute). Authors apparently assume that such personal names portray NUF as individuals. Yet, pasta and pesto are fungible products. In fact, these nicknames are kin to naming nonhumans in the same articles as if they were products: “beef,” “grass-fed” (noun missing), “Beefmaster” or simply “what we eat.”

This tradition also involves brand names rooted in consumer capitalism. For example, the amalgam “Enviropig” labels “a swine that has been genetically modified to excrete less phosphorus,” while the haplogized name “AquAdvantage salmon” designates a salmon that grows twice as fast. When product and brand-naming protocols are used, nonhumans lose their individuality to a label. To portray them as individuals, nonhumans are rarely described beyond a nickname such as “Kimona”; however, when they are called by a product or a brand name, they get a lengthy description. Bob “rattles off [the cow’s] specs,” another story elaborates—“minimum-input type cow, with more depth of body, more thickness, good udder structure and a good disposition.”

The Myth of Control

Alternative agriculture has a reputation in the industry that it is “for the crazies,” as one article describes its enthusiasts. To combat such attitudes, practitioners market it as free of cruelty in the hopes of distinguishing it from factory farming. Since it is not, it camouflages its speciesism with the myth that nonhumans are in control, e.g., an article describes a chicken as “Boss Lady.” Descriptions of alternative agriculture as a fun place enhance this myth. For instance, one article calls tours of backyard chicken coops “Tour de Cluck,” where looky-loos ogle nonhuman “housing” like the coop “kibbutz” and “Clucking-ham Palace,” depicted as “decorator show-houses.” While calling chicken coops “kibbutz” compares chickens to voluntary participants in a heavily-armed, socialist egalitarian community without owners, like the historical kibbutz, “Cluckingham Palace” is a spoof of Buckingham Palace (the British royal residence), which suggests that chickens are as powerful and pampered as British monarchs. Even though such names might be chosen playfully, their positive connotations are not lost on the readers, who would have a different impression were coops called “Alclucktraz,” for example, after the maximum-security prison of Alcatraz, and certainly if called “Cluckcentration camp.”

The myth of control also extends to portraying nonhumans as unduly pampered, as the term “Portland birds” used in one article suggests. These are hens whose egg production has diminished, rehomed around Portland, Oregon, seen as an extension of a skit from *Portlandia*, the 2011 US satirical TV series that ridicules concerns with NUF’s happiness and the human footprint on the environment. Although seen as spoiled, ironically, the hens end up on the plate, praised for being an integral (and impliedly willing) part of “a locavore movement that has city dwellers moving ever closer to their food,” as one article puts it. Another article reasons that cows are pampered and happy because humans have realized that “an angry cow is not a very good eating experience.” While the article argues that cows are treated without cruelty within alternative agriculture, it nonetheless objectifies them as food and foregrounds the pleasures of the human palate rather than the cows’ lives as the measure for moral consideration. Another article shares the advice of a Ms. Evans not to spoil chickens like “some moms,” thereby she feeds chickens with quince soaked in vodka. The article muses that “like raising children, how one keeps chickens is a personal philosophy.” When such statements define what constitutes humane treatment as personal philosophy, they imply that it need not be questioned even if it is cruel.

Last, the myth of control involves portraying nonhumans as respected, thus worthy of imitation by humans. For instance, to be elected, Portland “politicians running for office are expected to take part in a clucking contest” and get an “I had the courage to cluck” certificate. All positive connotations of respect are, however, misleading since the document does not certify that politicians explore nonhuman perspectives, only that they ate a heaping plate of “frittatas, soufflés and huevos rancheros.”

“Old Age”

A marginal number of NUF raised in alternative agricultural environments survive after their profitability plummets. Discussions about their consequent fate appear in 10 percent of the NYT sample, which makes it a somewhat well-addressed topic. This discourse of survival is portrayed as a “budding phenomenon” rooted in humans’ ethical impulses to generate a better future for nonhumans. A “quest” to bestow a “life with dignity” on nonhumans, as one article defines it, this discourse, nonetheless, incorrectly suggests that without human intervention, nonhumans are incapable of a life “with dignity.”

Nominalization (substituting actions with noun phrases) is one discursive strategy that paints a happier, cleaner picture of what happens to NUF. Examples are phrases like “wholesome end,” “blissful, pastoral end,” “end-of-life,” “day of reckoning,” and “retirement.” This strategy creates ambiguity about what really happens to NUF. No doubt chosen to inject humor, the metaphor “day of reckoning” does not bother the columnist with its connotations—what did NUF do to deserve a day when they would be judged for making, or failing to make, the kinds of moral choices that religious humans struggle to abide by? Mired in the abstract and unknowable, this metaphor makes it difficult to see that nonhumans have personal interest in life, instead, fostering the intrigue of imaginary conviction and punishment. The euphemism nonhuman “retirement” depicts alternative agriculture as a decisive advancement from the crude speciesism of factory farming where NUF have only one option—to be killed. The alternative is depicted as a compassionate, yet tough, choice that an increasing number of humans make to allow nonhumans to live out the span of their life. Articles beguile readers with metaphors such as “sunset” or “golden years” that nonhumans spend “on a farm” and hyperbole as “charity hostel,” yet hedge the fact that only a handful of favorite nonhumans’ “day of reckoning can be postponed indefinitely,” thus creating a strategic ambiguity that softens the harsh reality.

Calling NUF “senior birds” or “geriatric cows” is incorrect because most of them are young when they are considered unprofitable by the industry, and would otherwise enjoy longer lives. It is also euphemistic because it creates a false equivalency between discarded nonhumans and elderly humans, who inspire compassion for their poorer health and need of assistance. The image such terms create is one of compassionate humans taking care of elderly nonhumans in need.

At its core, camouflaged speciesism is an apology for carnism (the ideology of meat-eating). One article describes teaching children butchery. After selecting a live pig, whom they dutifully name “Wilburess,” the kids watch her slaughter on tape, then butcher her. Their teacher, a self-proclaimed “meat thinker,” declares with righteous indignation that meat, and not animals, deserves moral consideration, “What better way to learn about the ethics of your meat than butcher it yourself.”³

Although these “happy” stories foreground humans as making tough but compassionate choices, a few language slips paint a different perspective. When a cow grows “old and unproductive,” she is traded “in exchange for a ham,” which objectifies the cow’s value as a resource, not as an individual. This contradicts the dominant frame that human choices regarding nonhumans are grounded in ethics (moral consideration), and instead points clearly to economics. Hence, authors assure readers that killing nonhumans is common wisdom, “When cows age and their milk production drops, farmers slaughter them.” Readers can interpret phrases like “chickens outlive their laying years” not as hedging the fact that chickens have not evolved to measure their lives by the number of years they lay eggs for humans, but rather as a way to

understand that unless humans intervene to put chickens into new uses as “eating pests [or...] to turn compost, to keep grass down,” chickens’ lives are worthless. Last, the advice to “plan ahead” for the time when NUF can no longer “cover [their] expenses,” directly contradicts the humanity of alternative agriculture with “information about butchering techniques.”

In comparison, EP’s use of camouflaged speciesist strategies is insignificant. Euphemisms appear to mock nonhuman welfare, not convince readers that its current standards are not cruel. Three headlines spell out this point: “Five-star hotel-farms” (“Granjas de cinco estrellas”), “Comfort hotel for pigs” (“Pensión confort para los cerdos”) and “SMS: I am in heat. Signed: Swiss cow” (“SMS: estoy en celo. Firmado: vaca suíza” to describe a digital tool inserted in the cow’s uterus to alert farmers of her hormonal levels).

Challenging the Status Quo: Openings for Change

Although the above practices are the prevailing norm in the studied newspapers, there are some examples that challenge the status quo and might open journalistic routines to change.

First, a timid challenge is found in EP. For example, two articles introduce Spanish readers to veganism, another to a nonhuman sanctuary. Although false balance, hedging, myth of control and other discursive strategies are used to balance a non-speciesist with a speciesist, industry perspective, broaching these topics is a new, encouraging development. Another article focuses on the lack of attention NUF receive during forest fires. Its reporter, Javier Rico, denounces how livestock who die in fires are counted as economic losses rather than lives. Finally, a few articles exhibit an internal debate among contradictory messages in creating the story. This is encouraging because one of the stances is based on compassion, which could lead to challenging speciesism. In a remarkable case, the journalist Carolina Pinedo addresses nonhuman well-being. In spite of the fact that the subheading and most of the article links it to human health (treating NUF better produces healthier food), the headline and the last paragraph foreground labeling nonhumans as “cannon fodder” (carne de cañon) to proclaim that treating them better should also be done for moral reasons.

NYT is much bolder in challenging the status quo. Beth Greenfield’s story about vegan bed & breakfast at nonhuman sanctuaries is hardly controversial, yet sadly it is the only one that truly describes nonhumans as individuals on their own terms. Two other stories also deserve mention for documenting favorably the legal battles of animal rights activists against global industries. Marlise Simons’ critical article about Japan’s whaling industry exposes it as commercial in disguise, while an article by Richard Oppel Jr. exposes the Orwellian absurdity of Ag-gag laws that criminalize not the abuse of nonhumans on factory farms but its undercover investigation.⁴ The outlet truly probes nonspeciesism with several articles by food writer Mark Bittman and op-ed columnist Nicholas Kristof. Bittman decries “our isolation from killing” for allowing us “to tolerate unimaginably cruel practices simply because we don’t see them.” He urges us to recognize nonhuman abuse as a serious negative consequence of meat-eating, since recognition, he argues, is the only way to alleviate abuse. His most insightful observation is that nonhuman well-being, rather than damaging the environment or human health, should be considered the primary reason for changing nonhuman abuse. Arguing that egg consumption has unacceptable health and ethical consequences, Kristof also expands the parameters of addressing this issue with frank descriptions of hens’ gruesome treatment, without euphemisms or concealing its

horrors. These remarkable pieces show that, on occasion, NYT can challenge the speciesist roots of nonhuman abuse, as well as its technology of concealment. It can also call for action, unfortunately, so far only to decrease the amount of abuse, not end it.

Conclusions and Recommendations

SMS: I am in heat. Signed: Swiss cow. (El País)

Whereas Freeman recorded one slice of the iteration of speciesism from 2000 to 2003, exploring one of her studied outlets at a later period allowed us to see the development of speciesism over time. Further, by comparing newspapers from two different countries, we were able to see how speciesism changes across cultures. Our efforts have been rewarding in three ways. First, our findings confirm that Freeman's conclusions about speciesism in the media are still valid, not just in their original environment but also outside the United States. Analyzing the EP and NYT samples shows that language discourse maintains and reproduces nonhuman oppression by perpetuating speciesism through a series of strategies like commodifying nonhumans, hedging serious issues, the employment of false balance, prioritizing human interests, neglecting nonhuman suffering and individuality, and concealing or ignoring the plethora of extant cruelty-free alternatives.

Second, we discovered that speciesism is mutating. It is inherently unstable because it is built on indefensible prejudice. To survive the constant influx of new challenges that threaten to expose it, speciesism employs changing techniques. For instance, camouflaging speciesism is more difficult to spot. It involves strategies of emotional reassurance and comfort such as "bait-and-switch" that assume an inherently cruelty-free place where "cows are happy and food is healthy," where nonhumans are in control of their lives (as the quoted headline above), where we can still exploit and kill nonhumans without feeling guilty. As of now, the crude techniques of fear-mongering have not been relinquished; they continue to coexist with the camouflaged ones. The place where "cows are happy and food is healthy," is only a picture on the cover. Once we open the book, we are reassured that humans will continue to be speciesist and that carnism is not going away because the cows are the food.

Similar to Freeman, we also found that in a number of journalists' stories NUF are represented from angles that see their inherent, rather than instrumental value. However, unlike Freeman, we observed that speciesism is almost exclusively challenged at the section or paragraph level rather than the article level. The breadth and scope with which speciesism is challenged in EP is noticeably reduced compared to NYT. In the latter, challenge blends with defense within the same article and is refracted as soft speciesism.

Third, there are substantial differences between EP and NYT. While EP organizes its discourse on NUF within the perspective of crude speciesism, NYT increasingly incorporates a camouflaged version. The reasons behind these differences are worth exploring in a separate study. Here, we propose briefly that animal advocates have engendered frequent conversation about animal suffering in the United States in the last decades. Since discussing the injustice and arbitrariness of exploiting and killing NUF can shake the foundations of speciesism, such conversation is a threat to crude speciesism. Camouflaged speciesism can be seen, then, as the reaction to this conversation, as journalists' strategy to hide the ideological problems that arise from it. Camouflaged speciesism, however, is not a challenge to the status quo, just a strategy to ideologically reassure readers that things are morally right. As big business

searches to cure its animal-unfriendly reputation, the media recalibrates its approach by producing stories framed as happy, promotional pieces. This is to signal to us, readers, that democracy is working, therefore, we should not; and that the invisible hand of the economy is working (business allegedly self-regulates), therefore, we should not. The Spanish delay in developing a public discussion on nonhuman oppression—due to the later development of animal rights activism there—may be at the heart of EP’s more basic, crude speciesism.

The status quo is not challenged, but hopeful signs exist. That is why we are encouraged that a more responsible journalism is possible. To achieve it, we recommend that journalists replace crude and camouflaged speciesism with a substantive moral position, i.e., animal rights, compatible with exposing and abolishing nonhuman oppression. To question media’s role in protecting speciesism, we recommend that journalists explore nonhuman treatment beyond concerns for human health, and forgo recasting stories about animal agriculture into happy, promotional pieces (unless the nonhumans in them live independent lives free of exploitation). We believe that cultivating a perspective based on empathy, fairness and justice is important in the process of challenging speciesism. It means telling everyone’s story, including that of NUF.

Empathy should not be confused with comforting lies, like describing nonhuman abuse as one among several equally valid ways to treat NUF or as the way only outliers treat NUF. We also encourage the media not to co-opt the empathy perspective into a discourse of welfarism, which ultimately condones oppression, thus simply another form of speciesism. Fairness is fact-driven. It answers readers’ desire for truth over the reinforcement of cultural myths—speciesism/carnism—even if readers subscribe to these myths. It also represents nonhuman interests more objectively by eliminating euphemisms. In striving to achieve these, global journalists will meet the standard of professional conduct adopted in 1954 (amended in 1986) by the International Federation of Journalists, according to which journalists shall respect truth and “the right of the public to truth ... shall not suppress essential information ... shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination.” This standard is described as the duty of journalists, and is replicated in most international codes of ethics, including the ones by the US and Spanish journalists associations, as well as in the style guides of the two newspapers here analyzed.

Finally, to test our conclusions on a truly global scale, we recommend future research to include outlets from other countries or cultural clusters as well as from the alternative media sector.

NOTES

1. The acronym NUF is problematic as to some extent it reifies nonhuman animals. In a sense, however, all language creates abstractions; hence with this proviso we adopt “NUF” as shorthand.
2. “Eco-terrorism”— a term introduced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to justify its diversion of anti-terrorism resources in the suppression of environmental activism against corporations (see Potter 2011).
3. Michael Pollan (not in our sample) has written extensively on the ethics of food for NYT and other media and consistently used similar speciesist, pro-carnist ideology.
4. “Ag-gag” laws are US anti-whistleblower laws that criminalize taking undercover footage of animal cruelty in factory farms.

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