

Animal Rights as a Post-Citizenship Movement

ABSTRACT

Post-citizenship movements include persons who are well integrated into the economic and educational structures of their society, advocate goals that offer little or no benefit to movement members, and pursue cultural changes in addition to more traditional social movement goals (Jasper, 1997). This survey of 105 attendees at the Animal Rights 2000 conference, described by organizers as the largest event of its kind, supported viewing the animal rights movement as a post-citizenship movement. While confirming the high level of economic and education integration, as well as the moral motivation of participants, this study also showed a threefold increase in veganism over an earlier survey (Plous, 1991), supporting the importance of Jasper's cultural dimension of the post-citizenship model.

The contemporary animal rights movement, with its disproportionately well-educated membership, appears to share many aspects of what Parkin (1968) termed "middle class radicalism," including a movement whose members appear to be motivated by advocating particular claims on behalf of non-members. Parkin noted that virtually all of his respondents were well-educated, integrated into the middle

class, and were pursuing goals that potentially benefited both members and non-members. These aspects distinguished the Citizens for Nuclear Disarmament from “working class radicalism,” where efforts are made primarily on behalf of movement members (e.g., labor movements). Becker (1973) and Gusfield (1986) also demonstrated that members of social movements and other reform-focused organizations tended to be well educated, relatively affluent, and thoroughly incorporated into the economic and political social structures of their day.

Similarly, Inglehart (1997) has argued that “postmaterialist” social movements tend to be composed of those who are well educated, have reached a comfortable level of affluence, and whose participation within that movement is not motivated primarily by the promise of direct economic, political, and/or social benefits. He maintains that because of the level of material (and physical) security enjoyed by postmaterialists, these members can pursue post-materialist values, which tend to emphasize self-expression and quality of life issues.

Jasper (1997) created the term “post-citizenship movement” to characterize such middle class and overtly altruistic movements. Jasper discusses post-citizenship movements as being composed of people already integrated into their society’s political, economic, and educational systems: “Because they need not demand basic rights for themselves, post-citizenship movement members often pursue protections or benefits for others” (Jasper, p. 7). Clearly, the animal rights movement meets these criteria, as Jasper and Nelkin (1992) note in their discussion of animal rights movement members: “Membership generally requires time for activities, discretionary income to contribute, and a conviction that participation can make a difference (Jasper & Nelkin, p. 44).” Jasper and Nelkin and Jasper and Poulsen (1995) describe participants as having economic resources and political power that permit their full participation within the educational, political, and economic structures of their society; in short, animal rights activists tend to be “well-integrated” into these structures. The animal rights movement conforms to these criteria of appearing under conditions of significant economic security and political stability. Inglehart, Basanez, and Moreno (1998) state that the countries with the largest percentages of membership in animal rights organizations—the Netherlands (13%), Belgium (8%), Sweden (7%), and the United States (5%)—have large

middle classes and are substantively democratic. We will refer to this aspect of “integration” into the polity throughout this paper rather than to the classic social-psychological definition based on integration into social networks.

Post-citizenship movement members are similar to Becker’s (1973) rule-creating moral entrepreneurs who participate within a social movement (or other collective organization) based largely on their moral and ethical beliefs rather than purely for direct personal or collective gain. Similarly, Jasper (1997) contends that the members of post-citizenship movements propose economic and political changes that will not benefit them directly: Their goal is to “realize a moral vision” (p. 9).

This moral vision often includes a cultural dimension such as altering gender relations or making unacceptable previously accepted cultural practices—for example, wearing fur garments. Post-citizenship movements, Jasper (1997) argues, may go beyond traditional social movement tactics such as involvement in legislative processes to add cultural aims such as creating new moral rules for personal conduct (e.g., promoting vegetarian and/or vegan diets).

Through a survey of conference participants, we tested Jasper’s (1997) post-citizenship social movement model at the Animal Rights 2000 conference, held June 30 to July 3, 2000 in McLean, Virginia. We were interested especially in the participants’ economic and educational profiles, motivation for participation, and cultural manifestations of their beliefs in animal rights. We expected to find that respondents were (a) “. . . composed of people already integrated into their society’s political economic, and educational systems” (Jasper, 1997, p. 7); that is, well-educated and relatively affluent; (b) involved in the animal rights movement for moral reasons; and (c) demonstrated some sort of lifestyle/cultural commitment to animal rights beyond simply giving intellectual support to the claims of the animal rights movement.

Methodology

The Animal Rights 2000 conference drew together more than 700 animal rights activists from across North America, Europe, and South Korea. Dr. Alex Hershaft, president of the Farm Animal Reform Movement, which organized this event, described it as “. . . the biggest conference that the animal rights movement has ever had” (personal communication, June 30, 2000).

We surveyed 105 respondents, about 15% of the total attendees. Our survey was distributed at a plenary session on the evening of July 3, 2000, which was attended by approximately 300 people, giving us a response rate of about 33%. Our survey inquired about respondent demographics: what attracted respondents to the animal rights movement; what were the most effective means for raising animal rights matters with non-members, and what were the dietary and consumption habits of these activists.

Results

Demographics/Integration

The respondents described themselves as well educated (see Table 1). Approximately 41% stated that they had undergraduate degrees, 26% had Master’s

Table 1: Demographics / Integration of Animal Rights Activists
105 total respondents

Gender			Age			
	Num.	Perc.		Num.	Perc.	
Male	22	21%	Less than 18	2	2%	
Female	75	71%	18 to 25	16	15%	
			26 to 35	27	26%	
			36 to 45	24	23%	
			46 to 55	18	17%	
			56 and above	10	10%	
Education			(1) Annual Household Income			
	Num.	Perc.		Num.	Perc.	
High School graduate or less	12	11%	\$20,000 or less	13	12%	
Undergraduate degree	43	41%	\$20,001-\$35,000	15	14%	
Master Degree	27	26%	\$35,001-\$65,000	36	34%	
Professional Degree	13	12%	\$65,001-\$100,000	13	12%	
Terminal Degree	4	4%	\$100,001+	16	15%	
High school or less includes 2 under age 18 and 5 ages 18-25, some of whom may be still in college			Some respondents under age 25 reported income likely to be for family of origin			

Note: Numbers may not add to 105 and percents may not add to 100% due to blank responses.

degrees, 12% had professional degrees, and 4% had terminal degrees. Only 11% had high school education or less. Of the respondents who had not completed undergraduate degrees, half were under 25, suggesting that some may still have been attending an undergraduate institution at the time of this survey.

Most of the respondents reported incomes that could be defined as “affluent” or at least within the range of the middle class (Wolfe, 1998). Approximately 34% had incomes between \$35,000 and \$65,000, 12% of respondents had incomes between \$65,001 and \$100,000, and 15% of respondents reported an annual income of more than \$100,000. Only 26% of respondents had annual incomes under \$35,000.

Although the feminine composition of our survey matched previous reports of the approximate 3:1 female/male ratio (Plous, 1991, p. 194; Galvin & Herzog, Jr., 1998, p. 4), the results for age and length of involvement varied from previous findings. Galvin and Herzog reported a median age of 34 for study participants from the 1996 March for Animals as compared to 32 for those from the 1990 March for Animals. Our median respondent fell in the 36 to 45 year old age group, probably near the younger end of the range. Similarly, our median length of time involved in the movement was between 10 and 11 years, up from 6 years in 1996 (Galvin & Herzog, Jr.) and 3 years in 1990 (Plous).

Moral Motivation

When asked to indicate the top three reasons for their becoming involved in the animal rights movement (see Table 2), 64% of respondents stated that vegetarianism or veganism for compassion first attracted them. “Companion animal issues” and concerns over experimentation factored into less than half as many cases with 29% and 28%, respectively, identifying these causes. “Wildlife (hunting, etc.),” environmental concerns, and the use of animals in the fashion industry each were mentioned by less than one in five respondents. Only 13% identified health concerns as a key factor.

Most activists were drawn to animal issues over time, with the majority (58%) asserting that they “gradually gravitated due to things [they] read or saw.” Only 4% of respondents claimed that their families raised them as members

Table 2: Moral Motivation

Top 3 Reasons for Initial Involvement in AR

			Conversion Process		
	Num.	Perc.		Num.	Perc.
Vegetarian for compassion	67	64%	Raised that way by family	4	4%
Companion animals	30	29%	Influence by friends or family later in life	9	9%
Animal experimentation	29	28%	Gradual change	61	58%
			Sudden change	27	26%

Top Modes of Influence

Number rating “somewhat important” or “very important”

For their own conversion

	Num.	Perc.
Books	80	76%
Pamphlets	79	75%
Videos	62	59%
Group Membership	62	59%

In their work to influence others

	Num.	Perc.
Videos	92	88%
Pamphlets	91	87%
Friends	87	83%
Books	87	83%

Most Effective Group

	Num.	Perc.
PETA	41	39%

Reasons for

Effectiveness (all groups)

	Num.	Perc.
Pamphlets	33	31%
Well-funded	22	21%

Represents two-thirds of respondents choosing a leading organization. No other organization with more than 6 mentions

of the animal rights movement, and 9% stated that their involvement occurred primarily from influence “later in life by friends or family.” About 25% of respondents stated that they had “a sudden conversion,” usually derived from publications or direct experiences with animals, which led directly to their participation in the animal rights movement.

When asked to state how influential various methods of communicating and/or disseminating information about animal rights were in helping the respondents take “the first step” into animal rights, more than 75% cited books and pamphlets as being either “very effective” or “somewhat effec-

Table 3: Influential Media for Sudden Conversion Experiences

Books

- *Diet for a New America* by John Robbins
- *Slaughterhouse* by Gail Eisnitz
- *Free the Animals!* by Ingrid Newkirk

Pamphlets and Other Information

- Materials from PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)
- *The Higher Taste* (a Hare Krishna Publication)
- *Why Vegan* by Kath Clements

Magazines

- *The Animals Agenda*
 - *The Animals Voice*
-

tive.” Respondents indicating they experienced a sudden conversion mentioned information materials noted in Table 3. Almost 60% of all respondents cited videos as being either “very effective” or “somewhat effective” in communicating animal rights information and messages. Visits to an animal sanctuary, participation in, and/or witnessing some form of civil disobedience, and the presence of sympathetic family members had less impact on initially attracting these activists.

Respondents maintained the importance of print and news media when asked to consider what methods are “most effective” or “somewhat effective” for the movement to influence others. Reinforcing the value of visual images and information, 88% cited videos, 87% noted pamphlets, and 83% mentioned books. However, the pattern varied when considering the importance of social networks in recruiting others into the movement. In this case, 83% of respondents indicated friends, and 71% cited family as either “very” or “somewhat” effective in influencing others about the animal rights movement—a striking difference from the experiences of the respondents, where only 17% noted family and 35% indicated friends as influential. Of the remaining methods, only participating in or witnessing civil disobedience garnered less than 50% support for effectiveness.

The ability to offer such influential tools defined organizational effectiveness for respondents, who listed pamphlets/fact sheets, web site(s) and videos,

along with tabling (making movement members and written materials accessible to the public at information tables), demonstrations, strong funding, and responsiveness as the hallmarks of a superior organization. Nearly 66% of those choosing to identify a single organization that they consider most successful today in influencing others to join them indicated People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, giving this group more than 6 times as many mentions as the next most cited organization.

Lifestyle/Cultural Commitment

More than half (54%) of respondents described themselves as being “vegan in what I eat and what I wear,” meaning that these respondents neither ate food containing any animal product nor wore any products derived from animals (see Table 4). Ten % described themselves as “vegan in what I eat, but not what I wear.” About one in five described themselves as “vegetarian and thinking about becoming vegan.” Fewer than 7% indicated they were “vegetarian and NOT considering becoming vegan” or “eat[ing] animal products, but thinking about “becoming vegetarian or vegan.”

Our findings also suggested that a commitment to animal rights extended beyond diet and clothing and was highly relevant regarding other forms of consumption. Sixty six % of respondents stated that they would “definitely buy more,” and 22% stated that they would “probably buy more” “animal-

Table 4: Lifestyle / Cultural Commitment

Dietary Status	Interest in companies supporting animal issues	
	Num.	Perc.
Vegan in diet and clothing	57	54%
Vegan diet only	11	10%
Vegetarian considering vegan	23	22%
Vegetarian NOT considering vegan	4	4%
Nonveg considering vegetarianism	3	3%
Nonveg NOT considering veg*ism	0	0%

friendly products” from a “company that actively supports animal issues than [from] similar companies that do not.”

Of those who did not describe themselves as being vegan in what they ate and wore, the most commonly cited obstacles were not wanting to give up particular non-vegan products, not liking the non-animal alternatives, and not being able to maintain the discipline of the vegan lifestyle.

Discussion

Our findings support Jasper’s (1997) post-citizenship model in that we found that the bulk of our respondents appeared to be highly educated, therefore “. . . already integrated into their . . . educational systems,” and economically secure. They have demonstrated a high degree of moral commitment to the claims of the animal rights movement and have expressed significant lifestyle choices in alignment with the moral and ethical claims of animal rights. Our findings support previous research, which has indicated that animal rights activists often are drawn to the animal rights movement through material and/or literature that engages them morally (Herzog, 1993; Herzog, Dinoff, & Page, 1997; Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Jasper & Poulsen, 1995; Groves, 1997), reinforcing the importance of appreciating the moral commitment of animal rights activists. In terms of moral commitments, cultural transformations, and “lifestyle,” our findings suggest that the importance of being vegan in the animal rights movement has grown in the last decade (Plous, 1991) from 18% to 65%—providing evidence that the cultural component of Jasper’s post-citizenship model may be even more significant than previously noted, at least in terms of its application to the animal rights movement.

Demographics / Integration

American animal rights activists are educationally and economically well-integrated into their society. Consistent with Plous (1991), and Galvin and Herzog (1998), our respondents described themselves as well-educated, with nearly 80% holding undergraduate or higher degrees. Most of the respondents indicated they were middle income or affluent.

Other demographic data updates and reinforces conclusions by Galvin and Herzog (1998) that “the animal rights movement has not been successful in

broadening the gender distribution of its base.” The older, more experienced activists in our study deviated from the findings of Galvin and Herzog. However, this discrepancy may be due to differences in attendees at a paid conference that extended over several days, as opposed to a one-day free march.

Moral Motivation

We found that the animal rights movement is composed largely of people who are deeply concerned about animal issues for moral reasons—as Jasper’s (1997) post-citizenship concept would predict. The majority of respondents stated that becoming vegetarian for compassion was one of the top three factors that first attracted them to “animal issues,” while mentioning least often the direct benefit of becoming vegetarian for “health concerns.” The quarter of respondents reporting “a sudden conversion experience” caused them to become involved in the animal rights movement further suggests that the ideas and beliefs at the core of the animal rights movement hold a value-rational significance (Weber, 1978) for many of its members.

Moreover, we observed that many respondents stated that expressions of animal rights ideals in various media attracted them, which is consistent with a social movement characterized by members drawn to its moral message. Across all respondents and especially among those reporting sudden conversion experiences, books, pamphlets, and videos emerged as key sources of influence. McDonald (2000) provides similar examples of media in conversion or catalytic change and in prolonged learning when analyzing the adoption of ethical veganism. MacNair (2001) affirms the “importance of reading vegan materials to the maintenance of a vegan lifestyle” (p. 1). Activists view these tools as important sources in attracting other movement members, along with increasing roles for social networks and new media such as web sites. Organizations that provide such tools, while being well funded and responsive, may be viewed as being most effective.

The Cultural Dimension of Animal Rights

The majority of respondents demonstrated personal commitment to animal rights through lifestyle choices, with almost 66% indicating that they were either completely vegan or at least vegan in their diet. This represents a three-

fold growth in reported veganism versus activists at the 1990 March for Animals (Plous, 1991), perhaps signifying an increasing role for cultural manifestations within the movement. McDonald (2000) argues that vegans undergo a transformed world-view driven in part by the perceived moral correctness of veganism, which requires them to extend animal protection into all areas of their lives.

This belief in the importance of supporting animal rights through personal consumption was so powerful that 66% of our respondents claimed they would definitely buy more animal-friendly products from companies that not only manufactured them but also promoted animal rights. Most of these respondents, therefore, appear to be compelled by some form of value-rational motivation (Weber, 1978), which encourages behavior for the sake of principles, or other abstract concepts determined to be ethically compelling, rather than largely self-interested behavior. Such value-rational motivation also would account for the previously expressed willingness to expend energies and resources in support of animal rights. In this regard, our respondents parallel Plous's (1991) respondents who were defined as "activists," who had a professed knowledge and support of the philosophical bases of animal rights, and who had traveled "from another state expressly to join the march" (Plous, 1991, p. 194).

Our results suggest that the animal rights movement represents a "lifestyle" in the fullest sense of the term. This finding is also in keeping with other research that has suggested that the animal rights movement has formed its own cosmology (Sutherland & Nash, 1994) and behaves in a quasi-religious fashion (Lowe, 2001).

Summary

This research supports the view of the animal rights movement as an example of Jasper's (1997) post-citizenship model. Results regarding the educational and economic standing of our respondents, as well as the largely altruistic motivations that attracted our respondents to attend the Animal Rights 2000 conference, all are in keeping with Jasper's model. Moreover, our finding regarding the growth in veganism along with the apparent desire to support "animal friendly" businesses is indicative of a social movement whose

ethos impacts dietary practices, consumption patterns, and virtually every aspect of a member's life.

* Brian M. Lowe, University of Virginia and Caryn F. Ginsberg, Johns Hopkins University

Note

¹ Correspondence should be sent to Brian M. Lowe, Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies Program, University of Virginia, 106 Midmont Lane, P.O. Box 400764, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4764. E-mail: bml2b@virginia.edu.

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