Editorial: Special Issue

Editors: Janet Sayers, Massey University; Lindsay Hamilton, Keele University and Kate Sang, Heriot Watt University

This special issue originated from the Gender Work and Organisation conference held at Keele University in the summer of 2016. We listened to a truly thought-provoking series of papers in which interspecies relations were explored in a context of various workplaces and organised settings including veterinary surgeries, university campuses and meat production factories. We decided to publish the subsequent papers (and several later submissions inspired by the conference stream) to address an important oversight in studies of work, organizing and management: namely, that scholarship in this field has focused on humans while neglecting and marginalizing other species as objects, symbols and resources. This issue aims to provide new empirical insights into a range of human-nonhuman interactions as well as considering the theory and methods that suit these terrains of entanglement.

The issue is influenced by a range of disciplines which have traditionally been preoccupied with the human: geography, sociology, ethnography and anthropology, but which are now turning towards multi-species settings (DiFiore and Rendall, 1994). It is also influenced by the natural sciences and the examples that demonstrate that nonhuman animals can be skilled organisers in their own right. We find inspiration in ant colonies, for example, where managerial behaviours are evident when ants arrange their living accommodation and interact within their community (Dussutour et al, 2004; Gordon, 1999). Like us, they devise spaces for food storage and have chambers devoted to the burial of their dead. Bees provide further intriguing parallels. They conduct teamwork to co-ordinate the gathering and sharing of information, they capture and utilise resources and co-create elaborate nests by building ‘comb’ (Seeley, 1995). While many nonhuman animals are organised *by* humans it is possible to discern from such examples that nonhuman forms of organisational agency are deserving of reflection and, further, provide an important counterpoint to reductive anthropocentrism: the idea that it is only *we* who work, manage and organise.

In our own fields, each of us has a different interest in animal-human interaction, be it the scope and the politics of multi-species methods (Hamilton and Taylor 2013; Hamilton and Taylor, 2017), account writing and ethics (Sayers, 2016) or posthumanism and the work animals do in organisations. What connects us is a shared concern that the absence of other species from organisation studies is problematic, particularly as empirical research continues to show the significance of other creatures to meaningful experiences of work. We are mindful that the traditional exclusion of nonhuman animals from mainstream organisational scholarship has replicated and perpetuated male(business) – female(nature) binaries and want to shed light on the way that gender dominance has worked in tandem with hegemonic humanism through masculine modes of theorisation and language, limiting species-inclusive perspectives. We - like many other feminist scholars - share a sense of discomfort not only with the exploitative relations that have persisted between *man and woman* but also between *man and ‘beast’.*

The operation of powerwithin our own disciplinehas effectively silenced and/or denied the nonhuman; installing categorical binaries to reduce other-than-male actors to ‘things’ (at worst) and ‘other’ (at best). Challenging this, we start from the view that the acting capacities of non-human animals and their different forms of organisational agency provide the mandate for their inclusion in research; work that casts a critical gaze over the entangled nature of dominance and denial as it plays out in the workplace and beyond. The breadth and scope of nonhuman involvement with commerce and public service provides an important base from which to work. Dogs, for example, have contributed much to law-enforcement as well as fulfilling therapeutic and affective roles within schools, hospitals and other care settings (see for example, Knight 2005; Sanders 2006; Taylor, 2007 and 2010). Horses have provided the necessary labour power to fuel the development of entire economies through important contributions to agriculture, military work, transportation and latterly tourism. Several of the articles collected here develop our knowledge of these spaces of interspecies experience.

Helpfully, interest in animals is growing within organisation studies, (for example, the recent special issue of Organisation edited by Labatut et al, 2016; the 2016 Standing Conference on Organisational Symbolism entitled ‘The Animal’ and the forthcoming Special Issue of Culture and Organisation, due 2019) perhaps because authors are increasingly mindful that there are deep-rooted power problems to be unravelled in considering the actors and subjects that we choose to research. Those within gender/queer studies, feminism and women’s studies have already made good progress by crossing disciplinary boundaries to study new actors (and materials) of interest. Connell (2001), for example, questions how and why the concept of the natural world has worked in tandem with that of hegemonic masculinity: masculinity traditionally aligned with reason, rationality and the human mind which devalues the feminine, the realm of emotion, the body and the natural world. Subsequent feminist approaches to environmental matters (such as sustainability) have developed in response to the conceptual links between ‘woman’ and ‘nature’ and a desire to understand how processes of inferiorisation have reinforced each other. The rise of posthumanism, ecofeminist critique and advocacy/activist scholarship have provided further resources to challenge the way in which we approach these issues (Barua, 2014; Bradshaw, 2011; Braidotti, 2005, 1997, 1996a and 1996b; Pedersen, 2011).

While an emergent and by no means clear-cut theoretical position, posthumanism’s broad emphasis upon the continuities between human and other animal life - and its desire to make visible the false dualism between humans and other species - has offered crucial ammunition to those seeking to challenge the anthropocentrism that has infused the religious, philosophical, political and scientific history of our own species. As Donna Haraway (2003) and others (for example, Braidotti, 2006) have highlighted, we now need to re-think dualisms to understand our intertwined lives. Haraway’s (2003) thesis of *naturecultures* remains an influential way to contour our thoughts. Noting the continuities between human and animal forms of culture, Haraway highlights the dangers of sanitized species categories, suggesting that how we constitute others is the basis for our behaviour towards them. By extension, then, deconstructing the binary purisms that portray ‘us’ as better than ‘them’ is central in her thinking (Haraway, 2008; Taylor and Twine 2014). Braidotti, emphasizing the significance of gender/sex differences in such debates, argues that the contemporary era of advanced postmodernity is one in which “the very notion of ‘the human’ is not only de-stabilized by technologically mediated social relations in a globally connected world, but it is also thrown open to contradictory re-definitions of what exactly counts as human” (2006: 197). After all, it is precisely the sort of thinking Haraway and Braidotti caution against, that has - for many decades – treated ‘women’ as an analytical category, antithetical to ‘men’. The articles collected here draw on such weighty scholarship to provide an innovative way of understanding the complex entanglements that enmesh humans and other creatures in specific social settings (Taylor and Twine, 2014; Pedersen 2011), critiquing humanist academic discourses as well as business practises surrounding sustainability, social responsibility and justice (Plumwood, 1993).

The contents of the issue

The papers in this special issue reveal many fascinating human-animal stories. Opening with the theme of environmental sustainability, Olivia Davies and Kathleen Riach’s paper ‘From manstream measuring to multispecies sustainability? A gendered reading of bee-ing sustainable’ was everything we, as editors, hoped for in a paper to herald the significance and importance of non-human relations to organisational studies (and to gendered work studies in particular). The paper is a careful empirical, and sometimes poetic, analysis of the relations between bees, human organisations and the women and men that labour beside them to produce honey. This ethnographic exploration interrogates ‘masculinist measuring’ biosecurity practices with bees. It is situated within literature about sustainability, specifically the ‘save the bees’ discourse, and examines the language of sustainability through a critical lens located in political ecology and feminist materialism. Three themes emerge from their observations – Pests, Protection and Pace – which they use to highlight how outcomes often run counter to their intended objectives. This article will provide an important signpost for sustainability scholars and for the future development of research investigating bee-human relations. Importantly, it provides empirical and theoretical ballast to fortify the emerging field of animal-human-organisational studies.

Moving into discussions of professional work with other-than-human life, Caroline Clarke and David Knights’s paper focuses on veterinary medicine. In ‘Who’s a good boy then? Anthropocentric masculinities in veterinary practice’, the authors make a cogent case for the necessity of gender scholarship to recognise the many animals that participate in our organisational lives in one way or another, and ways that professional cultures are locations for multi-species analysis involving subtle gendered readings of practices and discourses. The article begins by pointing out how few studies have critically engaged with the masculinities of veterinary practice, despite the clear and evident themes of gendering that are apparent in their work, before moving into a sophisticated analysis of their qualitative research with veterinarians. Here we see how anthropomorphism and humanism are embedded in gendered masculine discourses in veterinary surgical practice. The paper has the added advantage of being a highly enjoyable read because it gives a humane insight into the day-to-day life of vets in their relations with the many animals they deal with on a day-to-day basis. Clarke and Knights’s story is universal, affecting and a beautifully written piece of work. We believe this will be a touchstone paper for scholars in animal studies and professional work as well as a platform for the development of future studies on gender, nonhuman animals and work.

The issue then turns to the question of ethics and animal cruelty as we read Kendra Coulter’s paper, ‘The compounding feminization of animal cruelty investigation work and its multispecies implications’. Here we see the usefulness of taking animal-human interactions seriously when looking at women’s work. Coulter shows ethnographically how the lives of women and the lives of animals are caught in a ‘Catch 22’ situation. Animal cruelty investigation work is doubly devalued when there is ‘compounding feminization’ because it is done by women and because the lives of animals are not recognised as significant. Coulter argues that better legislation, safer conditions of work, and better conditions and pay would help these women but could also lead to them losing the jobs they are deeply committed to because improvement of work conditions would, inevitably, lead to the de-feminisation of that same work. This is the first paper in labour scholarship to look specifically at this under-researched occupation of animal cruelty investigation workers and, beyond offering an insight into their harrowing and rewarding work-lives, underlines how the feminisation of work and social relationships with animals are inextricably intertwined.

Developing notions of suffering and care through a different trajectory, Nickie Charles and Carol Wolkowitz’s paper ‘Bringing dogs onto campus: Inclusions and exclusions of animal bodies in organisations’ brings a critical lens to bear on an increasingly popular activity of universities, especially their libraries: bringing PAT (Pets as Therapy) dogs onto campus in a controlled way to alleviate student stress. Using dogs in service organisations to nurture the emotional lives of humans is now common in places like nursing homes and hospitals. The positive benefits of these practices are widely understood; levels of happiness rise and stress levels reduce. Drawing on examples, this paper highlights how the lives of both humans and animals are significant and suggests that the inclusions, exclusions and subordination of women and animals have parallels. The sensation of touch is the cornerstone of this paper and it dwells upon how the animals are touched and how they touch humans, showing the gendered patterns in how students and staff interpret these physical interactions. Intriguingly, here we see how PAT dogs may inadvertently reinforce pre-existing gendered preconceptions for human-animals on campus. This article provides a significant original contribution to the developing literature on the use of service dogs, adding important empirical depth to understanding the PAT dog in a socio-political and gendered institutional context. This article is an important addition to our knowledge of interspecies relations as they pertain to equality, health and wellbeing.

Moving away from animals as companions towards a critique of animals as resources, Eimear McLoughlin’s paper troubles the conception of meat. ‘Knowing cows: Transformative mobilizations of human and nonhuman bodies in an emotionography of the slaughterhouse’ is a compulsory read for anyone interested in animal-human studies and for those intrigued by the organisation of the contemporary factory floor. It is a deeply affecting paper in its excavation of this contentious and highly contested space of work. Based on ethnographic fieldwork – an emotionography – which pays close attention to the emotional lives of both workers and animals, McLoughlin demonstrates how these emotional lives are managed through spatial arrangements in the slaughterhouse. Here, a boundary between human and animal is maintained to reduce the toll on humans (and animals) and although a lack of emotion is often attributed to these environments, this paper shows how the institutional context of the slaughterhouse is riven with emotional eruptions. These are discussed in terms of the interspecies encounters between masculinity and animals processed as food. This paper makes an important contribution to understanding masculinity and work in an institutional context of killing animals: once read never forgotten.

The issue then turns from emotion and slaughter to issues of power, species and research methods more broadly. Nik Taylor and Heather Fraser’s paper ‘Resisting sexism and speciesism in the social sciences: Using feminist, species-inclusive, visual methods to value the work of women and (other) animals’ contributes new insights into research practice by interrogating how we come to knowledge about other species. Its convincing argument is that visual methods are central to the development of research about non-human animals in institutional contexts and the authors reflect upon the data they have generated through an open online call for people to respond to a question asking them ‘What is it about Animals’? Drawing on this example, the paper is illustrated with some images and comments that were sent in as part of the project - they show the subtle emotional inter-subjectivity that can be elicited by visual means. To help include other species in future qualitative work, innovative and novel means of inquiry such as those advocated for by Taylor and Fraser will be imperative, particularly if we are to be successful in building momentum for a ‘species turn’ relevant to organisation and management studies.

Developing the theme of methodological innovation, Suvi Satama and Astrid Huopalainen investigate how autoethnography across human-animal borderlines can shed new insights on emotion and health. In ‘Please tell me when you are in pain: A (heart-breaking) story of care, grief and female-canine companionship’ provides a powerful example for the use of novel methodological approaches to the study of species, gender and work. The article is based on one authors’ experience of grief when her beloved dog is diagnosed with a terminal condition. It shows how thoughtful self-reflexive methods, starting with one’s own relationship with a companion animal, can support theoretical reflection about wider social and cultural relations with animals in organisational contexts. Bravely touching on emotive subjects which are universal and yet relatively unexplored in academic context, this article focuses upon the everyday world of the companion animal-human relationship and yields important new insights into the emotions that infuse these domestic intimacies.

The issue concludes by showcasing Rebecca Finkel and Paula Danby’s research on women and horses in ‘Legitimating leisure experiences as emotional work: A post-humanist approached to gendered equine encounters’. This article extends research on the emotional engagement women have with horses. Finkel and Danby explore the gendered human-equine ‘equiscape’ through empirical research using in-depth interviews, participant diaries, and a multi-species ethnographic process of inquiry. Their study evokes the close emotional entanglements that some women have with horses and the relationships of knowing and care that develop between them in coming to the identity of the ‘horse woman’. Using a posthumanist lens, the authors focus upon how women justify the hard work, especially the emotional labour, that they invest in their horses which they primarily do through ‘acceptable’ forms of emotional engagement like work for the community. We conclude the issue with this important contribution because, for us, it opens out a number of particularly salient avenues for further enquiry, not least of which is the value and significance of posthumanism as a theoretical frame; the need for new methods of empirical enquiry, and the importance of appraising everyday interspecies interactions more critically.

Running through these collected papers are some common themes. First, the aesthetic quality of the writing. Too often, as scholars, we forget how passion ignites our curiosity and, therefore, our work and our obsessions. In these papers the emotional engagement with the research process and the non-human Others who were kept in clear sight throughout the journey are foregrounded by the care taken to write both evocatively and scientifically. There is an open-ness to emotional engagement and reflection which means that through their writing the papers are powerfully affecting. Authors have taken seriously the notion that nonhuman animals have lives worth including as subjects within the research design and the process of account-making. Without over-sentimentality, they have furthered the ‘species turn’ by focusing our attention on important actors be they human or otherwise. As editors we spent time horrified, amused, touched, frightened, and the papers opened up a world to us each and every time we read them through their various iterations to completion.

This issue of the *affect* of writing is not only one of attachment or engagement with the topic and subject matter, however, as language itself is embroiled in the embodiment and politics of researching gender and interspecies interaction (Sayers, 2016). While - in the past - women have been denigrated by comparing them to animals (Connell, 2001) much feminist thought has focused on language construction and discourse for this very reason. Recent scholarship has, however, started to bring discussion back to the body, and this has been evident in this journal and many others devoted to forwarding feminist thought, women’s empowerment and the development of critical organisational scholarship. The careful empirically grounded research in almost all papers involving close observation includes cognisance of the lives of animals in their theorising and argumentation. Here, then, we see how the body, the senses and the feelings of the human researcher are vital to the production of evocative storytelling, authoritative theoretical argumentation and an ‘affecting’ reading experience.

A further connecting theme is ethical analysis and commentary. The articles we have selected foreground and extend crucial moral debates by challenging the dominance of unhelpful binaries and categories; human v animal, male v female and the myriad expectations and assumptions that draw power from them. Besides our hope of rendering the finer points of such a critical process more lucid, we hope that these collected articles prompt greater reflection upon the ethical value of humanist hegemony. Together, they show how and why critical scholarship should work beyond the ethnocentrism, objectivisation and dualism that has stalled many attempts to regard social life and gender categories as contiguous and messily overlapping. All the papers collected here stress that it is possible to be concerned for the welfare of animals and humans at the same time; they are not at all mutually exclusive. In fact, they are often interlinked.

Importantly, as several of the articles show, the experience of humans and other animals often rely upon the management of connections and disconnections. This method of organising sometimes produces intimate and close relationships with other species while at other times, categorical boundaries are maintained to help human beings to cope with their exploitative treatments of other species. This is not restricted to the factory floor or the veterinary surgery, however, because even the process of research is not a value-neutral one when it comes to species difference, particularly if we prioritise verbal forms of expression to exclude those who do not speak languages we can easily interpret and understand from our studies. There are no simple solutions here. What matters is that we see our organisational boundaries – and our epistemological priorities - for what they are; culturally mobile, mutable, shifting and porous, made to suit particular circumstances and ways of seeing the world.

Questioning their usefulness is vital if we are to reappraise our treatment of other social actors around us (Haraway, 2003 and 2008; Knight, 2005) as well as our conceptions of diversity, equality, inclusion and what society is (or could be). Such critical thinking helps to release us from narrow and reductive anthropocentric tethers, opening out new possibilities for understanding agency, social action and interaction as well as the politics of knowledge itself. But while we are ambitious for such posthumanist goals to be realised, we have to recognise that in this issue we can highlight only part of the story. All of the authors included here are from European or Europe-originating countries and mostly from the UK. This leaves open for further research other continents, indigenous peoples, non-white middle-class women’s relations with animals, and - of course - other species.

The gaps, the silences, the choice of category/boundary are what implicates all humans in the way we behave towards, think and write about nonhuman life-forms and we - as editors - are not immune from such responsibilities. There is a pressing need for more scholarship to explore the unknown and power-laden worlds of human-animal interaction, particularly if we are to seed and cultivate a better-defined and more scopic field of enquiry. Questions of power, dominance and the role of the nonhuman belong firmly within the mainstream of critical organisation studies and deserve close attention from those already mindful of the difficulties that taxonomies, binaries and boundaries entail. We hope that this issue’s readers will draw inspiration from this collection of papers and discover the sparks that ignite their own research and writing endeavours with and about other animals.

References

Barua, M. (2014) Volatile ecologies: Towards a material politics of human-animal relations. Environment and Planning, 46(6), 1462-1478.

Bradshaw, G.A. (2011). An ape among many: Animal co-authorship and trans-species epistemic authority. Configurations, 18 (1-2), 15-30.

Braidotti, R. (2005) Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming Cambridge: Polity Press

Braidotti, R. (1997) ‘Mothers, Monsters and Machines’ in Conboy, K. Median, N. and Stanbury, S. [eds.] Writing on the body: Female embodiment and feminist theory New York: Columbia University Press

Braidotti, R. (1996a) Signs of wonder and traces of doubt: On teratology and embodied differences in Lykke, N. and Braidotti, R. [eds.] Bteween monsters, goddesses and cyborgs. Feminist confrontations with science, medicicine, and cyberspace London: Zed Books

Braidotti, R. (1996b) ‘Cyberfeminism with a difference’ accessed 28/10/16 at [www.let.uu.nl/womens\_studiesrosi/cyberfem.html](http://www.let.uu.nl/womens_studiesrosi/cyberfem.html)

Connell, R.W. (2001) The Social Organisation of Masculinity, pp. 30-50 in The Masculinities Reader, (Eds.) S.M. Whitehead and F.J. Barrett. Cambridge: Polity.

Dussutour, A., Fourcassié, V., Helbing, D., & Deneubourg, J. L. (2004). Optimal traffic organization in ants under crowded conditions. Nature, 428(6978), 70-73.

Di Fiore, A., & Rendall, D. (1994). Evolution of social organization: A reappraisal for primates by using phylogenetic methods. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 91(21), 9941-9945.

Gordon, D. M. (1999). Ants at Work: how an insect society is organized. Free Press, Simon and Schuster

Hamilton, L., and Taylor, N. (2013) Animals at Work: Identity, Politics and Culture in Work with Animals. Brill Academic Press: Boston and Leiden.

Hamilton, L., and Taylor, N. (2017) Ethnography after Humanism: Power, politics and method in multi-species research. London: Palgrave Macmillan

Haraway, D. (2003) The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

Haraway, D. (2008) When Species Meet. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Knight, J. (ed.) (2005) Animals in Person: Cultural Perspectives on Human-Animal Intimacies. Oxford: Berg.

Labatut, J. Munro, I and Desmond, J. (2016) ‘Animals and Organisation’ a special issue of Organisation 23(3) 315-329

Pedersen, H. (2011) Release the moths: Critical animal studies and the posthumanist impulse. Culture, Theory and Critique, 52(1): 65-81.

Plumwood, V. (1993) Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, London: Routledge

Sanders, C. 2006. “The Dog You Deserve'': Ambivalence in the K-9 Officer/Patrol Dog Relationship, Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 35(2), 148-172.

Sayers, J. (2016) A report to an academy: On carnophallogocentrism, pigs and meat-writing

Organization Vol 23, Issue 3, pp. 370 - 386

Seeley, (1995) ‘The Wisdom of the Hive’ Harvard University Press Cambridge Mass, USA

Taylor, N. (2007) 'Never an it': Intersubjectivity and the creation of animal personhood in animal shelters. Qualitative Sociological Review, 3(1), 59-73.

Taylor, N. (2010). Animal shelter emotion management: a case of in situ hegemonic resistance? Sociology, 44(1) pp. 85-101.

Taylor, N., and Twine, R. (2014). The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre. London: Routledge.