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## Editors' Overview: Taking Stock of Animal Studies

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In the inaugural issue of *S&A*, we called for the launching of a substantive multidisciplinary field. "Animal studies" consists of two areas of study: the direct investigation of nonhuman animals in various settings to provide empirical data toward the goal of alleviating suffering and ensuring well-being; and the study of the nature and impact of human/nonhuman animal interactions. Two journals that are promoting the first component are *Animal Welfare* and the forthcoming *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*.

Concerning the second component, the purpose of *S&A* is to encourage social scientific studies of the human side of human/animal interactions. After three years of publication, we pause for an evaluation of that project. To provide an empirical basis of the assessment, we offer the results of an informal study of the contents of *S&A* (Table 1). Data include field, geographical origin, and gender of the first author, and subject area and method of the study. For comparison, we provide similar data from *Anthrozoös*, another journal featuring studies in this part of animal studies.

### Method

We included "articles" from the first five issues of *S&A* (1993-1995) and "reviews and research reports" from volumes 1-7 (1987-94) of *Anthrozoös*. Although occasionally ambiguous, we relied primarily on first author departmental affiliation to determine field or academic discipline. Area of study utilized the four subject areas covered by *S&A* (see "information for contributors," backpage). We further broke down one of those areas, "popular culture," into "companion animal" and "other" for comparison of the two journals, as *Anthrozoös* is a publication of the Delta Society, an organization dedicated to the promotion of the benefits of human/companion animal interactions. We also broke down "applied uses" into "research" and "other." *S&A* is under the editorial control of Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, an organization which focuses on laboratory uses of animals. Geographical origin is residence of first author, categorized as North America, United Kingdom, other Europe, and other. The UK is singled out because of the importance of its role historically in the emergence of two distinct animal

protection movements and because the publisher of *S&A* is located in the UK.

We coded the articles - 22 from *S&A* and 113 from *Anthrozoös* - for the primary method or approach of each in terms of the 10 categories established by Rajecki and Beck (1993). Two coders (D. W. Rajecki and Susan Modlin) independently classified all papers, yielding an inter-coder agreement of 78%. The remaining cases were discussed to agreement. In the rare instance where agreement could not be reached, a coin was tossed.

**Table 1. Number and Percentages of Field, Area, Geography, Gender, and Approach in *S&A* and *Anthrozoös* Samples**

	<i>S&amp;A</i>		<i>Anthrozoös</i>	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Field</b>				
Psychology	8	36	49	43
Sociology	4	18	3	3
Anthropology	3	14	3	3
Political Science and Criminology	4	18	0	0
Medicine, Veterinary				
Medicine and Allied	0	0	24	21
Biology, Ethology and Allied	1	5	19	17
Other	2	9	15	13
<b>Area</b>				
Applied - Laboratory	5	23	2	2
Applied - Other	2	9	9	8
Popular Culture - Companion	1	5	70	62
Popular Culture - Other	8	36	24	21
Wildlife/Environment	1	5	8	7
Sociopolitics	5	23	0	0
<b>Geography</b>				
North America	14	64	91	80
United Kingdom	4	18	4	4
Other Europe	1	5	8	7
Other	3	13	10	9

	<b>S&amp;A</b>		<b>Anthrozoös</b>	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	7	32	58	51
Male	15	68	55	49
<b>Approach*</b>				
History/Content analysis	8	36	7	6
Questionnaire/Survey/ Interview	5	23	52	46
Observation (Direct)	4	18	10	9
Diagnostic Scheme/ Taxonomy	2	9	7	6
Experiment	1	5	10	9
Program Evaluation	1	5	7	6
Position Paper/Essay	1	5	5	4
Review	0	0	3	3
Case Study	0	0	6	5
Scale Development	0	0	6	5
Total articles analyzed	22	100	113	100
*Note. Approaches category codes are ordered in terms of descending percentages in the S&A sample.				

## Results

We highlight some of the more obvious findings here. However, we invite and encourage the submission of more interpretative comments from the reader.

While the field of psychology contributes the most in both journals, other social sciences are increasingly represented. Studies by political scientists, particularly on the animal rights movement, are important recent additions. We would like to see more cross-cultural studies by anthropologists and sociologists, as well as more studies from education and educational psychology on moral and attitude development and the pedagogy of the use of animals in the classroom. Comparing

the two journals, *S&A* is publishing more social science and *Anthrozoös* more natural science.

In terms of subject areas, animals in the popular culture (entertainment, companion animal, animal symbolism), applied uses of animals (research, education, medicine, and agriculture), and sociopolitical movements (including public policy and the law) are well and nearly equally represented in *S&A*. Within applied uses, however, agriculture is under-represented. *Anthrozoös* publishes predominantly in the area of applied uses, and within that, studies of companion animals. Both journals are weak in the area of wildlife and the environment. Perhaps this is simply a reflection of the existence of journals devoted to environmental studies (*Environmental Ethics*, *Environmental Values*, *Environment and History*...). We would like to see more papers on issues like the programmatic and political relations between environmentalism and animal rights.

Clearly, even for two United States-based journals, a more balanced geographical distribution of authors is desirable. On the other hand as a disproportionate number of animal issues and welfare literature is authored and published in the UK, the North American emphasis, arguably, is redressing that imbalance.

Turning to approach, both journals have a dearth of experiments, indicating a focus on descriptive or "softer" methods. Both also include a substantial percentage of qualitative methods utilizing questionnaire, survey, or interview. However, *Anthrozoös* uses the category in nearly one half of its studies, almost twice the percentage of *S&A*. More than one-third of the studies in *S&A* are coded history or content analysis, compared to a much smaller percentage of these appearing in *Anthrozoös*. Taken together, these two findings suggest that *Anthrozoös* emphasizes frequency and demographic data more, while *S&A* publishes more studies within an interpretative and constructionist style of investigation.

## Conclusion

Animal studies is well launched. In addition to the emergence of the two journals under discussion, the volume of business in our "books received" department is another index of the growing popularity of this field. Increasingly these new titles are solid scholarly works from a variety of disciplines.

We close with one caveat and suggestion. As the man who, having lost his wallet, only looked for it under the streetlight, we in the social sciences tend to investigate only those areas we think our methods best illuminate. To study human-

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animal interaction, we may need to develop methods that cast light more broadly or at least in a different direction.

In the context of animal studies, we rely heavily on language in our investigations of animals. Yet many of us believe that nonhuman animals don't talk. Ironically, psychologists, in particular, have long studied animals, in part, to take advantage of this presumed absence of language and avoid its multivalent density. But these psychologists perceive themselves as natural, not social, scientists and study animals as a device to understand humans – as models or stand-ins. This is precisely *not* animal studies. For the latter is predicated on the value of studying nonhuman animals in and of themselves and in their varied relations to other animals, including us.

While that is another story, requisite innovations in methods are critical to this discussion. That development will be forthcoming to the degree that we, as social scientists, allow that nonhuman animals are experiencing beings who are "subjects of a life," and remain open to investigative approaches that include taking an intentionalist stance toward them, empathizing with them, becoming participant observers of their lives, and communicating with them.

### *Reference*

Rajecki, D. W. and Beck, A. M. (1993). *Anthrozoös'* research (volumes I-V) with notes on case study and single-subject design. *Anthrozoös*, 6, 3, 154-165.