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The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA): Creating a Collective Identity

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## **Introduction**

How different are humans from animals? The animal rights movement has been tackling this question and more on its quest to establish basic human rights for animals. The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is one of the most recognizable organizations within the animal rights movement due to their attention grabbing antics and controversial advertisements. Through visual rhetoric PETA attempts to answer the question of human and animal division. In both PETA's PSA and print advertisements they attempt to create shared physical and mental substance between humans and animals. In creating a shared identity PETA could establish a foundation for equal treatment between the species. The ways in which PETA attempts to construct equal moral and physical substance between humans and animals is flawed. While PETA is successful in creating visual rhetoric that appeals to the audience's cognitive reasoning and emotions they are not successful in catalyzing actual behavior change. Through the analysis of PETA's visual rhetoric it becomes clear that their attempt to create a collective human and animal identity is unsuccessful due to conflict within their own advertisements.

The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) was founded in 1980 and became infamous in their crusade for animal rights. According to their website it was then that they began to work through research, animal rescue, cruelty investigations, and public education. PETA is the largest animal rights organization in the world, with more than 3 million members and supporters worldwide. Things have changed since 1980 –PETA is still campaigning for animal rights however, the organization is now infamous for their controversial advertisements. According to PETA's website, their mission statement is to focus its attention on the four areas in which the largest numbers of animals suffer the most intensely for the longest periods of time:

on factory farms, in the clothing trade, in laboratories, and in the entertainment industry To do this PETA launches campaigns that sometimes use graphic images to grab both media attention and social attention. In order to captivate their audience PETA presents their message in controversial ways. “Such tactics assume the shock or surprise of violating norms of appropriateness allows the message to get the audience’s attention and have them attend to the pertinent message” (Scudder, 162). Like many social movements PETA is fighting an uphill battle. Many people do not consider animal rights to be an important issue, or are not willing to change their lifestyle in order to satisfy the movement. PETA faces even more opposition due to their lack of credibility. “Organizations that seek change require a higher level of legitimization than an organization that wants to maintain an already accepted practice” (Griffiths, 728). The attention grabbing antics PETA is famous for hurt their ability to present themselves as a credible source of information. The animal rights movement must maintain credibility in order to successfully challenge the boundaries that separate human from animal.

A consistent theme throughout this thesis is understanding the clear boundaries separating humans from animals and examining how PETA handles these constraints. How this separation is identified and understood varies and can be affected by social and cultural factors. There is a lack of agreement and understanding of the philosophical notions within the movement (Aatola, 393). It is difficult to articulate the experience of animals because animals are unable to speak in a way humans completely understand. This lack of understanding is important because we will never be able to know the subjective experiences of another species, we can only understand our own (Burghardt, 509). Because of this lack in understanding, and the desire to blur the boundaries PETA considers the human perspective when creating the visual interpretation of their messages. The animal rights movement struggles with common beliefs and

practices in which humans are allowed to use animals, that using animals is of the norm, and that animal rights itself is both radical and extreme (Cherry, 451). The animal rights movement struggles to move against the tide of common human behavior and thus become an out-group themselves. In order to overcome these cultural constraints and push forward, the animal rights movement must appeal to widely held norms in a non-violent manner (Munro, 80). Animal rights activists attempt to persuade the population to be more open-minded and accepting of views and values that may seem foreign (Hadley, 305). The movement fights for animals to be recognized as a “person.” “The status of personhood allows a being to live free from exploitation, manipulation, and death at the hands of a controlling body of others” (Black, 316). Peter Singer’s Animal Liberation was published in 1975 and is cited as the turning point of the animal rights movement for his use of the term “speciesism.” According to Kruse, Singer proposed that animals should be extended the same moral consideration as humans and if they were not it should be considered on the lines of racism or sexism (73). “Speciesism” covers many form of species based disrespect including the idea of humans having moral worth and status over animals (Meyer, 115). In order to establish a common moral status between humans and animals PETA attempts to present animals in a way humans can relate to.

Social movement organizations must attempt to use persuasive communication campaigns to redefine accepted social practices into social problems (Freeman 270). The movement itself is in charge of spreading the message, and communicating its importance. “Social movement organizations must convince the public that not only is the public’s accepted view of reality based on faulty premise but also that the situation deserves to be defined as a ‘problem’ that warrants their immediate attention” (274). Traditional social movements often define their success through legislative reform. Having others identify with the movement is part

of the process but not the desired end result (Cherry, 156). In order to reach reform a social movement must provide a definition of the “greater good” that is acceptable and valuable to the public (Freeman 273). This is paramount in catalyzing behavior change.

The analysis conducted in this thesis reveals that PETA is less concerned with articulating the greater good, and more concerned with the amount of attention their campaigns receive. PETA creates PSA and print advertisements in order to communicate animal rights abuses to a large audience; however their ability to inspire that audience to act is questionable. In their attempt to accumulate media coverage activists are likely to find themselves in a situation where they must choose negative coverage or no coverage at all (Kruse, 70). PETA has found itself amidst this struggle – more often than not falling on the side of negative coverage. In another attempt to grab media attention the organization also capitalizes on popular culture. Cultures of music, entertainment, and celebrity contain different and more readily available opportunities compared to news-based controversy which is why they are so attractive to the animal rights movement (Simonson, 401). Media coverage represents a sense of importance. If the organization is considered news-worthy by media outlets their importance is translated to the audience. The media is a platform for PETA to create social noise surrounding the movement, and themselves.

The tactics PETA uses in order gain social attention are different from other animal rights organizations. PETA’s PSA and print advertisements use visuals and language that would not be seen in an ASPCA advertisement. The ASPCA does not attempt to shock their audience; rather they attempt to capitalize on human sympathy. Their advertisements do not use graphic images or sexually explicit material in order to garner support. As Freeman puts it “Radicals can make moderates seem more reasonable to decision makers, which support reforms not revolution. Even

if radical ideological rhetoric seems widely rejected at the time, it often successfully achieves the long term benefit of nudging the movement and society further towards its ideological side of the spectrum” (279) PETA’s controversial advertising campaigns risk being dismissed by their audience as just an attempt to create shock, however these advertisements make other animal rights advertisements seem more reasonable.

The animal rights movement seeks to humanize the dehumanized. PETA’s PSA’s and print advertisements serve as a platform for them to articulate animal rights while garnering media attention. PETA attempts to blur the boundary between human identity and animal identity through their visual rhetoric. In order to understand how PETA plays on both human and animal identity it is important to establish what identity is. Defining human and animal identity will serve as a platform in which the analysis of PETA’s visual rhetoric can be done. This analysis consists of both video PSA’s and print advertisements from PETA’s own campaigns. PETA’s campaign advertisements appear to have a clear goal; however when given a more in depth evaluation it appears that pieces of the advertisements do not work towards achieving the same goal. As a result of the conflict within their message PETA is unable to establish visual rhetoric strong enough to create the shared human and animal identity they desire. The first chapter takes up identity focusing on human identity, animal identity, and group identity. It is important to define what identity is in order to understand how PETA appeals to human identity. Building from the concepts established in chapter one, the second chapter is a content analysis of PETA’s PSA’s and viral videos. As a way to examine a different aspect of PETA’s visual rhetoric, the third chapter examines PETA’s print advertisements. After both the PSA and print advertisements have been analyzed the final chapter summarizes the findings of this thesis. In conjunction with the summary the conclusion also offers a discussion on PETA’s visual rhetoric.

## **Chapter 1 - Identity**

Identity is important in understanding many different aspects of humans and society. The ability to construct and deconstruct identity gives insight in what is possible with social structures. Somers and Gibson claim “just as sociologists are not likely to make sense of action without focusing attention on structure and order, it is unlikely we can interpret social action if we fail to also emphasize ontology, social being, and identity” (40). This chapter will begin by distinguishing how human identity is contextualized.. Identity is important to understand because it gives insight into human action, and interaction. Grouping is a phenomena examined within this chapter. The recognition of shared identity or lack of shared identity can result in either the inclusion or exclusion of certain beings. The inclusion results in group formation, whereas the exclusion results in “othering.” The theme of animals as the “other,” and how that results in an animal identity is looked at in this chapter. The concepts of self-identity, collective identity and animal identity will provide a basis to understanding the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)’s rhetoric.

Humans are social creatures who have emotional responses and are capable of cognitive reasoning. How a person socializes, and with whom creates a social identity. According to Tom Crompton and Tim Kasser in any attempt to work at the level of human identity one must have an understanding of how identity is created. “Most identity theorists recognize that peoples sense of self is shaped crucially through social influences; our perception of what is socially ‘normal,’ the language and concepts used in public discussions, and the ways which we organize ourselves socially” (24). It is through social norms and social organizations that a person’s individual identity can develop - this context is most important because it usually remains unseen and is therefore overlooked and taken for granted. It is explicitly human to define one’s self through

social influences. Animals interact with one another, however not to the level of complexity in which humans interact with each other. Humans rationalize these interactions in order to form self-identities, and group identities.

The interconnectivity of human beings occurs between people who share substance, and utilizes human emotion. The recognition of particular shared substance between people can result in excluding those who do not share that same substance. Hobson-West claims “like the privilege afforded to those designated human, the science label comes with it certain social, cultural, and economic advantages. One of the ways that boundary-work is achieved is through the expulsion of others considered by insiders to be non-real members” (29). This can range from a small amount to a large amount of shared interests, knowledge, personal experience, culture, or lack thereof. This also can be a result of a person feeling affection for another person, which is an example of people sharing substance as a result of emotion. Kenneth Burke gives the following example in A Rhetoric of Motives: “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (Burke, 20). A person does not have to literally share substance with another person to identify with them. In the example above “B” may have made some kind of emotional appeal to “A” that created a connection.

In having a connection or sharing substance a person can still remain unique in themselves. “Two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common, an ‘identification’ that does not deny their distinctness” (Burke, 21). The ability for a person to identify but remain distinct is a concept PETA utilizes through their visual rhetoric. Burke emphasizes this as consubstantiality - a person does not have to share everything in common

with another in order to identify with them and by not being completely similar he or she remains distinctively unique. This effort reflects the human desire to maintain their uniqueness while also being a part of a society. Society is made up of individuals acting together. According to Burke society is a way of life that requires acting together. In acting together he finds men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, and attitudes that make them consubstantial (21). These commonalities are what make up a society, and allow for socialization to occur.

Because humans are social beings but also have the desire to express their individuality many different identities exist within society. “We know no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinctions between self and other, we and they are not made” (Calhoun, 9). The recognition of people who have different languages or cultures from one’s own sparks the concept of differentiation. As a result of different identities division is inevitable. According to Kenneth Burke “identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (22). Being divided on the basis of identity can act as a catalyst. The division of identities can spark the interest of people to either maintain their identity, or attempt to transform into a different identity. This desire can be acted upon and people attempt to change their own identities in order to socially conform, or illicit social change. According to Calhoun “the origins of various identities were seen as constructed and therefore potentially mutable, thus, so that in principle socialization process and social structure could be changed” (16). This is paramount to understanding how social movements, specifically the animal rights movement come into existence. Because identity is formed it is possible to make changes. These changes have the ability to transform society which could then transform personal identities.

## **Self-Identity**

The formation of self-identity is a vital aspect of humanity. The creation of human self-identity is a part of integration and an important aspect of socialization. According to Mennel “self-identity is seen as a universal human property and its acquisition a social process through which all normal human beings must pass” (175). Becoming aware of what constitutes a person’s self-identity happens over time. Self knowledge is the process of understanding who we are as a person He believes this understanding is always a construction though at times it feels like a discovery (Calhoun, 10). Recognizing one’s own self identity is the result of the building of that identity through social influence and other factors. Self-Identity does not just happen; it is a process that occurs over time.

Self-identity is a multi-layered concept where self is at the center. There are many different facets of self-identity. According to Burke a thing is metaphysically identified by its properties. “Man’s moral growth is organized through properties, properties in goods, in services, in position or status, in citizenship, in reputation, in acquaintanceship and love” (23). Through these properties people attempt to distinguish themselves from others. For example John Smith works as a doctor of medicine, a doctor is not all John Smith is, however it is how he identifies himself. The same goes for a person involved in a same-sex relationship. A person who is romantically involved with another person of the same sex identifies themselves as homosexual. Homosexuality can serve as a way in which people identify themselves, and through this identity people can meet others who also identify themselves in that way. The same can be said for those who choose to follow a vegetarian diet, and those who eat meat. The

different facets and subgroups of self-identity serve to connect people to one another, and distinguish people from others.

Social realities cause identity distinction. In separating properties with one set of 'others' a person then shares properties with a new set of 'others.' For example: distinguishing one's self in a way that disconnects from Group A results in the connection to Group B. Group A represents different properties than Group B. Calhoun explains "each dimension of distinction is apt at least tacitly also to establish commonality with a set of others similarly distinguished. There is no simple sameness unmarked by difference, but likewise no distinction not dependent on some background of common recognition" (9). It is impossible for all to be the same; however how we distinguish our differences is a result of a common understanding. It is important to note that these distinctions can be changed. Shared substance can be created amongst different groups.

### **Group Identity**

The concept of grouping is based on human imagination. Whenever a group is established there is subsequently an out-group of those who were not included in the initial group. Many social movements consist of groups "who do not perceive themselves to be disposed and are struggling for the freedom, equality, justice and rights of others rather than selves" (Black, 312). These "others" are often ignored and devalued identities. In the history of the United States both women and African American's are prime examples of devalued members of the out-group. Activists work to create a collective identity between in and out groups as a way to enact the cultural change they wish to see (Cherry, 451). This is a difficult task because

the identities and constructs social movements aim to break are rooted in pre-existing cultural practices.

Grouping can occur under any circumstance it can be any size and can be based on many different aspects of personal connection. Social factors motivate the basic need to affiliate with others in order to maintain a sense of belonging and connection (Waytz, 412). The act of people coming together and creating a group is an important aspect of socialization. “Communities, classes, elites, ethnicities, genders – come to share a sense of collective identity and, through perceptions of interests common to individual members of their category, begin to tackle problems of collective action” (Mennell, 175). Groups are made up of different, unique individuals - acting as a united front. The action in which groups take is based on where the group principles lay. According to Somers and Gibson “the assumption that persons in similar social categories and similar life-experiences (based on gender, color, generation, sexual orientation, and so on) will act on the grounds of common attributes, theories of identity politics posit that ‘I act because of who I am’ not because of rational interest or set of learned values” (52). Group identity affects not only a person’s thought process but their decisions and actions. Once a person is invested in their group identity they take on the values and interests of that group which can result in taking certain actions.

Identifying with a grouping of people creates commonalties and strengthens the group’s primary beliefs. Groups are made up of individuals who have their own set of interests beliefs and values. The production of self-sameness and categorical identities structures a new set of problems. This creates a situation where the group is primary and others are secondary. Wiley highlights this very issue when discussing the politics of identity in American history. The struggle is mainly over the definition of political categories of people, especially minority

groups: “This struggle concerns the qualities that will be socially and institutionally applied to these groups, which will define their rights and duties, which will affect the quality of their lives” (131). Group identity affects more than just its members. Crompton and Kasser claim, “people’s social identity is defined in part by the groups to which people feel that they belong - other people who share their race, sex, or nationality, or who are members of their family. Considering oneself to be part of one group (in-group) creates, by default, an out-group.” (25). Categorizing other-than-human species as an out-group seems to lead to heightened indifference to their wellbeing or even to their suffering.

This idea of primary and secondary grouping is important. Lemert explains “The ‘we’ of this second group is concrete. It refers to occasional but deeply understood groupings of individuals sharing similar or same historical experiences, usually below, or marginally outside, the world to which the first groups ‘we’ refers” (104). These groups do not have to be mutually exclusive. There is constant struggle within groupings to merge into a larger collective identity. “It often happens that the tensions created when groups are forced together into interdependence result in a shift-either slow and oscillating or sudden and dramatic – toward a more even power ratio. When power ratios become less uneven, the imposed sense of inferiority is weakened” (Mennell, 182). When inferiority is weakened and identity is shared there is greater chance for the equality of different groups. The idea that groups can merge and become more equal in power is paramount to the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) struggle. According to Mennell “In more equal societies, he suggests, people more readily identify with the sufferings of others” (185). The others in this case are Animals, who have an identity of their own.

Where there is variation there is inequality - if there is a top there must be a bottom. Somers and Gibson focus on this relationship between men and women. According to them the primary social actor is namely male, white, and western – and women and ‘others’ are suppressed, denied, and devalued (53). Mennell claims “the more secure the members of a group feel in their own superiority and their pride, the less great is the distortion, the gap between image and reality, likely to be” (181). The strength in which people adhere to their roles in identification the stronger they will be and the harder they will be to change. These inequalities and differences result in grouping and thus group-identity. This highlights the idea of domination and the ability for one being to be more capable or important than another. “This ethic of domination removed animals from the sphere of human concern. But it also legitimized the ill treatment of humans who were in a supposedly animal condition” (Bailey, 41). The idea that humans are above and therefore better and more important than animals is what continues to be emphasized in society today. This separation of human and animal is what PETA tries to bridge through their visual rhetoric.

### **Animal Identity**

The human and animal dichotomy is something that has long been a part society. “There is the entrenched notion that to be human is, precisely, to be distinguished from a beast” (Bailey, 44). The separation of humans and animals and its relationship to the hierarchy of groups of people in both action and language defines both people and animals in an important way. Humans have used cognitive reasoning as a way to separate the human and animal species. “In the history of western philosophy rarely have we been permitted to forget that what separates

‘us’ from the beast is reason” (Bailey, 42). This argument has been used throughout history when deciding on the rights of African Americans, women, and animals. It is often centered on how rationally the parties are capable of behaving. According to Hobson-West “For sociologists interested in human identity construction, animals are symbolically important in functioning as a highly complex and ambiguous ‘other’” (23). Animals themselves are perceived to act on primal instinct, unable to revert to cognitive reasoning. The ambiguity surrounding animals exists because humans often identify animals as symbolizing both sides of dichotomies. Hobson-West uses the examples of animals being considered both wild and tame, subject and object, and victim and aggressor (27). The ambiguity is a result of the lack of knowledge we have of animals, and the lack of knowledge is a result of the boundaries separating humans from animals.

There is a thin line that separates what an animal actually is, its identity, and the animal symbolism people have become so comfortable with using. According to Baker “animal symbolism makes frequent use of actual living animals- and that this may well have uncomfortable consequences either for the symbolism or for the animals themselves when they are called on to act out their unwitting role as the random bearer of a ‘universal’ meaning or as the arbitrary totem of some group or other” (66). An example of this is the bald eagle. The bald eagle serves as representation for America, thus representation for American values such as freedom and equality. The meanings attached to the bald eagle do not represent the animal itself. People recognize animals and identify animals primarily on the symbols that are attached to them rather than the living creature they are. This represents a lack of importance given to animals – and an emphasis on the human construction of meaning.

Animals are considered inferior in comparison to humans. This makes the use of animal symbolism interesting. Animal symbolism often times depicts animals in a way that is

humanized. Baker states “the clichéd notion that our culture always sees animals as inferior need not simply be taken for granted; the notion is certainly not manifested in overt form at every level of the culture. Even if, as suggested earlier, these supposedly positive animal images have been drained of much of their animality, they are still the cultures chosen iconography” (71). Draining animals of their animality is necessary when using them as symbols for human identity because animal symbols are commonly used to depict human superiority. The previous example of the bald eagle serves as an example of this. American strength and superiority is represented through the eagle as a symbol. It is interesting that animal imagery is used to describe humans because the animal is often the image of all things not human. Mennell claims “it does so precisely by destabilizing that familiar clutch of entrenched stereotypes which works to maintain the illusion of human identity, centrality and superiority” (26). Baker explains this further claiming that animals are often considered the archetypal cultural “other.” (xxxv). Animals are in nature separate from humans thus they are often identified as inferior to humans. This inferiority is what PETA attempts to change.

The concept of animals that PETA most often presents is similar to what Phelps identifies in his book The Longest Struggle. Phelps describes the “humanization” and “sentimentalization” of animals. He gives the examples of animals being used as companions for human beings versus animals being strictly looked at as property, or a means to an end. He describes the notion that animals lack human traits thus we imaginatively endow them with our own as a speciesist view of the human / animal connection. “The traits which bind all species of sentient beings together are more extensive and important than the traits that isolate one species from another” (Phelps, 96). When Phelps describes sentient beings he means beings that have the ability to experience pleasure and pain. In doing so he believes that all things that are capable of having those

experiences have interests in experiencing pleasure and avoiding pain. This is the basis in which a moral argument for animal rights can be introduced.

Humans identify animals through their own humanity. By doing this humans present themselves as the primary entity and animals the secondary. According to Waytz and Morewedge anthropomorphism exists “because the self often serves as the default concept for reasoning about unfamiliar agents, anthropomorphism is likely to result when reasoning about unfamiliar entities” (412). Due to animal’s inability to be completely understood by humans, they struggle to obtain the same treatment and moral weight as humans. Phelps defends animal interest by posing a question “...the question is not, can they reason? Nor, can they talk? But, can they suffer?” (77). In posing that question Phelps makes the statement that no sentient being, which is what an animal in his definition is, counts for more in the moral equation than another. In a world in which animals often are identified as sport, entertainment, meat, fur, slaves, or experimental subjects this notion is radical. As Kant describes it “therefore, they were suited only to serve as means by which – human beings – could achieve their own ends” (Phelps, 80). This view is the common view that is experienced in American culture today, and the most commonly understood identity bestowed upon animals in Western cultures. This is the basis in which PETA attempts to create a shared identity between humans and animals. If PETA is capable of creating a shared identity, humans would more likely be concerned with animal welfare and animals as a whole.

## Conclusion

A large part of identity is where a person places his or her values. When there is a large emphasis on self there is less room for others. According to Crompton and Kasser, “Research suggests that messages framed as connecting with intrinsic values are often more effective in motivating deeper and longer-term behavioral changes” (30). Value appeals are the most successful because they require connecting to a person’s most central beliefs. Once they do so the person becomes invested in the cause on a deeper level. In order to be successful they must attempt to connect to the multiple facets of humanity.

Emotional response is considered a facet of human identity. Many of the images used in these advertisements seek an emotional response. PETA makes identity appeals through words and images of abused animals looking with “pleading eyes” inviting the viewer to experience the pain and suffering (Atkins-Sayre, 318). By imposing human emotions into their advertisements PETA attempts to bridge human emotion to animal emotion. Famous PETA slogans include “Did your food have a face?” and “Pigs are friends not food.” PETA utilizes language in order to connect terms that are primarily considered human ie. “face” and “food” – to animals. “These slogans act to inspire the dominant public to imagine what these fellow beings must go through, because we, too, says PETA understand pain, slavery, exploitation, and murder” (Black, 320). By appealing to human emotion and human experience PETA wants the public to use their humanity in understanding what it is to be animal. Human understanding of animals to the extent that the audience feels shared substance is the desired outcome of their advertisements.

There is an understanding as humans that a level of responsibility for others exists on the basis of our values, and ability to reason. In order to cover the issues of moral obligation PETA’s

advertisements do not focus on breaking a person's moral obligation to others it focuses on expanding it to include non-human animals. "It is crucial to recognize that those aspects of identity that must underpin systemic public concern about environmental and social issues can be reinforced through campaigns and communications focused on a range of other issues" (Crompton, and Kasser 31). People tend to feel the most obligations towards those whom they share substance with. So it is important for PETA to expand who humans share substance with in order for there to be a deeper moral obligation – and thus a human and animal collective identity.



## Chapter 2

### **Fish Have Feelings Too – A Content Analysis of PETA’s PSA and Viral Video Advertisements**

Understanding PETA’s use of visual rhetoric to create a shared human and animal identity is important because it examines the core message of the organization and the importance of creating identity through media. Creating a shift or change in social behavior and identity requires more than just an attitude change – it requires a value change. In order for PETA to illicit a response they must manage to create concern regarding the connection and similarities between human and animal identity. There is a lot of research that has focused on PETA’s use of celebrity and women, but very little attention is paid to PETA’s key message. There has been no previous content analysis created for PETA’s advertisements. PETA is faced with conquering the distinct separation between humans and animals, and they attempt to destroy the barriers through the use of advertisements. PETA utilizes media in order to communicate their message in a way that can reach a broad and diverse audience. In order to reach as many people as possible PETA’s campaigns are emphasized through mass mediated visual rhetoric. According to Freeman visual rhetoric is important because it creates presence for issues through the eyes of global audiences who many not all speak the same language (Freeman, 275). Visual rhetoric is identified as more powerful than written argument in providing clear, fast proof, presented in a way that may influence the public’s opinion or action (Kruse, 68; Atkins-Sayre, 315). Reaching out to as many media outlets as possible is also important for furthering the movement. Through their PSA and viral video campaigns PETA makes various appeals to human identity in order to create a shared human and animal identity. While PETA clearly

makes an effort to create shared identity – they are unable to succeed in doing so. Looking exclusively at emotional appeals in advertising will serve as a foundation in which the content analysis can be examined. This study will rely on a qualitative content analysis of PSA's that can be found directly from PETA's website.

### **Emotional Appeals in Advertising**

PETA's PSA and viral ads are emotionally charged in order to captivate the viewer's heart and mind. "Creative appeals of an advertisement are determined by the persuasive style of the message content. Message content consists of what is stated in the ad as well as the manner in which it was said. Persuasive or creative appeals of advertisements have been depicted in numerous ways including fear, humor, sex, and intellectual appeals" (Bebko, and Sciulli 23). Through these appeals PETA attempts to bridge human and animal identity. According to Charlene Bebko and Lisa Sciulli it is emotional appeals rather than logic that is most successful at stimulating behavior change. Many advertisements produced are filled with emotional branding and cultural branding. While it is noteworthy that emotional branding can be beneficial for product consumption- consumers purchasing products don't require this type of appeal, however social cause issues encourage a more reflective introspective type of behavior. "The social cause advertisements may contain less information cues and elicit more emotions due to individuals, decision-making processes, and desired outcomes" (24). Empathy is often used for this reason in Animal Rights activism. The desired outcome of animal rights rhetoric is often for the viewer to feel a sense of emotional response to the treatment and well-being of animals. "Research on prejudice towards human out-groups also shows the benefits of activating

egalitarian values and feelings of empathy. When people are reminded of the priority they put on treating other humans equally, research shows they tend to treat out-group members more positively” (Crompton, and Kasser 26). Empathy acts as an adhesive - By presenting images and using language that causes humans to empathize with animals it would be likely humans would treat animals in a more positive way. The ability for emotion to shape and change the way people behave and it is the animal out-group that PETA attempts to put this change in behavior in effect for.

The use of empathy suggests more from the viewer than just a slight change in emotion and behavior. “when people are asked to consider the perspective of out-group members, this experience of empathy leads them into the in-group and less likely to engage in behaviors that might be damaging to them” (Crompton, and Kasser 26). By asking humans to consider the animals perspective PETA could create a sense of shared experience. For social activism campaigns to succeed they need to create empathy in order to further any cause in which behavior change is the desired outcome. This would help animal activists communicate that the animal out-group has inherent value beyond its usefulness to humans. Tom Crompton, and Tim Kasser use an example in which experimental subjects are shown pictures of animals in distress, and are encouraged to take the perspective of the animals. According to Crompton and Kasser, the subjects reported a higher level concern for all human and non-human life. This can also be seen in the ASPCA’s animal cruelty commercial which features Sarah McLaughlin. The commercial shows various images of abused animal with McLaughlin’s own song “Angel” playing in the background. The commercial challenges the viewer emotionally – the viewer must choose to donate and be a part of the solution, or do nothing and act as a bystander to animal

cruelty. The use of these types of emotions plays on a person's perspectives as his or herself as a good person.

Emotionally challenging imagery is part of what is considered "vivid" stimuli. "Emotionally interesting, concrete and imagery-provoking, and proximate in a sensory, temporal or spatial way...vivid information could activate more information processing, and thus is potentially more memorable" (Baek, and Mayer 749). By remembering PETA's visual rhetoric people are left with the message of that rhetoric long after their initial exposure. This type of emotional appeal can be communicated through the use of sexuality. PETA is infamous for using sex to sell their animal rights messages. The use of vivid stimuli through sexually provoking material makes their campaigns and advertisements achieve higher retention.

## **Methods**

40 Public Service Announcements (PSA) and viral videos were viewed directly from the [peta.org](http://peta.org) website. The videos include campaigns for vegetarianism, animal experimentation, the use of animal skins, and animals in entertainment. The sample of PSA's were analyzed and coded on the basis of sexuality, emotions, anthropomorphism, behavior, animal type, human gender, and presence of young/baby animals. The Mood Rating Scale which was developed by Plutark (1980) and modified further by Hong, Murdenslough, and Zinfinan (1987) used in Bebko and Sciulli's research was used to develop a way in which to code emotional appeals. I coded emotional appeals for happiness, sadness, fear, and guilt (moral anxiety). Happiness was coded through the use of light-hearted, carefree, light, and smiling material. Sadness and fear are both dark and upsetting material, Images that showed animals in a sad or fearful state were coded by

those emotions Happiness serves as an emotion in which people desire – sadness, fear, and guilt are all emotions people wish to avoid. PETA utilizes these emotions with purpose.

Aside from its use in PETA ads - manufacturing companies often make use of human sexuality to sell products and increase consumer response. Items spanning from cigarettes to clothing all use sexual appeals in order to increase consumption – the success of these appeals are apparent. According to Tae Baek and Mark Mayer the Sexual Behavior Sequence model (SBS) is a theoretical framework that serves as a basis for understanding people’s responses to sexual advertisements, and what constitutes a sexual advertisement. Advertisements that utilize sexual material expect a specific outcome – the purpose of sexual material is to create arousal in the viewer. This arousal can transcend into motivation to become a part of or further the cause at hand. Sexuality was coded from previous research on sex in advertising by Reichert and Carpenter, 2003, and the SBS model used by Baek and Mayer.

The first column of Table 1 represents sexuality. The coding of sexuality consists of sexually suggestive material (flirting, kissing, hugging) by using the letters “SS” , innuendo (physically re-enacting a sexual act) was represented by the letters “IN”, revealing clothing (scantily clad dress, bikini style bathing suit, undergarments) was represented by the letters “RC”, and nudity (back/side/or frontal full exposure) was represented by the letter “N.” The second column of Table 1 represents emotions. Happiness was coded by using the letter” H”, sadness with the letter “S”, fear with the letter “F”, and guilt with the letter “G.” The third column of Table 1 represents anthropomorphism. If the video displayed anthropomorphism it would be represented by the letter “Y” for yes, if not then “N” for no. The fourth column of Table 1 is dedicated to behavior – specifically cognitive reasoning and primal behaviors. If the video contained cognitive reasoning it is coded using “C/R,” if it displays primal behavior it says

“primal.” The fifth column of Table 1 measures the length of the PSA’s in seconds. The sixth column identifies whether the video was viral or not. The seventh column of Table 1 shows what type of animal, if any, was in the video. The eighth column specifies whether there were humans in the video, and what their gender was “M” for male, “F” for female. The ninth column identifies which campaign the PSA is in support of. “V” represents vegetarianism, “S” represents skins, “E” is for entertainment, “Ex” is for animal experimentation, and “AR” is for general animal rights. The tenth column is where the gender of primary sexual object is identified. The eleventh column examined if the video used images of babies, and the last column provides the title of the PSA.

## Results

[Table 1]

Sexuality	Emotions	anthropom	Behavior	Length	Viral	Animals	Humans	Campaign	G of Primary		Title
									S.O.	Babies	
SS, IN, RC, N	H, S, F, G	Y, N	C/R, Primal	(seconds)	Y, N	(type)	M, F	V, S, E, Ex, AR	M, F	Y, N	
SS, IN, RC	H	N	C/R, Primal	31	Y	None	M, F	V	M, F	N	Boyfriend Went Vegan
None	H, F	N	Primal	60	Y	Lion	M, M, F	E	None	N	Wild Animal Agent - Lion
None	H, F, G	N	Primal	60	Y	Chimp	M, M, F	E	None	N	Wild Animal Agent - Chimp
None	H, S, G	N	Primal	60	Y	Elephant	M, M, F	E	None	N	Wild Animal Agent - Elephant
None	S, G	N	C/R	197	Y	Cow	M, F	V	None	Y	Downed Cow
SS, IN, RC	H	N	Primal	39	Y	None	F	V	F	N	Naila's 'Veggie Love'
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	52	Y	Chicken	M	V	None	N	Why I Don't Eat Chicken
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	351	Y	Raccoons	M	S	None	N	A Shocking Look in China
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	60	Y	Chicken	M	V	None	Y	McCruelty I'm Hatin It
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	216	Y	R, Sh, C, Sn	M, F	S	None	Y	Whose Skin Are You In?
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	141	Y	Cow	None	V	None	Y	Meats Not Green
SS, RC, N	H, S, G	N	C/R, Primal	403	Y	Cow	F	V	F	N	State of the Union Under
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	44	Y	Seals	M	S	None	Y	Canada's Shame
SS, IN, RC	H	N	Primal	97	Y	None	F, F	V	F	N	Veggie Love Casting Ses
None	H, G	Y	C/R	77	Y	Seals	M	S	None	N	Save the Seals Rap Video
SS, IN, RC	H	N	Primal	34	Y	None	F	V	F	N	Brittanys Veggie Love Ca
SS, IN, RC	H	N	Primal	30	Y	None	F	V	F	N	Veggie Love Meet Nikki
SS, IN, RC	H	N	Primal	29	Y	None	M	V	M	N	Joey's Veggie Love Castin
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	780	Y	Cow, Ch, P	M	V, AR	None	Y	Glass Walls'
None	S, F	N	C/R, Primal	301	Y	Monkey	M	Ex	None	N	University Of Utah Lab Ir

Sexuality	Emotions	Anthropo	Behavior	Length	Viral	Animals	Humans	Campaign	G of Primary		Title
									S.O.	Babies	
SS, IN, RC, N	H, S, F, G	Y, N	C/R, P	(seconds)	Y, N	(type)	M, F	V, S, E, Ex, AR	M, F	Y, N	
None	S, F, G	Y	C/R, P	32	Y	Chicken	M	V	None	N	Torture Camp
None	H, S, G	N	C/R	117	N	Cat, Dog, Cow	M, F	AR	None	Y	One Can Make A Difference
None	S, F, G	Y, N	C/R	195	N	Multiple	M, F	AR	None	Y	Why PETA?
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	162	N	Monkey	M	Ex	None	Y	Free Me
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	255	N	Rabbit, Rat	M	Ex	None	N	Nestea CRUELtea
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	30	N	Cat, D, Rab,	None	Ex	None	Y	Locked Away
None	S, F	N	C/R	208	N	Polar Bear	M, F	E	None	Y	The Polar Express
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	60	N	Fish	M, F	V	None	N	Silent Scream
None	S, F, G	N	C/R, P	21	N	Elephant	M	E	None	Y	Ringling Baby Killers
None	S, F, G	n	C/R, P	31	N	Elephant	M	E	None	N	Why Animals Attack
None	S, F, G	N	C/R, P	299	N	Elephant	M, F	E	None	Y	Tigers Eye Productions
None	S, F, G	N	C/R, P	82	N	Dog, Pig	M	E	None	N	Help Ban Hog-Dog Rodeos
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	38	N	Rabbit	F	S	None	N	Donna Karan Bunny Butcher
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	66	N	Seals	M	S, AR	None	Y	Explore Elsewhere
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	162	N	Reptiles	M	S	None	N	Indonesia's Cold Blooded S
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	232	N	Pigs	M	V, AR	None	Y	The Suffering of Pigs on Ffar
SS, N	H, S, G	N	C/R	53	N	Ch, C, Pigs	F	V, AR	F	N	Bonnie Jill Laflins Sexy PETA
None	S, F, G	N	C/R	30	N	Cow	M	V, AR	None	N	Standard Practice at Land o L
SS, RC	H	N	P	89	N	None	F, F	V	F	N	Tofu Wrestling
N	G	Y	C/R	79	N	None	F	V	F	N	Naked Body Parts

[PSA – Viral – Video Advertisements – peta.org]

This study explores how PETA attempts to create shared human and animal identity through their visual rhetoric. All 40 PSA's made a call on one or more emotional appeal throughout the video. Guilt is a key emotion played upon in the PSA's. Of all 40 videos coded 75% (N=30) used guilt as a primary emotion. Many of these videos displayed graphic images to the viewer. In the video "Why I Don't Eat Chicken" the viewer is confronted immediately with the cruelty chickens are subject to – the title makes a statement of its own, and illustrates that people abstain from eating chicken as a result of viewing these images – calling on the viewer to examine his or her own morals and values. As shown in Table 1 animals were in all videos emphasizing guilt except for the "Naked Body Parts" vegetarianism campaign advertisement where anthropomorphism was used instead. Sadness in which animals appear to look sad or upset - was displayed in 72.5% (N=29) and fear was shown in 65% (N=26) of the videos. Animals were used in every video displaying fear, sadness, or both. In "The Polar Express" video campaign against animals in entertainment, sadness and fear were both displayed through the use of polar bears that appeared to be in fear of what was going to happen to them. Happiness (lighthearted, jovial material) was shown in only 32.5% (N=13) of the videos. The videos displaying happiness also had the use of either sexuality or humor. In the "Boyfriend Went Vegan" video sexually suggestive material, innuendo, and revealing clothing were all displayed by the man and woman in the video. In this video a couple's love life takes a turn for the better when a woman's boyfriend decides to adopt a vegan lifestyle.

Sexual content in the form of sexually suggestive material, innuendo, revealing clothing, or nudity, appeared in 25% (N=10) of the sample videos viewed on PETA's website (peta.org.) Overall 20% (N=8) of the PSA's had revealing clothing. These were all primarily viral. Out of the 40 PSAs 52.5% (N=21) were considered viral videos. Only one of the viral videos contained

no sexual content, leaving 20 of the viral videos displaying sexually suggestive material, innuendo, revealing clothing, and nudity. Females were the subject of 78% (N=7) of the sexually suggestive viral videos and PSAs. Full nudity in which the subject is completely unclothed was displayed in only 7% (N=3) of the sample. The PSA “State of the Union Undress” was one of the three videos. In this video a woman pretends to be a scantily clad dressed president delivering a State of the Union speech for animal welfare while completely undressing until fully nude. 80% (N=8) of the videos containing sexual content showed humans displaying primal behavior. In “Brittany’s Veggie Love Casting” the female was the primary sexual object showing primal behavior which is the behavior most identified with animals and is represented through automatic response oriented actions or instincts. 80% (N=8) of the videos containing sexual material displayed primal behavior, however not one of the sexual PSA’s contained animals. In this video the female displays sexual innuendo towards vegetables.

Critical Reasoning relies on the ability of a subject to weigh the pros and cons of a situation and make a decision based on reasoning. Critical Reasoning alone was the primary behavior in 57.5% (N=23) with 20% (N=8) displaying both critical reasoning and primal behavior. In the video “Glass Walls,” the longest video in the sample at 780 seconds, critical reasoning was the primary behavior. Cows, chickens, and pigs were all featured in this PSA which displayed the horrors animals are exposed to at the hands of humans. The film takes place within a factory farm. “Glass Walls” campaigns for both vegetarianism and animal welfare.

Anthropomorphism was used in 10% (N=4) of the 40 videos by having humans literally take on the appearance of animals in the PSA’s. Out of the total sample 37.5% (N=15) used baby animals in the campaign. Images of small infant animals create an image of helplessness to the viewer. In “Downed Cow” a campaign for vegetarianism sadness and guilt were both a part of

the PSA displaying a calf. Here PETA attempted to display the horrors of how veal originates. 80% (N=32) of the sample contained images of animals. Only 5% (N=2) are videos showing fish and reptiles. In the video “Silent Scream” a fish appears to be in distress over being cooked for dinner. The video “Indonesia’s Cold-Blooded Secret” shows a compilation of reptiles being killed for their skin and attempts to display sadness, and fear and illicit guilt.

### **Discussion**

The internet has become the new frontier for social movements to generate attention and support. The use of internet oriented PSA’s and advertisements are one of the more popular routes organizations are taking to garner exposure and generate hype. The internet is capable of reaching a large audience fast. The video PSA’s obtained from peta.org featuring their campaigns for vegetarianism, animal experimentation, animals in entertainment, and general animal rights were part of the sample for this research.

Emotional appeal was one of the strongest tactics used in the PETA PSA’s. Animals were featured in all PSA’s except for one in this case, and the one that didn’t contain an actual animal utilized anthropomorphism. Guilt is used to create a sense of responsibility to the animals in the PSA’s and animal rights as a whole. The use of guilt challenges the viewer to consider their opinions and behaviors wrong – and instead adopt the opinions and behaviors of PETA. In all of the videos displaying sadness and fear animals were the primary focus of the video. The videos attempt to display these emotions in the animals in order for us to feel shared substance. The viewer is made to feel uncomfortable with the apparent suffering of the animals. By making the viewer feel uncomfortable with the images they will more likely want to put an end to whatever behaviors or actions were making them feel uncomfortable in the first place. Humans were the

main subject, and sexuality and humor were used in all of the videos displaying happiness.

Animals do not expressively appear to be happy – that is, animals for the most part are unable to smile, or make facial expressions that we equate or readily assume to represent happiness, or enjoyment. PETA never used humor when the primary focus or main images were those of animals - creating a more serious and urgent tone.

A video on the internet goes “viral” by being extensively shared through different media outlets. There is a clear correlation between sexual material and the ability of a video to be considered popular. The use of provocative content resulted in more views and shares of a given PSA emphasizing human interest in sexually charged advertising. Women mainly serve as sexual objects in PETA’s advertisements. This is problematic to their cause – by objectifying women they seek to separate and degrade them which is something that is not in agreement with their campaign for equal animal rights. In Western culture animals are not identified through sexuality. In order for PETA to utilize sexuality in their campaigns they must rely on human subjects behaving in “animal” ways. The subjects of these PSA’s were human suggesting primal behavior. Primal behavior has already been defined as relying on instinct – thus through the sexual behavior being displayed is supposed to speak to a natural inclination towards sexuality. The use of primal behavior in the humans depicted in the different PSA’s creates a shared identity through the use of behavior we consider to be more animalistic in nature.

Primal or critical reasoning behaviors could be coded in all 40 of PETA’s PSAs. The PSA’s that consisted primarily of primal behavior were much shorter in length than those containing critical reasoning. When displaying primal behavior one isn’t burdened with the task of explaining a subjects actions – it is understood that what is occurring within the context of the subject is done as a result of instinct or want, not based in rationalities. The longest PSA with

dominantly primal behavior was 89 seconds long. It could be understood that displaying primal behaviors in the PSA would create more difficulty for human understanding and by trying to outwardly communicate the purpose of using this type of behavior could hinder the message. By relying more on critical reasoning PETA utilizes a more human behavior in order to deliver their message. Presenting an image or situation that can be distinguished as reasonable through the eyes of the viewer makes the message more likely to be considered acceptable or valid. Critical reasoning PSA's were much longer in length with the longest being 780 seconds long. The PSA's with critical reasoning as the dominant behavior were often times making a more complex argument for animals than those displaying primal behavior regardless of what type of animal if any were used in the PSA.

Anthropomorphism is something more easily depicted in a still image than in video because often times it takes altering an image in order to create it. The use of anthropomorphism is a less ambiguous way for PETA to deliver the idea of a shared human and animal identity. All of the videos depicting anthropomorphism used guilt as the primary emotional appeal, and all called up critical reasoning as the primary behavior. So while the humans were made to appear more like animals they still maintained a more human behavior. This creates visual and mental tension within the advertisement. The viewer is faced with the image of a human who has taken on the appearance of an animal – yet still maintains a high level of humanity.

There were a plethora of different animals used in the PSA's often times containing more than one species per video. PETA is concerned with animal rights as a whole, thus using a variety of animals is necessary in order to illustrate their message. Out of all of the 40 PSA's only one contained a fish, and one contained reptiles. In the PSA displaying a fish, the fish itself was not the primary focus of the PSA. The PSA displaying reptiles was a compilation video made up of many

different images and different types of reptiles. According to Waytz and Morewedge, “people are likely to project their own beliefs and desires anthropomorphically onto stimuli that look humanlike in their observable characteristics and movements, just as people who appear similar to self” (412). Humans share less substance in the form of physical features with these specific animals. It is not a common belief that marine life or reptiles have the ability to feel emotion, and due for the expressionless appearance it is difficult to make them appear to have this ability. It would prove more difficult for PETA to illicit an emotional response from the viewer to either fish or reptiles due to the lack of shared substance. The substantial use of baby animals could be explained by the human desire to protect infants and the idea of nurture as a shared substance. One of the most basic and vital commonalities we share with animals is the ability to create offspring, and the importance and emphasis we put on that offspring. For animals and humans reproduction is the very basis to our existence. Because of this almost every society shares sensitivity to children and infants. Humans often connect infants or babies to a sense of helplessness and innocence. The vulnerability associated with babies in general plays on human emotion and elicits human sympathy. This vulnerability and sympathy however, can also serve as a deterrent to PETA’s struggle towards animal rights and shared human and animal substance.

### **Conclusion**

PETA makes a clear attempt to appeal to both human emotion and cognitive reasoning. Making appeals to cognitive reasoning and emotions may appear to be tactful but can also be problematic. People have different personal moral philosophies that relate to how they feel animals should be treated (Galvin, and Herzog 147). These moral philosophies are often times supported by social and cultural influences. “Relatively permanent, deeply embedded and difficult to change such boundaries are often supported not only by cultural beliefs, values, or

norms, but are also institutional and structural relations” (Cherry, 457). According to Cherry it is the animal rights activists’ goal to blur and shift these boundaries in order to group humans and animals together in a shared identity. Through the appeals to human emotion PETA attempts to create shared identity between humans and animals but are unsuccessful. Their use of emotional appeals and their use of sexuality do not work together towards the same goal. By using sexuality PETA undermines the message of animal welfare as being a serious issue.

## Chapter 3

### Feel Their Pain – Rhetorical Criticisms of PETA’s Print Advertisements

A cow is more likely to find itself on a person’s plate, rather than a person’s mind. Animals are used for food, clothing, entertainment, and scientific research. Animals are processed in closed off areas away from the average citizens grasp. This creates a sense of apathy towards animal rights which serves as an issue PETA attempts to tackle. The ignorance that surrounds animal treatment and the use of animals creates indifference in PETA, and the animal rights movement’s causes. Factory Farms are often placed away from public view and animals are often disassociated with the products they become. According to Phelps this may not be a bad thing “indifference based on ignorance, even willful ignorance, can be overcome with knowledge; callousness developed as a defense against compassion is harder to penetrate” (Phelps, 185). By bringing awareness to the issues that animals face PETA is able to break the ignorance surrounding animal welfare. People who are uninterested in animal welfare are a more difficult audience to persuade.

The social phenomenon of diffusing responsibility is a defensive tactic people use to justify their decision to not act. The diffusion of responsibility exists due to the avoidance of confrontation of eating meat, and using animals as a personal moral issue. Phelps claims “in short, they regard animal protection as an issue of secondary importance which must never be allowed to interfere with the established order of society” (Phelps, 134). Shaking societal constructs is a challenging task. Rather than just looking at vegetarianism as a diet based solely

on preference, PETA must stigmatize eating meat; this also goes for any other uses of animals as a means to an end.

The use of visual rhetoric is one of the strongest forms of persuasion PETA has in their arsenal. Through their print advertisements PETA is able to create realities. The advertisements use visual images, and words to do this. In his book Language as Symbolic Action, Kenneth Burke describes the “dramatistic” use of terminology. He says “Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality” (Burke, 45). Language shapes reality. One specific situation can be interpreted multiple ways through language. PETA understands and utilizes the power of language in all of their advertisements – to the extent that it illicit the response they intend.

By using suggestive and motivating language PETA seeks to create a sense of urgency from those viewing the advertisements. Kenneth Burke identifies this as the use of “dramatism.” Burke describes this as “a technique of analysis of language and thought as basically modes of action rather than as means of conveying information” (Burke, 54). PETA’s visual campaigns are used to both convey information but more importantly encourage action. There are two advertisements on the campaign for vegetarianism analyzed. The 2005 “Holocaust on Your Plate” campaign is one of the most controversial advertisements PETA has ever created. In the campaign PETA utilizes images of the Holocaust to represent current conditions for factory farmed animals in the United States. In doing so PETA attempts to create a shared identity between humans and animals and blur the lines dividing human victims of genocide and animal victims of factory farming. The other vegetarian campaign is the “All Animals Have the Same Parts” campaign. The justification for using two advertisements from the same campaign is that

the vegetarian campaign is considered the most significant issue PETA campaigns for. The “Boycott the Circus” advertisement represents the animals in entertainment campaign – its significance to this study serves as an example of a campaign PETA is not as well recognized for and serves as another example of the appeals PETA makes to human and animal identity. PETA creates print advertisements as a way to use visual rhetoric to break the ignorance and establish a desire to share their beliefs and actively pursue them. In order to do this PETA will have to do more than break the illusion of ignorance and the diffusion of responsibility.

## The Holocaust on your Plate Campaign



[Figure 1]

Social change cannot occur without a catalyst. For social activists finding new ways to reach an audience exposed to an unprecedented amount of advertisements is a difficult task. Shocking and offensive campaigns are nothing out of the ordinary for the Animal Rights activist group PETA. The “Holocaust on Your Plate” campaign presents the suffering of animals today as the modern embodiment of the Holocaust in which meat eaters are Nazi’s and animals are the victims. The advertisement campaigns for vegetarianism by attempting to make eating animal meat a moral issue.

The advertisement chosen is one of many in the “Holocaust on Your Plate” campaign. PETA attempts to articulate animal rights through the use of shock value. The advertisement itself is a panel attached to a silver fence. It appears to be part of the fence and is eye level. Both the cow and the man are looking directly at the viewer. The color scheme for the advertisement is black, white, and red – colors all associated with Nazi Germany. In large capital letters it says

“THE HOLOCAUST ON YOUR PLATE.” In smaller letters it says: “During the seven years between 1938 and 1945, 12 million people perished in the Holocaust. The same number of animals is killed EVERY 4 HOURS for food in the U.S. alone.” There is a diagonal line separating the black background on what appears to be the Holocaust side from the white background on the animal side. The side representing the Holocaust appears to be set back as a result of the black background. The wording does not jump off the page at the viewer. The side describing animals is light and grabs immediate attention. Looking directly at the advertisement the viewer is invited to read from left to right. The audience starts by seeing the image of the Jewish victim of the Holocaust – but is left with the larger image of the calf. Visually the viewer moves from past to present, which places a sense of urgency to the issues the animal is faced with. The connection PETA is trying to make between the Holocaust and factory farmed animals is unmistakable.

In his book The Longest Struggle Phelps describes a similar situation. When describing farmed animal’s movement from traditional farming to factory farming he insinuated that this was similar to going from prison to a concentration camp. “Farmed animals were in prison; they were not able to manage their own lives and organize their own societies, and they were under a sentence of early death from the day they were born – but they were not yet in the concentration camps” (Phelps, 171). This is the stance PETA takes through their advertisement. The atrocities that occurred under the rule of Nazi Germany are those that animals are faced with today. Through both image and language they convey this very message.

The starving Jewish man and calf are images of abuse and neglect, each representing a form of perceived inferiority. PETA creates a common theme of victimization within the advertisement between the man and cow. PETA strategically uses a grown man as the victim of

the Holocaust, and a baby calf as the victim of the meat industry. Society identifies small – infantile beings as vulnerable, whereas grown men require less of society’s attention and aid. Through this imagery PETA makes the claim that these new victims require our immediate help. Both of their eyes are looking directly at the viewer eliciting both sympathy and a sense of responsibility. The images of the man and the baby cow differ in size. The Jewish Holocaust victim appears to be small and set in the background whereas the calf is quite large and appears to be in the front. Symbolically this translates that the issue of animal welfare is at the front of the line and a current issue. The Jewish man being a victim to the Holocaust is something of the past, according to this advertisement it is now animals who are victims of the Holocaust.

The phrase “THE HOLOCAUST ON YOUR PLATE” is the central focus of the advertisement. According to the advertisement eating meat is a form of genocide. Creating a situation which examines the term “genocide” forces the viewer to acknowledge meat was once a living thing that has since been inhumanely and unjustly killed. In the smaller text it says that 12 million people “perished” in the Holocaust. It continues to say that the same amounts of animals are “killed” every 4 hours for food consumption in America. This connects directly to what Kenneth Burke described as a “dramatistic” use of language. The word “perished” is used in regard to Jewish Holocaust victims and translates as a passive way to describe the deaths. Strategically the term “killed” is used when discussing animals emphasizing the brutality of killing animals for food. The word “killed” carries a higher level of moral weight than the term “perish.” Morally one is more confronted by the term “killed” because it requires the action of another being. Word choice is important because the advertisement is attempting to create a sense of importance. The Holocaust is considered one of the largest crimes against humanity thus in PETA’s opinion factory farming and meat consumption is not only the same but worse.

PETA's "Holocaust on Your Plate" advertisement is clearly controversial and attention grabbing. PETA is forced to create controversy in their advertisements because they are not just battling America's perception of animals; they're trying to end something that is considered normal and enjoyable in American culture. For many people eating meat is American. The golden arches of McDonald's are American landmarks, and the business of eating meat is lucrative. According to the American Meat Institute in 2009 beef and poultry sales totaled \$158.4 billion. PETA is left with the task of getting people to believe what they are doing is wrong, what their families are doing is wrong, and what this country is doing is wrong.

PETA's campaign advertisements attempt to make specific appeals to their audience. PETA is an extremely well known animal rights group. PETA is not a completely reputable source – thus they struggle to establish ethos in their advertising. To make up for the lack of ethos PETA emphasizes Pathos and Logos in order to distract the audience. Pathos is used through the representation of the Holocaust and calf. The suffering in both the man and animal creates a sense of sympathy in the viewer. Sympathy and guilt have been noted as emotional appeals in previous chapters and are a recurring theme in PETA's visual discourse. The use of the Holocaust in this advertisement is an extremely controversial move on PETA's part thus feelings of shock, horror, and even disgust are created.

Logos is clearly displayed in the smaller text on the advertisement. The advertisement clearly states that 12 million people were killed during seven years of the Holocaust. It continues claiming that 6 times that are killed daily for American food consumption. Culturally we are appalled by genocide and the use of it in the advertisement is an example of mythos. The United States had an active role in ending the Holocaust, and it is also a common notion that the United States concerns itself with human rights. The use of the Holocaust appeals to our cultural sense

of rights and responsibilities. By utilizing images of the Holocaust in conjunction with the calf – the advertisement seeks to illicit a similar response.

The advertisement itself is offensive. It walks a fine line of being extremely aggressive and extremely off-putting. It creates a scenario where people who consume meat are comparable to Nazi's. The advertisement itself is a fallacy. The advertisement struggles to present a clear message – it creates an emotional response then forces you to think critically. The advertisements attempt to illicit sympathy is undone by the exploitation of the Jewish Holocaust victim. While it asks for sympathy and understanding for animals it seems to neglect both of those things for Jewish people. The entire campaign could be perceived as capitalizing off of the suffering of Holocaust victims.

While PETA is successful in stirring emotions through this advertisement it fails at persuading the viewer to empathize for both the human and animal on the same level. Persuading the viewer to completely swear off meat forever after viewing this advertisement is a long shot. The intentions are clear, and the ability for PETA to correlate animal abuse and human abuse to the scale of the Holocaust is purposeful in order to create shock. If the viewer walks away from the ad without changing his or her behavior – he or she will still remember the images presented through this advertisement, and that is a small victory in the eyes of PETA.

## All Animals Have the Same Parts Campaign



[Figure 2]

Eating meat is a socially acceptable act. Meat is a staple for most living in the United States and abroad. According to the USDA 25.6 billion pounds of beef were consumed in 2011 in the United States alone. The act of killing animals for human consumption is something PETA vehemently opposes. The “All Animals Have the Same Parts” advertisement is in support of the vegetarian campaign of the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). PETA is well known for their use of celebrity endorsements in order to further their advertising campaign. The print advertisement that is featured on the PETA website is an image of American model/actress Pamela Anderson in what appears to be a bikini-style bathing suit with markings sectionalizing her body into specific parts. The advertisement presents a side view of Anderson’s body, however her face is turned to the front and she is gazing directly at the viewer. On the left of Anderson is a small image of a cow with a heart on its stomach and the words “Have a heart, Go

Vegetarian.” The advertisement plays on array of emotional appeals explored in the previous chapter two – thus serving as evidence of the organizations attempt to create a shared human/animal identity.

The use of emotionally stimulating language is apparent throughout this advertisement. The word “Animal” is used exclusively even though the image is that of a human. PETA uses the word “Animal” as an umbrella term – covering both human and non-human animals. This also makes an effort to create what has previously been referred to as collective identity. According to Kenneth Burke “basically, there are two kinds of terms: terms that put things together, and terms that take things apart. Otherwise put, A can feel himself identified with B, or he can think of himself as disassociated from B” (Burke, 49). The remainder of the phrase “have the same parts” is visually articulated through the segmentation of Pamela Anderson’s body in the image. The words “Rump” and “Round” were transcribed on her leg as a way to identify her body part in a way we identify the body parts of animals when utilizing them for food. Considering this is a vegetarian campaign the use of terms we readily identify when referring to animal meat were purposeful. Visually implementing these terms on Anderson’s body can be seen as an attempt to illicit an emotional response – more specifically a response calling on both cognitive reasoning, and guilt. The idea that both humans and animals “have the same parts” implies that humans and animals share physical substance. This is an effort to break the illusory vision we have of animals being the exact opposite of human.

The use of Pamela Anderson in this specific advertisement is strategic. Anderson is an infamous sex symbol in American pop culture. Her career ranges from pornography to television and she was even named “Playmate of the Month” by Playboy magazine in February 1999. The use of sexual appeal transcends Pamela Andersons recognizable image – in the advertisement

Anderson is dressed in what can be considered revealing clothing. These types of sexual appeals are another attempt to create a sense of shared substance. It is also used to create a sense of desirability to the cause. Vegetarianism is demonstrated to be the sexually appealing diet which would make meat consumption the opposite. Thus in order for one to be sexually appealing he/she must adopt this alternate style of eating.

On the left of the advertisement is a small image of a cow encircled by the words “Have a Heart, Go Vegetarian.” Inside the image of the cow is a small heart shape. The terminology is interesting. According to Burke “not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the attention to one field rather than to another. Also, many of the ‘observations’ are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made” (Burke, 46). The heart appears small relative to the size of the advertisement – however given the nature of the advertisement it has significant meaning. The image of a heart within the cow represents the symbolic existence of emotion in an animal. The words encircling the image challenge the viewer to “have a heart.” Thus the consumption of meat becomes a moral issue. If consuming meat is considered to be immoral or heartless – then adopting a vegetarian diet is thus the morally acceptable and mindful option. Not only does this image attempt to challenge the viewer’s morals – it is also used as what has been described in previous chapters as an emotional appeal – particularly an appeal used to illicit a response of guilt.

Like any piece of advertisement the “All Animals Have the Same Parts” vegetarian campaign makes certain appeals to the viewer. There are clear examples of pathos and logos in this campaign. Ethos is once again a struggle for PETA. The use of celebrity endorsement would normally serve as an appeal to ethos – however given PETA’s choice of celebrity that is not the

case. Pamela Anderson is not considered to be a credible or reputable source. PETA's ethos is damaged by their choice of endorsement for an advertisement that is supposed to represent an issue of high importance.

Pathos is also a clear appeal to the viewer of this advertisement. While the image itself doesn't illicit an immediate emotional appeal – the language certainly does. The moral appeal for people to “have a heart” and the use of the small image of the cow and small image of a heart carries emotional weight. The language is used purposely to stir emotion in the audience. As Phelps puts it this creates a sense that “no sentient being counts for more in the moral equation than any other sentient being” (Phelps, 77). The clear segmentation of Anderson's body creates a sense of shock – confronting the viewer with the words transcribed over her body. The sexual appeal of Pamela Anderson's image due to her career, and her revealing clothing, and body position can also be considered as an effect to create an emotional response.

Through both language and image the neo-Aristotelian appeal of logos is clear. Giving the viewers a reason to act is the strongest aspect of the argumentation in this visual rhetoric. The strongest logical appeal made in this advertisement is the words “All Animals Have the Same Parts.” This challenges the viewer to consider themselves animal. The argument is furthered through the image of a segmented Pamela Anderson labeled with cuts of meat. This is also a strong claim on shared identity.

## Boycott the Circus Campaign



[Figure 3]

A campaign that gets less attention from the media and the world is PETA’s campaign against animals in entertainment. PETA strongly opposes the use of animals in any forms of entertainment claiming that it is not humane or fair to the animals to keep them caged and forced to behave in ways that are mostly not natural for them. The ad contains Shilpa Shetty – an Indian “Bollywood” film actress and model dressed as a tiger and chained up in a cage. “Bollywood” is India’s interpretation of Hollywood in the United States. Her body is facing the front and she appears to be staring directly at the audience. The advertisement reads “Beaten lonely and abused” and calls on the viewer to boycott the circus. The campaign to end the use of animals in entertainment is just one of the many campaigns PETA crusades for.

The most immediate image the viewer is confronted with upon viewing this advertisement is that of Shilpa Shetty having taken on the appearance of a caged tiger. Shetty is recognized as an “exotic” model and actress and in this advertisement takes on the representation of an “exotic” animal. According to Edward Said there has long been an interest in obtaining “exotic” things. He defines this as Orientalism. According to Said “Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said, 3). Both Shetty and the Tiger by this definition could be viewed as the Orient being dominated. In this advertisement Shetty serves as the physical embodiment of a tiger. This has been defined in previous chapters as anthropomorphism – in this case reverse anthropomorphism. Aside from the tight tiger skin print body suit, Shetty also has facial makeup, fake ears, and big, tussled hair. According to Waytz, and Morewedge: “Anthropomorphism represents a process of inductive reference whereby people involve the real, or imagined behavior of other agents with humanlike characteristics, motivations, intentions, or underlying mental states” (Waytz, and Morewedge 411). Shilpa Shetty maintains her humanness in the image but is only disguised as what appears to be a tiger. The idea of caging or chaining a human against their will is something that would be considered wrong, and an infringement on natural human rights. The viewer is then called upon to identify with the humanness of the model but the representation of the animal. Thus the viewer of this advertisement is at a crossroads of identity. The use of reverse anthropomorphizing Shilpa Shetty is a clear and concise appeal to create a shared identity between humans and animals.

Like the previous advertisements the use of language is paramount in this advertisement. The words “beaten lonely and abused” appear in large bold letters on the right side of the advertisement. The sizing of the entire phrase differs with the words “beaten” and “abused” being significantly larger than the word “lonely.” This visually puts emphasis on the larger words. The significance of using the words beaten and abused when referring to the caged animals used in the circus are used to create a sense of anger from the viewer – and illustrate that the animals suffer great fear in the situation. The idea that the animals feel a sense of loneliness is also an attempt to create shared identity by using a very human emotion to describe the emotion in the animals involved in the circus. The call to “Boycott the Circus” is in smaller print but is very clear to the viewer. This is because the attempt to create a shared identity through language outweighs the call to boycott and end the use of animals in entertainment. Once again we see what Burke described as “dramatism” through the calculated use of language. It is clear PETA is fighting a more complex battle than one would automatically assume.

Once again the traditional approach to rhetorical criticism is made clear through the identification of ethos, pathos, and logos in the advertisement. Ethos is apparent once again through the organization putting their name clearly at the bottom of the advertisement. Again PETA uses the use of celebrity to garner a sense of credibility with their cause. An interesting factor in this advertisement is that both the campaign and model are not marginally well known. Shilpa Shetty is not a mainstream or major actress on the world stage – and is hardly recognizable to Western societies. Still the use of her celebrity serves as a call to Ethos.

Pathos is demonstrated through the emotional appeal of the language and sexual appeal of the imagery. The words beaten, lonely, and abused are emotionally saturated words. Shetty appears to be fearful in the advertisement holding one of the bars and looking fearfully at the

viewer. The tight fitting bodysuit and the reputation she has as a very attractive exotic model play into the fact that this is sexual imagery. Sexual appeal has been defined previously as an emotional appeal that is often used by PETA to attain a greater response to their advertising.

The appeal to logos is identified through the moral obligation to protect things that are beaten or abused. Anthropomorphism furthers the responsibility and response to the claim that circus animals are beaten, lonely, and abused because it creates a dual issue of a human being the subject of the abuse.

## Conclusion

Through the visual rhetoric presented in the form of campaign advertisements and PSA's PETA attempts to captivate, inform, and encourage action within their audience. The attempt to create shared human and animal identity is clear – however the tactics PETA uses undermines their cause. The appeals to human sympathy and guilt are contradictory in nature – being helpless, and in need of human intervention, hurts the appeal to create an equal and level playing field between humans and animals. PETA campaigns for humans to act on the animals behalf – this creates tension within the notion of shared identity. If animals were placed on the physical and moral level of humans the animal would be responsible for itself. Human intervention is always an issue of choice – whether the victim is human or animal.

It is clear PETA attempts to present animals in a way that humans can relate to – an effort to blur the boundaries drawn by humans. According to Hobson-West “the drawing of boundaries is a crucial part of what it means to be human, and goes wider than just seeing the animal as other... boundary drawing is not just an intellectual exercise but has ‘real world’ and sometimes dramatic consequences” (Hobson-West, 25). Boundary drawing is something that is vital to human understanding. The blurring of these lines is possible for a moment through visual rhetoric; however, undoing the boundaries in reality is a much harder task.

PETA campaigns for humans to stop exploiting animals – however they use images of humans in almost all of their advertisements. The use of sexualizing women is degrading. The advertisements objectify women as sexual objects which is the kind of behavior they are asking their viewers to abstain from when it comes to animals. Rather than presenting their evidence in an intellectual way – PETA relies on shock and emotional appeal to do their bidding for them.

This is successful in captivating an audience and obtaining large amounts of media attention, but falls short in motivating that audience to take action and adopt the animal rights movement's values. In order to gain credibility with their audience – and be successful at eliciting social change – PETA will have to stop presenting messages that contradict themselves.

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