

# The Animal Studies Repository

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From the Selected Works of Corey Lee Wrenn, Ph.D.

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## Why Can't We All Just Get Along? Factionalism in Animal Rights

Corey L Wrenn, *The Animal Studies Repository*



Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/corey-wrenn/20/>

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## Updates from Your New Section Chair

Jennifer Earl

*CBSM Section Chair*

*Professor of Sociology*

*University of Arizona*



The CBSM section is an 800+ person-strong section determined to understand how people try to change their communities, nations, and the world. At least in my lifetime, we have never been needed more. It is an honor to lead the section this year and to try to support the work of our members as much as I can during that time. Although I will have more substantively to say in my next column, in my first Chair's Column for the CBSM newsletter I wanted to reflect on a few goals I have as Chair this year, provide some updates, and also invite your feedback.

My first goal sounds routine but is actually quite important. I want to leave the section like I would leave a campsite: better off than I found it. My second goal is a process-based one: open up processes to the membership and work as transparently as possible. My third goal is an outcome-focused goal: promote the work of younger members and promote an inclusive section. With these goals in mind, I am working with the other section officers, council members, and committee members on a number of initiatives.

First, following my campsite metaphor, Andy Andrews (past-Chair), Jocelyn Viterna

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served on many committees, on the Council for each section, and as Chair of the PWSC section.

When diagnosed with brain cancer, Greg turned his considerable research skills to the problem, creating a novel diet designed to starve the cancer cells. He adopted a 360-degree approach to positive living and affirmative attitudes, all while remaining dedicated to his wife, Mary Coyle, and their son Enzo, and while maintaining a robust scholarly life.

Greg will be long remembered for his brilliance, generosity, energy, and compassion as a scholar-activist. The three-hour long memorial service in his honor at Hofstra University in October amply attested to his broad scholarly reach, the rich collaborative relationships he had built with local community organizations, and the depth of love that many held for him. Gregory Maney contributed enormously to the fields of social movements and peace studies, and to our world. By so many he will be missed.

(Some of this material was drawn from a proposal to nominate Greg for a distinguished career award. Michelle Gawerc, Lee Smithey and Lisa Leitz also contributed to that proposal.)

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## Why Can't We All Just Get Along? Factionalism in Animal Rights

*Corey Wrenn, Monmouth University*

As a long time vegan, I often use the Nonhuman Animal rights movement as a case study in my collective behavior research. My identity as an activist-scholar means that I am often in a position of bearing witness to the frustrations of activists who are often not aware that the barriers they face in mobilization efforts are actually rather ubiquitous to collective behavior.



Many activists bemoan the heavy divisions that have emerged within the Nonhuman Animal rights movement, specifically as it has developed and transformed over recent decades (Wrenn 2016). In the 1970s and 1980s, the movement has been divided between factions that advocate direct action and structural change (such as the infamous Animal Liberation Front) and those that advocate institutional reform (such as the Humane Society of the United States). More recently, conflicts have emerged over aims to either reform or abolish Nonhuman Animal use. Rather than seeing these divisions as healthy growing pains, they are most often viewed as a serious liability. Indeed, many movement leaders point specifically to factionalism as a primary reason for limited movement success.

Factionalism is not unique to advocacy on behalf of other animals. In fact, factionalism and the manifestation of radical offshoots tend to be characteristic of social movements. As a social movement organization increases in size and becomes more dependent upon member contributions (and thus more reliant on appealing to a larger constituency), organizational goals tend to dilute. This professionalization process encourages the manifestation of more radical splinter groups (Koopmans 1994, Wrenn 2016, Zald and Garner 1987).

Factionalism is also facilitated when resources are more plentiful (Soule and King 2008). This often happens when a movement professionalizes, as professionalization entails a specialization in attracting contributions. This is certainly the case with welfare-oriented moderate organizations in the Nonhuman Animal rights movement (Pendegrast 2011). As groups amass resource wealth, resource-hungry factions sprout up intent on implementing their own approaches.

Zald and Garner (1987) have also suggested that factionalism is more likely to manifest when a movement is especially hostile to authority and when short-term goal attainment is less likely. Achieving

Nonhuman Animal liberation is certainly a long-term goal, meaning that schism is likely to form across generations and different demographic groups. This movement could also be categorized as potentially “hostile” to authority, as it challenges entrenched power and systems of oppression. Indeed, Nonhuman Animal rights activists have been targeted as a leading domestic terrorist threat in the United States. While this is understandably discouraging to anti-speciesists, other social movements have shared similar experiences. Social movements of all kinds often share predictable patterns of growth and professionalization that facilitate radical factionalism. Unbeknownst to many activists, this is rather typical movement behavior.

Social movement researchers have established the normalcy of factionalism, but whether or not factionalism is detrimental to goal attainment is still under debate. Many social movement theorists and advocates argue that infighting among factions damages public credibility (Benford 1993), diverts resources (Benford 1993, Miller 1999), leaves the movement vulnerable to countermovement attack (Jasper and Poulsen 1993), or even leads to its demise (Gamson 1990). Others, however, argue that factionalism can work to the benefit of the movement. This can be accomplished when factions draw attention to the cause with radical tactics and claimsmaking (Haines 1984). Movement infighting can work positively to penetrate across multiple class and cultural boundaries (Benford 1993, Gerlach 1999, Reger 2002), minimize overall failures, and increase solidarity for specific groups (Benford 1993). It can also fuel positive competition, motivate participation, and inspire tactical innovation (Gerlach 1999). Factions also act as a mechanism for managing conflict and thus promote continued collective action (Reger 2002). In short, factionalism increases movement adaptability.

Factionalism forces a movement to engage in critical reflection. Radical factions in particular function to create an ideal towards which the movement might

aspire. Radical advocates in favor of abolishing (rather than reforming) Nonhuman Animal use serve this purpose by imagining a critical vegan utopia where species inequality and exploitation are rejected (Wrenn 2011). The vegan abolitionist faction offers an alternative vision, motivates participation, and promotes a fundamental paradigm shift that is integral to reaching the goal of Nonhuman Animal liberation. Factionalism does not necessarily push a movement into decline (Rochford 1989), and a movement that survives factionalism can emerge stronger and more focused.

Moderates in the Nonhuman Animal rights movement often promote dominant welfare-oriented organizations as necessary for member recruitment. However, it is more often the case that a moderate stance is maintained to attract and maintain highly impersonalized public membership and external monies from conservative funding sources (McCarthy and Zald 1973, McCarthy and Zald 1977). As an organization becomes mainstream, it often becomes decreasingly committed to social change and more focused on organizational survival. These large organizations can become less interested in attracting new activists and more concerned with attracting paying members who will have no obligation to participate beyond financial donations. When organizational framing exchanges emphasis on social change for an emphasis on advertising, the important role played by radical factions becomes much clearer (Schwartz 2002).

Activists in my field regularly plead for the various factions to overcome their differences and work together. Whether animal lover or animal user, vegan or meat-eater, moderate or radical, we’re all supposed to be on the same page if we care about the well-being of other animals. Generally, it has been my observation that the ones making these pleas for cooperation in the movement are those who identify with the professionalized regulationist organizations that dominate the Nonhuman Animal rights space. From this perspective, factionalism might be

denounced as part of a strategy to encourage radicals to forgo their critical, utopian stance and retreat back into the more profitable moderate approach.

Factionalism is known to drain resources, but its presence is integral. The dominant regulationist paradigm in the Nonhuman Animal rights movement has failed to seriously reduce the reification and exploitation of nonhumans, and radical activists make this point central to their claimsmaking. As the movement professionalizes and large regulationist charities increasingly compromise goals and tactics, the role of radical abolitionism becomes critical in offering an alternative vision, motivating activism, and advocating a necessary vegan paradigm shift. It is my hope that the stigma surrounding factionalism might be reduced in the service of more effective social justice advocacy and social movement research. At the very least, increased awareness to factional patterns could alleviate the stress felt by radicals who are disproportionately burdened, ostracized, and sanctioned by a movement's displeasure with factional tension.

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## Memory Activism: Reimagining the Past for the Future in Israel-Palestine

*Yifat Gutman, Ben Gurion University of the Negev*

Using cultural practices like tours and testimonies for the purpose of influencing public debate and political discourse is not new. Using such practices to strategically commemorate a contested past is a relatively new phenomenon, one that is part of a surge in memory of a difficult past among civil society and grassroots groups around the world in the last two decades. In my new book, *Memory Activism: Reimagining the Past for the*



*Future in Israel-Palestine*, I term this activist strategy “memory activism.” After conducting extensive ethnographic fieldwork among Israeli and Palestinian peace activists since 2000, I found that collective memory can be used as a “weapon of the weak” for political change.

From 2000-2011, I followed three groups of peace activists, both Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel, who have been remembering pre-state Palestinian life and their loss and displacement in the 1948 war. This history is known as Al Nakba (*the catastrophe*, in Arabic). More specifically, these activists borrowed practices of touring and testimony from mainstream Israeli culture and infused them with counterhegemonic messaging in the context of the prolonged conflict. Memory practices of Palestinian citizens, primarily return visits, also appear in this activist memory work, and the meeting between the two sets of national memory practices is intriguing.

Similar to other peace activists, the memory activist groups in Israel sought a nonviolent resolution to an ongoing conflict, yet they also differed from peace activist movements in their temporal approach to political change. Peace activists are traditionally future-oriented and often make an effort to bracket a contested and polarizing past in order to highlight common ground. Memory activism, when employed as a strategy of peace activism, is oriented toward the past, and thus brings in different temporal relations as the foundation of its model for political change: first the past, then the present and future. The aim of memory activism is to disconnect the hegemonic linear link between a particular past, a present that is indicated as resulting from this past, and a projected future. Activists construct a different trajectory by creating an alternate understanding of the past that brings a new understanding of the present and a new vision for the future.

In the state utilization of tours for national education in Israel, the hegemonic connection is drawn between the biblical past of the Jewish people and the present (and future) settlement of Jews in the land of Israel as part of the renewal of the Jewish people after its near