HUMAN-ANIMAL: EXPLORATIONS AT THE HYPHEN

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Modern society is reliant on the domination of nature. This domination of nature has led us to a current state of environmental crises. From polluted water and air, unsafe and unsustainable food production, loss of wild spaces, and now perhaps most troublesome, global warming, we are in a critical time period where the future of humankind is in question. In order to productively engage in these issues it is urgent that we begin to think about nature in a new way, one that is not reducible to an either us or them mentality. Now is the time to begin to find new ways to view nature that break away from the old paradigms. But how did we get to this state, and is there another relationship we could have with nature that does not rely on domination?

Animals have probably been the hardest hit from this worldview of domination. We offer them no legal rights, we eat them, we wear them, we imprison them for entertainment, we deny their ability for agency, and we destroy their habitats. Humans work hard to maintain the distancing from animals that is necessary in a modern society that is based on their domination. “Artfully hidden behind factory-farm gates or research-lab doors, obscured by disembodiment and endless processing, and normalized by institutional routines and procedures” (Emel and Wolch, 1998), we have thoroughly re-made animals for our own liking. However ‘natural’ this process may seem at the surface, it is in fact a product of our way of conceptualizing the world. One predominant way that we think about nature is through dualistic thinking. Dualistic thinking divides
the world into hierarchical categories with associated negative and positive connotations. It aims to simplify the world and judge it according to the master subject. Dualism's structure is one of either/or, and it closes the possibility of the many. By thinking of animals and nature in a dualistic fashion we are able to justify our current society that is based on their domination. We have put ourselves on one-side of the dualism, that of human and culture, of rational thought, an association with everything that is positive. Animals are on the other side of the dualism, they are viewed as 'natural', purely instinctual, having no capacity for reason, and therefore exist for our taking. If we are to break away from this dominant world view then now is the time to start re-conceptualizing our relationship with them. The underlying political aspect of this research project is to begin to break down the dualism that exists between animals and humans so as to open up a new space from which to explore our relationships with animals, nature, and ultimately ourselves.

This research project aims to explore one aspect of the culture/nature dualism, that of human/animal. It will not be possible to explore this dualism without simultaneously exploring woman/man, self/other, public/private, and the list goes on, for to unravel one dualism is to begin to unravel them all. I propose to do this by conducting semi-structured comprehensive interviews with animal trainers at a marine mammal facility to explore human/animal relations. The marine mammal facility where my interviewees currently work (or have worked) did not endorse this research. The interviewees agreed to be interviewed only if their identities and the identity of their workplaces are kept confidential. Therefore I use the pseudonym Dolphin Fun for the
facility, and varying pseudonyms for the trainers as well.

Dolphin Fun is a captive dolphin facility that offers unique interactive programs with the animals. By interviewing marine mammal trainers at Dolphin Fun, I want to explore how the intersection of relationships between animals, trainers, places, and spaces form meanings and practices in everyday life. The objective of this research is to study what those meanings and practices tell us about human/animal boundaries, nature/culture dualisms, systems of domination, multiple subject positions, and the politics of resistance and care.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

There are a few main areas that I would like to cover in this first chapter as a way to set the backdrop for the rest of the story. The first area is a brief history of zoos and aquariums. By tracing the history of zoos we can begin to see the framework within which Dolphin Fun currently operates. The second area I concentrate on is science, for this is how Dolphin Fun currently talks about and manages their animals. So I briefly look at how modern science came to be and how ‘the animal’ became an object of science. Then I briefly outline some of the major criticisms of science. Next I move on to the New Animal Geography so as to place my thesis in the wider framework of geographical work being done on the subject of animals. Within this section I review the major themes of the New Animal Geography as well as begin a discussion that starts to work through some of the major theoretical dilemmas facing this new field of study.

1.2.1 Menageries to Zoos, Aquariums, and Animals as Commodity

Menageries, modern zoos and aquariums “reflect a culture’s ideas about political
power and ultimately the place of animals and human beings in the universe" (Hoage and Deiss, 1996). Therefore it will be useful to briefly look at the history of zoos and aquariums to see how it follows Western ideas about animals, science, and our place in it all. The word menagerie comes from the French and literally means a place to manage animals. Because there are few animals collected, they are always special, one individual representing the many. Therefore menageries and the modern zoos and aquariums are mainly concerned with the symbolic role of animals.

Humans have a long history of animal containment. There is evidence to indicate that prehistoric nomads caught and kept young wild animals. One of the earliest recorded wild animal menageries is 2500 B.C. in Egypt.

Early menageries were primarily status symbols of wealthy and affluent societies due to their large requirements for resources. Because of this they were mainly established in urban areas, a trend that continues today. Early menageries were privately owned and not open to the public. They were established by royalty for private use. In the early menageries there was no effort at organization, and the “animals were caged for human amusement and as symbols of status and power” (Hoage and Deiss, 1996).

It was not until the late eighteenth century that the emphasis changed. What caused that change were many factors including changes in communication, Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, and the Linnaean new classification system which all led to a new way of viewing animals. These changes included a new emphasis on studying and classifying, and menageries became zoological parks, as they switched from mainly private to public affairs with increased access to the general public. During this time the
idea of science and education as the reason for the parks came to fruition. Furthermore, because of the printed word, many of these animals became nationally known, as well as the people that were ‘collecting’. People felt strongly towards their nation’s zoological parks, “the premier zoo symbolized the premier nation or empire” (Hoage and Deiss, 1996). There was a strong desire to make the zoo a complete experience, having one of everything and becoming a living encyclopedia of life, and there was increasingly a struggle between the dual symbolic roles of science and showmanship (Hoage and Deiss, 1996). This is something that still plagues modern zoos and aquariums. The zoos established in the eighteenth and nineteenth century organized the animal exhibits based on the scientific organization of animals. However, this trend is dwindling in modern zoos, with animal display moving in the ecosystem direction. This way of displaying animals came from Carl Hagenbeck in Germany, starting around 1907, and his naturalistic ‘panoramas’ that emphasized natural habitats and hidden barriers. His goal was ‘bar-less’ enclosures that he thought would encourage more natural behavior from the animals, and allow the public to view the animals in a context similar to their original habitats. From his ideas we find this modern concept of holistic animal displays that follow guiding ecological principles with a current emphasis on entire ecosystems, emphasizing habitats and interconnection.

Another significant event in the history of zoological parks is the modern concept of conservation and breeding of rare and endangered species. Having rare specimens was something that always had been part of early menageries and zoos, for these were the animals that attracted the crowds. They represented the colonial mind, having been
captured and transported from the colonies, and gave imagination to the ‘other’ uncivilized worlds that were being colonized. In America cultural activities were progressing slower than Europe because concentration was focused on surviving as a newly independent country. The country was wild, and for a long time the emphasis was on taming the wilderness rather than any thoughts about conservation. This changed from the work of a few men and one in particular, William Temple Hornaday. Hornaday was an established hunter and was hired at the Smithsonian Institute in 1882 as chief taxidermist. He became interested in North American mammals and went west to search for specimens of bison. What he found was that the bison were on the verge of extinction. Hornaday realized then that humans were capable of wiping out entire species. These species would have to be preserved, and he created the department of living animals under the National Museum. Those animals that previously would have been killed or shipped away were kept at the Smithsonian and dedicated to the purposes of science and preservation (Hoages and Deiss, 1996). This early view from Hornaday of zoos as a place for endangered wildlife conservation and breeding took nearly seventy years to spread, but now nearly every modern zoological park participates in these activities.

This transition has not always been smooth. As the world’s wild places shrink there has come the realization that more and more the ‘wild’ has been reduced to a series of megazoos. Areas have to be enclosed and monitored for poachers and logging, and many areas become cut off and the corridors that remained for traveling and migration have been shut down. The problem is the burgeoning human population combined with
our lifestyle. Biological diversity is down to its lowest level in 65 million years. We consume 100 million tons of fish from the ocean every year. Five billion animals are slaughtered for food just in the US every year. Across the globe, ten to fifteen billion domestic animals are occupying areas that were once wildlife habitat. Only four percent of the Earth is protected land (Croke, 1997).

Faced with these facts, the zoo community has come to realize that animals need to be saved not just in zoos but also in the wild. Animals in captivity are not the same as wild animals, a problem that the zoo community is aware of. They lose much of their natural behavior and many do not reproduce or lead healthy lives in captivity. Furthermore, the genetic diversity of zoo animals has usually been interfered with, and is not the same as wild animals. Therefore zoos have to rely on wild animals for their continued existence. Increasingly however, as wild spaces shrink and biodiversity diminishes, wild animals are relying on zoos for their continued existence as well. “The zoo community is uniquely qualified to manage and preserve…biodiversity. Nutritionists, biologists, wildlife veterinarians, population specialists, geneticists and behaviorists are already assembled and on staff” (Croke, 1997).

Although zoos may not be up to the challenge, government agencies so far have not put wildlife conservation as a priority. So perhaps by default, much of the work of conservation is left to the zoological community. There are over seventy species survival plans (SSP) in American zoos currently. While this is much needed research, increasingly the realization is that the SSP won’t save any species; only conserving the animals in the wild will.
With this new urgent view of the need for real conservation, many zoos and aquariums have stepped up to the challenge. The modern approach to more natural enclosures is partly motivated by the hope that animals could be released back into the wild. However, “…there isn’t one such exhibit in the United States that would claim its inhabitants are prepared to survive in the wild” (Croke, 1997). This is the irony of much conservation work, without wild field conservation happening simultaneously it falls short of its goal of species survival.

Many zoos and aquariums participate in conservation but only on a superficial level. They promote conservation and education, but they do not really participate in conservation work. Even something as simple as providing more natural enclosures, something that promotes animal health and maintains wild behaviors, is something that only a third of US zoo exhibits can legitimately be called, and even that may be a generous estimate (Croke, 1997). Furthermore, zoos and aquariums need money to survive, and that means pulling in large crowds, something that often works against animal well-being. Large crowds disrupt natural behavior, can stop reproduction activities, and generally add stress to many animals.

This is the state of modern zoological parks. Although the emphasis on education, conservation, and preservation of both wild and captive animals and their habitats is unquestioned, the actual reality of most zoological parks falls short. Aquarium history follows a similar trajectory. We will now examine that more closely.

Aquariums proliferated later than zoological parks, in the 1800s, due to the slower development of glass containment systems. However, fish have been maintained by
humans since 2500 BC, where Sumerians kept them in ponds for food. In 1853 the first public aquarium opened in London, England. Because of inadequate life support systems, most animals perished in the early aquariums. It wasn’t until later that advances were made in aeration, filtration, temperature, and water storage. In 1856 the first public aquarium was opened in the United States by P.T. Barnum. Over the next 50 years there was an explosion in interest in fish and their environments. Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute was established in 1885, and Scripps Institution of Oceanography followed in 1903. Both of these establishments offered large aquariums for public viewing. During the 1960’s a ‘new wave’ of public aquariums began with the New England Aquarium in Boston, MA. Many of the new aquariums had a local or regional theme that put them in good positions to become local or regional environmental centers and to develop a role in conservation issues.

Aquariums differ from zoological parks because of their different containment systems. Glass provides a viewing realm that is completely different than zoological enclosures. It allows the viewer to be up close and personal with the aquarium animals, and there is less of a feeling of boundary between human and animal. However, even with this more ideal enclosure, aquariums have still made the effort in recent years to make enclosures bigger, more natural, and to include a whole ecosystem or at least similar species as are found in nature. They have followed the same trends as zoological parks.

Dolphin Fun has capitalized on this trend as well. They keep their dolphins in a ‘natural’ lagoon that is open to the ocean through gates and boasts real currents and fish.
This eliminates many of the controversies and animal rights issues that occur in facilities that still house marine mammals in cement enclosures. Not all controversy is eliminated however, and the fact that Dolphin Fun is a private company adds an additional level of scrutiny from animal rights activists. Dolphin Fun is not alone in being a privately owned company in the business of using animals as commodities. Modern zoos and especially aquariums have increasingly come into corporate ownership and it will be useful to briefly look at how corporate culture is influencing these parks.

"Popular culture, mass media, and consumer goods play a profound although mostly unexamined role in shaping people's understanding of and relationship to the biological world" (Davis, 1997). In our increasingly urban world, many people only interact with animals through zoos and theme parks. This is the major justification for educational efforts, with the idea that exposure to endangered or threatened species will lead to feelings of empathy and a desire to conserve species that otherwise would not be felt. However, the implication of being 'educated' by corporations is something that is only beginning to be understood. The three-fold concern between science, education, and entertainment often masks the commodification of 'nature' (and animals) that is taking place. Susan Davis' work at Sea World shows just how carefully managed these parks are in order to offer up the experience and feeling of unmediated 'nature'. As she repeatedly points out in her research, however, Sea World's first and foremost goal is to get people into the park and spending money (1997).

The basis of these parks is the unquestioned culture-nature or human-animal dualism. Just walking through the park 'freely' (they are in fact carefully planned out to
direct movement) while viewing animals in their cages and tanks reinforces dualistic thinking where humans are the master subjects and animals are the ‘other’, there for human appropriation. In the case of corporations, the animals are used for scientific discovery, conservation and education, but also for entertainment, and most importantly, for profit. For privately owned zoological parks and aquariums it is not in the company’s best interest to have the guests question the divide between humans and animals, because this will lead to questions about animals in captivity for profit.

If the new model for public zoological parks and aquariums really is conservation, both in situ and ex situ, it will be interesting to see how these many privately owned companies play into this new role. As a private company, they make no real claims to be of public benefit. However, most do call themselves educational facilities, and claim their emphasis is on conservation. But it will be hard for them to promote true conservation, which involves “connections-to the wild, to other humans and to a kind ethic of conservation and care... (a letting) go of the notion that you have to see certain species to care for them” (Croke, 1997). This is at the heart of the questions about privately owned companies promoting conservation and education. How much they accomplish this goal of conservation and how much they mask their profit status under the rubric of education is something that needs to be further studied.

Following the development of menageries, with their emphasis on royalty, status, and entertainment, to the modern (often corporate) zoological park with its emphasis on science, conservation, and education (and the unspoken profits) allows us to better place the current context of Dolphin Fun.
However, the reliance on science in modern zoos and aquariums is worth exploring. I have explained how this emphasis on science came about in zoos, but it will be useful to discuss the ways that science has permeated modern society as well.

1.2.2 Science

Although a thorough history is not possible here, a brief look at how we became a 'modern' society reliant on science and technology will be useful. In non-Western cultures this history is very different, but since Dolphin Fun is a product of a particular Western way of thinking, I will be concentrating on early European and American history only.

To begin it is useful to see what the Judeo-Christian legacy has given modern society. Although there have been many ideas that have been passed down to us, one of the most important is the Great Chain of Being.

The essence of this view... was that the world was made up of a hierarchical set of relationships with God at the top of the chain and clay/dirt at the bottom, with angels, men, women, animals and plants in between.

(Barry, 1999)

This worldview is still prevalent today and sets the stage for the idea that everything 'below' man exists for his use, including woman and all of 'nature'. This then puts forth the idea that nature is instrumental in value, which is a change from earlier views of nature that believed that nature had intrinsic value apart from just serving mankind. Nature previously was viewed as a nurturing mother, a female earth that was central to an organic cosmology (Merchant, 1980).

Judeo-Christianity slowly changed the view of nature, but the Enlightenment or 'modernity' even more radically changed people’s perception of nature and our place in
the world. In the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries many changes took place across society and a new world view of nature as machine and progress through science and technology began to dominate. This new world view was founded on the ideas of hierarchy and patriarchy laid out in the Great Chain of Being. During this time the ideals of democracy and capitalism also began to take hold. Carolyn Merchant in *Death of Nature* sums it up best:

The rise of mechanism laid the foundation for a new synthesis of the cosmos, society, and the human being, construed as ordered systems of mechanical parts subject to governance by law and to predictability through deductive reasoning. A new concept of the self as a rational master of the passions housed in a machinelike body began to replace the concept of the self as an integral part of a close-knit harmony of organic parts untied to the cosmos and society. Mechanism rendered nature effectively dead, inert, and manipulable from without.

(1980)

However, this predominant modern world view is not without its detractors. Feminists have been keen to point out the problems of the mechanistic world view, since this view is standing on the shoulders of the domination of not just nature, but women as well. To begin we should look critically at the notion of reason as it developed from the seventeenth century onward.

To generalize, they argue that what theorists of rationality after Descartes saw as defining rational knowledge was its independence from the social position of the knower. Masculinist rationality is a form of knowledge which assumes a knower who believes he can separate himself from his body, emotions, values, past and so on, so that he and his thought are autonomous, context-free, and objective.

(Rose, 1993)

Michele LeDoeuff describes masculinist work as work that "claims to be exhaustive and it therefore assumes that no one else can add to its knowledge; it is therefore reluctant to listen to anyone else" (Rose, 1993). By assuming that man is able to disconnect from his social position, he also assumes that his research is universal and exhaustive. Feminists disagree with this point. They see this notion of reason as gender
biased. They point out that in order to define what it means to be ‘rational’, you must also define irrational. Rationality is associated historically with men, the Self, and irrational with women, the Other. Feminists question these dualities. They claim that in science the position of the viewer should always be identified, which is rarely done. Included in this critique is not just this view that the master subject is masculine, but that they are also white, bourgeois, and heterosexual (Rose, 1993).

Important to this idea is the concept of identity, which is always a contested issue because it is formed through power relations. Identity is intricately tied up in ideas of the Other and the Self. The Self can be defined as white heterosexual male, while the Other is everything else as perceived from his perspective. Because of this perception the male can only understand others as they differ from his masculinity. It follows that since the male is rational, he is the one able to make claims to truth through science. Science legitimated the process of truth production.

1.2.2.1 Science as Truth

It is important at this point to look briefly at the idea of the ‘common rules’ that qualify what counts as a serious statement and what does not. These rules are not explicit or hidden, “these rules are intrinsic to the statements themselves as mutually sustaining entities...in the sense that, as serious statements, they obey similar rules of formation. These rules of formation govern what can and cannot be said as part of the language of truth” (Haugaard, 1997). One way that we currently give an idea the status of truth is by arguing that it is ‘science’ (Haugaard, 1997). Indeed, the scientific discourse has become the way to explain the world.
Once again, feminist critiques of science are especially enlightening and include several dimensions. The first is that scientific claims to objectivity made by use of reliance on certain senses, especially sight, is fraught with problems. The ability for ‘man’ to separate himself into two dimensions, rational and emotional, and to utilize only the ‘rational’ side while conducting research seems implausible. This view also discounts the effects of underlying social structures, and since science is “a socially produced body of knowledge and a cultural institution” it would seem to follow that these social structures (gender, race, class, sexuality) would be reflected back into the cultural institution of science, “in its structure, theories, concepts, values, ideologies, and practices” (Bleier in Seager, 1993). Another important dimension to this critique is the extent that modern science is reliant on a paradigm of domination and exploitation of nature (Seager, 1993). This paradigm has easily lent itself to the ‘environment’ becoming an object of scientific knowledge (Darier, 1999). The study and management of the environment has taken on important dimensions to scientists as well as environmentalists. Joni Seager (1993) in particular has several concerns about this new trend towards scientific study and the management of nature. First, scientists are still predominantly white, male, and middle to upper class, and this is reflected in their research. Secondly, by moving into a reliance on science, humanistic values in assessing environmental problems are removed from the equation. Thirdly, the inherent uncertainty of science always plays in favor of environmental offenders. Until something can be proved there is room for inaction. Lastly, the reliance on ‘scientific experts’ takes environmental assessment further and further away from the realm of lived experience.
and those that might be most knowledgeable about the issues. This realm is where most ‘Others’ are found.

Challenging our current views on rationality and science handed down to us from the seventeenth century is critical in discovering new ways to explore our relationship with animals. This reliance on science and rationality coupled with the culture/nature dualism has led us to the current state where animals have become the object of scientific study. Much of what we know about animals comes from science, and therefore science plays an important role in how we think about human/animal nature/culture relations. Historically science viewed animals as automatons, with no capability for reason, free will, or culture. Part of the way that animals became fixed entities with no ability for agency is in the classification/taxonomy and evolution theories that emerged from the seventeenth century. Both classification and evolution reinforce the culture/nature dualism. Classification seeks to bring order to ‘nature’, “it encapsulated fixity: each species’ place in the chain was held according to theological doctrine to be preordained by God” (Birke, 1994). Once again, the legacy of the Great Chain of Being continues in our theories.

Evolution, as popularly understood, also represents the divide, since it is based on, ...

...the supposition that organisms can be ranked in a scale of being...it goes hand in hand with the notion that evolution represents a linear progression towards perfection in the form of human beings.

(Birke, 1994)

Although most scientists disagree, including Darwin, the view of animals as essences with fixed identities and a set order to the animal kingdom through evolution persists today.
Another way this view of animals is reinforced is through ethology, the study of animal behavior. Ethology tells us about animals through science. However, as Linda Birke (1994) points out, this can be problematic. First ethology has been limited by methodology, which has been primarily reductionism. The unit of study is the species, with individual animals or deviant behavior being dismissed. We think that animals have less individuality than humans, but that assumption has been built into the methodology by which we study them. It would seem that ethology needs to question the framework that this branch of science is based on. The nature/culture dualism is built into the science of ethology through its methodology that fails to account for the individual. There has been new work accomplished in the field that is beginning to address these questions and that recognizes individuality among animals, mostly research involving higher mammals. There has even been research into animal cultures. However, Dolphin Fun is still operating under the old paradigm.

The above critique of science applies to Dolphin Fun because from the view of the trainers, which will be further discussed in the next chapter, science is seen as a barrier between them and their knowledge claims. It works to undermine the importance of their cross species connections and renders them without a legitimate voice to speak for the animals. It is important to note, however, that not all science fits this critique. In fact, some of the critiques of science mentioned above run the risk of taking on the attributes of a metanarrative (Pedynowski, 2003). The concern is legitimate. The idea “that ‘scientists’ are blithering onward, peering down an Enlightenment-bequeathed
paradigmatic tunnel of presumed objectivity and authority with little or no regard for the social context of their knowledge production” doesn’t speak much for scientists, many of whom “are grappling with issues of values, choices of scientific indicators and neutrality/objectivity in their work” (Pedynowski, 2003). It also disregards the different scales operating within science; there is the scientists, but also the academy, industry, the military, etc., all of which also play influential roles in shaping what is studied by whom. One way out of this dilemma is to acknowledge that there “are many sciences, arranged along a continuum of methods, methodologies and claims to certainty” (Pedynowski, 2003).

Many different areas of academia are grappling with these issues of science, nature, and animals. Geography has also contributed to these areas of research, and since human/animal relations occur in specific places and spaces, a geographical perspective can be especially illuminating.

1.2.3 The New Animal Geography

Humans have always been enmeshed in social relations with animals. In many ways animals are the ultimate ‘other’, both conceptually and geographically, as they occupy the spaces of the ‘wild’, and our relationship with them usually is one of domination. The combination of geography and animals has historic precedence, but only recently has a ‘new animal geography’ emerged. Along with other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy, the social sciences are now beginning to look seriously at the ‘animal question’. For geographers,
...the emphasis now is indeed on excavating the kinds of networks of human-animal relations... showing how the places and spaces involved make a difference to the very constitution of the relations in play.

(Philo and Wilbert, 2000)

Its aim is to look at how we ‘place’ animals not only in physical places, but also in imaginary, literary, psychological, and virtual spaces. But the ‘new animal geography’ is going even further, looking at, “the practices that are folded into the making of representations, and-at the core of the matter-to ask how animals themselves may figure in these practices” (Philo and Wilbert, 2000). By considering how animals figure in these practices, the ‘new animal geography’ is hoping to take up the issues of non-human and animal agency, and questions of whether animals can “destabilize, transgress, or even resist our human orderings, including spatial ones” (Philo and Wilbert, 2000).

A key component of this new animal geography is studying how animals have historically been ‘placed’ (in many senses of that word). Tied in to this idea of ‘placing’ animals is the questioning of what constitutes the category ‘animal’, and how this category is socially constructed. For example, in “Taking Stock of Farm Animals and Rurality”, (Yarwood and Evans, 2000), the authors try to infuse rural studies and agricultural geography with new ideas based on the idea that farm animals are socially constructed in both physical and cultural terms. To do this they look at livestock in Britain and Ireland using empirical evidence and interviews with members of the Rare Breed Survival Trust (RBST). They show how breeds were developed in certain areas to match productive needs and climatic conditions, and how “strong associations can exist between breeds, place, and culture” (Yarwood and Evans, 2000). By showing the various
ways that cultural influences have affected the spatial and temporal variations in animal distributions in the countryside, they wish to move livestock out of the limited category of ‘units of production’.

The new animal geographers are also questioning the definitive line that is drawn between animals and humans. Instead of a sharp divide, they argue for continuity between animals and humans that would open up a basis for a more inclusive animal ‘politics’. For example, in “Constructing the Animal Worlds of Inner-City Los Angeles”, the author’s ultimate goal is one of “a new, less anthropocentric urban theory” (Wolch, Brownlow, and Lassiter, 2000). This new theory would conceptualize the city as a part of nature and animals as residents. To develop this theory, the authors had to explore the ways in which attitudes toward animals in the city are formed, and the role of cultural differences in shaping these attitudes.

Animals historically are granted little agency. It is one of the goals of the new animal geography to show how animals have agency and resistance. The belief that animals do not have the capability for agency is rooted in the human-animal divide and the idea that only we have the ability of self-awareness. This idea transpired from the previously mentioned discourses that started in Europe in the 16th-17th century onwards that emphasized a distinct difference between nature and culture.

In order to break away from these widely held beliefs of animals as fixed identities with no agency, animal geographers work to show the intricacies of human-animal relations and how animals exert their own forms of agency and resistance. An
example of this type of work being done is in “Feral Cats in the City”, (Griffiths, Poulter, and Sibley, 2000). In this study the authors examine the interaction between feral cat colonies, people, and places. They argue that cats are transgressive, they break the boundary between nature and culture since they are often only half domesticated, spending a good portion of their lives outside of the confines of the home and owner. Since ferals confuse this matter even more, being always potentially domesticated pets, they looked at how the pet/feral/wild boundaries are blurred. The authors claim that our relationship with cats, and animals in general, “can be captured in a dialectic of desire and disgust, domination and affection” (Griffiths, Poulter, and Sibley, 2000).

Furthermore, our ordered spaces of the city have no room for animals that are out of place (non-domesticated), so these feral animals are always a source of contestation between those that desire the animals to be brought back in, and those that wish for them to remain in the ‘wild’. The authors state that there is “a sense that the boundary between urban civilization and animal nature has to be maintained, a fear of the merging of culture and nature” (Griffiths, Poulter, and Sibley, 2000).

The culture-nature and human-animal dualisms are at the base of the new animal geography. Ultimately, until this fundamental way of thinking about animals is changed, it will be difficult to create “many forms of shared space” (Wolch and Emel, 1998). All of these views of ‘nature’ as one side of the culture-nature dualism work on the assumption that ‘nature’ has no agency, and we have no connection with ‘nature’. Once again we come back to dualistic thinking and the idea that only we have agency. In the
either/or world of dualisms, it is either culture (humans) or nature (others), and of course
the choice is humans.

To be defined as 'nature'...is to be defined as passive, as non-agent and non-subject, as the
'environment' or invisible background conditions against which the 'foreground' achievements of
reason or culture (provided typically by the white, western, male expert or entrepreneur) take
place.

(Plumwood, 1993)

Interestingly enough, it is not only animals that have been placed in the 'nature'
category. Historically this category has included women, certain races, sexualized bodies,
emotions, and the list goes on. Because dualistic thinking offers a way to conceptualize
and categorize the world, they build upon each other. For example, Jody Emel (2000)
shows how the eradication of wolves in the United States was dependent on dualistic
interrelated relationships “of sexism, racism, animal abuse, and economic practices.” She
points out that it is not enough to look at just one of these issues, it is necessary to engage
in all of them in order to understand the process of wolf eradication in the United States.

Dualisms work by hyperseparation and incorporation. Hyperseparation denies the
continuity between nature and culture, celebrating humans as unique in this world. This
standpoint has been called natural realist and is partly, if not wholly, responsible for the
idea that, “‘the human’ designates a whole different order of being from ‘the animals’”
(Anderson, 2001). Incorporation, on the other hand “constructs nature as simply a form
of culture, which denies nature difference and subjectivity” (Michel, 1998). This is
similar to the standpoint of the new social nature or social constructionist view in
geography that “sees nature as inescapably social” (Castree, 2001, original emphasis).
However, both of these positions have an “inability to imagine human-natural relations in
a nondichotomous way” (Castree and Macmillan, 2001). For feminists working on the
nature-culture dualism, either way of thinking about nature implies unequal relationships and works to normalize hierarchical structures, where the master subject is always at the top. From his view from above, as the Self, everything else becomes the Other by which he defines himself. So how do we look at this dualism from a different view, one that is not either/or, but the many?

The new animal geography is beginning to engage in the possibilities offered by non-dualistic thinking. One possibility offered by Suzanne Michel is to take the leap into the borderlands between nature and culture. This would entail a movement for kinship and difference.

This simultaneous awareness of blurred boundaries and distinctness between human and natural entities such as animals provides us with a tentative framework to look upon identities (both human and animal identities) as products of interrelations between distinct humans and natural entities.

(Michel, 1998)

This new awareness moves away from reinforcing the boundary between humans and animals, which is based on dualistic ideals that separate things into two categories with distinct edges, and instead recognizes the webs of interconnection. To transgress these boundaries and resist the nature/culture dualism is one way in which we can begin to rethink our relationship with animals. Michel shows in her study how eagle rehabilitators and wildlife educators in Southern California are using their work, combined with a politics of care, to traverse the human-animal borderlands. Not only do they recognize their kinship with the eagles, but they also participate in “political opposition to current trends to dominate and destroy species such as the golden eagle” (Michel, 1998). Their ability to traverse the human-animal borderlands is a direct result from their everyday politics of care for the eagles.
The idea of a politics of care is another useful concept to help us re-think dualisms. Sara Ruddick defines care giving (by men or women), as that which “offers one construction of power which refuses domination, respects embodied willfulness, but does not let abuse go unchallenged” (Hermann and Stewart, 2001). In this light caregiving is seen as a political act of resistance against the dualisms that exist. Care is a practice that has the potential to “help with the broad task of redefining moral and political boundaries” (Tronto, 1993). It does not rely on self/other boundaries but instead crosses these boundaries to treat the other with respect and compassion. It happens in everyday, situated places and spaces and uses what Haraway calls cyborg vision which is ruled, “by partial sight and limited voice-not partiality for its own sake but, rather, for the sake of connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible” (Haraway, 1991).

Linda Birke and Luciana Parisi offer another related way to re-think human/animal dualisms. They invoke the idea of becoming (from Deleuze and Guittari), “to break down rigid boundaries of what counts as individuals or species, for it is these boundaries that reinforce Western beliefs about animals as separate from ourselves” (Birke and Parisi, 1999). Instead of seeing others and ourselves with fixed identities, we need to begin to think in terms of the continual process of becoming. This process is about change, shifting the emphasis from individuals to “organisms-in-relation—not only to each other, other kinds, and environments, but also to themselves” (Birke and Parisi, 1999). It is about interconnections and the fluidity of relationships; it recognizes multiple subject positions and complex webs of entanglements.
While much groundbreaking work has been done in the new animal geography, much more needs to be done in breaking down the human-animal dualism. As Owain Jones points out, we need to begin to “deal with the world as practice in a way which might be more inclusive, incisive and embedded than our abstracted, universalized systems of thought” (Jones, 2000). He points out that one way to begin this is to start dealing with animals not as collective wholes but as individuals. Up until now, there has been limited research dealing with individual animals and individual people; in short, an exploration of human-animal relations on an everyday situated level. This is what this study aims to focus on, hoping that by concentrating on the everyday situated knowledges of trainers and their relationship to animals, new ways to re-think the human-animal dualism will become illuminated. Until this dualism is broken down, animals will continue to remain our ultimate ‘other’.

1.3 Marine Mammal Facilities

To set the context properly it will be necessary to review the nature of modern marine mammal facilities. Although the exact marine mammal facility where this research takes place has to be left anonymous for privacy reasons, most marine mammal facilities currently in operation in the United States are similar in nature. The main reason for this uniformity is due to the passing of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972 and the establishment of The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (known as the Alliance from here on) in 1987. The MMPA has put severe limits on wild marine mammal collecting. This has had a huge impact on marine mammal facilities since now they must rely primarily on captive bred animals for their
businesses. This has caused an increase in demand for captive marine mammals, to buy, trade, or breed within the industry.

The Alliance, on the other hand, has worked to regulate and manage all the different marine mammal facilities. The Alliance:

...is an international association representing marine life parks, aquariums, zoos, research facilities, and professional organizations dedicated to the highest standards of care for marine mammals and to their conservation in the wild through public education, scientific study, and wildlife presentation.

(from www.ammpa.org)

To become an Alliance member, a facility must pass a stringent accreditation process. The Alliance’s commitment to public education, marine mammal reproduction, and research is a system that most modern marine mammal facilities follow. Since the passing of the MMPA and the work of the Alliance, of which Dolphin Fun is a member, most marine mammal facilities are run similarly. Although each has its own idiosyncrasies depending on the type of facility and the animals they have, the standards that must be met to be an Alliance member work to ensure a level of uniformity.

Marine mammal facilities are set up like most other corporations, since there are few non-profits in the industry. In addition to the more common top management positions (human resources, director of operations, etc) they usually employ a director of animal management who has a higher degree in animal behavior. This position oversees the trainers. They also have staff marine mammal veterinarians on hand as well.

Within the industry word gets out quickly on what is economically successful and what is not. They vary in size and breadth, but almost all marine mammal facilities now have a training, education, and gift shop department. The gift shop department is where the facilities sell everything marine mammal related, including any photographs or video
taken during the encounters. Within the education departments there is some variability. Most education departments work to ensure that the public is being educated during their visit to the facility. There is an emphasis on conservation that comes from the Alliance. Many education departments have outreach programs or separate programs that are just educational in nature and do not necessarily involve interaction with animals.

The training departments also have similarities across marine mammal facilities. One of these similarities is that the trainers hired are primarily college educated with a degree in psychology, marine biology, or animal behavior. Throughout the industry pay is not very high for trainers, but there is prestige in being a marine mammal trainer.

All facilities use positive reinforcement for training. Positive reinforcement is a form of operant conditioning where primary reinforcers, like food, are used to mark desired behavior. Secondary reinforcers are used as well, such as toys or rub downs. When an undesired behavior occurs, it is ignored. Through the use of positive reinforcement, the trainers are able to develop strong relationships with the animals they work with based on trust and respect, something that other methods of training do not necessarily provide. Through positive reinforcement the trainers are able to train the behaviors that are common to performances and interactive programs, and also to train medical behaviors such as fluke presentations for blood draws. This allows the trainers and medical staff to collect husbandry information on the animals ‘voluntarily’.

There has been a trend in recent years of not only performance shows with dolphins (and other marine mammals) but also interactive programs where the guests are offered the opportunity to get up close and personal with the animals. These are
potentially more powerful educationally, and they are more profitable, so they are gaining popularity. The combination of shows, interactives, and behind the scenes areas have led to advanced facilities where there is usually many different areas for the animals to occupy depending on what they are doing that day. The movement of animals is again based on training; they are trained to gate and follow directional commands so that the trainers can more or less control their movement and placement.

Most marine mammal facilities also are participating in varying degrees of research. This is usually done by researchers outside of the company. Most common is research aimed at improving captivity viability. This research is done with the facility’s own marine mammals. This research can be used to help wild dolphin populations, and often is, but primarily it is used to benefit captive animals. As private businesses, these companies are profit driven, and this is reflected in all their decisions, research not excluded.

1.4 Questions

There are three main conceptual areas that I explored during the interviews. First, how do the trainers mediate the relationship between the corporation and the animals? Second, how does the corporation (and science) mediate the relationship between the trainers and the animals? Thirdly, how does the animal’s behavior mediate the relationship between the trainers and the corporation? These three areas allowed for a process of triangulation (see figure 1).
All of these areas, as much as possible, were grounded in accounts of everyday activity, for “when we ground interviews in this way, we find that social organization is “in the talk” and that we can mine the talk for clues to social relations” (Smith, 1987 in DeVault, 1999).

Within each of these areas there are several sub-questions that I cover in the interviews. Questions to be explored in the first area are:

- What are the trainer’s perceptions about the animals?
- How do the trainers talk about their relationship with the animals?
- What sort of multiple subject positions are the trainers taking on, and what circumstances are these dependent on?
- What are the trainer’s personal hierarchies regarding themselves and the natural world?
- Has caring for the animals blurred the trainer’s sense of human/animal boundaries? Has it led to an increased awareness of the similarities and differences between humans and animals? Has it produced a sense of kinship?
In the second area:

-What kinds of discourses does the corporation want the trainers to tell the public about the animals and captivity issues?
-What kinds of work place hierarchies do the trainers identify in the corporation?
-How do the trainers perceive corporate scientific decision making regarding the animals?
-What do the trainers feel the corporation’s underlying mission is?
-How/Do the trainers resist corporate culture, scientific discourses, and decision-making protocols?

In the third area:
-Do the trainers perceive the animals as capable of resistance and agency?
-How does the animal’s behavior affect the decisions made about them by the trainers and the corporation?
-How does the animal’s behavior affect the interaction between the trainers and the animals?
-How does the animal’s behavior affect the relationship between the trainers and the corporation?

In these three areas I searched for areas of tension as a way into the material. These areas of tension represented jumping off points into the messy world of human-animal relations that are structured by dualistic thinking. These tensions showed how dualisms are played out in the real world of these animal trainers and the dolphins they worked with. By focusing on the tensions, I was also able to discover the many ways that
these dualisms are being broken down and new ways of viewing human-animal relations were being formed.

1.5 Methodology

I conducted multiple in-depth semi-structured interviews. I conducted one, two to three hour interview with each interviewee. I interviewed five women and two men who work/have worked in animal training for periods longer than one year. The interviewees were primarily marine mammal trainers that all worked at Dolphin Fun. All of the trainers were white, middle class, and had a bachelor’s degree (as do most of the employees at Dolphin Fun). I know all of the interviewees on a semi-personal level from my work experience at Dolphin Fun.

The interviews occurred outside of work on their own time on a voluntary basis only. The interviews were conducted at a location where the participant felt comfortable; they ranged from Starbucks to the beach. I took notes and tape recorded the interviews and then transcribed them. I conducted semi-structured interviews which opened the possibility to explore any issues that the trainers felt were important to the study, or any issues that struck a spark of excitement in the trainers. In order to grasp the full intensity of experiences that the trainers had to offer, I tried to leave room for spontaneity and story telling. I did not believe the richness of the relationships would come out if I adhered too strongly to pre-conceived ideas and questions. Rather, I used my questions as gentle guides in the interviews, so that the participants had a sense of empowerment throughout the experience.

There are some important points about the interview process that I want to
emphasize. First, my primary interest in this research is political; I have a long-standing interest in animal rights, environmental issues, and feminist activism. Clearly, I am not entering this research project 'value free'. Instead I wish to replace this idea with one of conscious partiality (Mies and Shiva, 1993). I did not wish to impose my beliefs on the trainers; rather I wanted to develop a dialogue where we together were exploring these issues. The goal was consciousness raising on both sides, with the hope that the research will open up new ideas about human/animal relations that will not only benefit us, but ultimately the animals as well.

Second, I was conducting these interviews with an insider’s status. I worked for one year at Dolphin Fun, and I currently participate in animal training. Most of the trainers I interviewed are people that I had previously worked with and had already developed a relationship with. My prior knowledge and relationship with the participants easily lent itself to a lively and rich dialog. However, I bring this point up cautiously, for there are many issues that make me an outsider as well. The animal training field can be elitist, and while I worked at a marine mammal facility, I worked in education, not directly with the animals. I started animal training with dogs, not marine mammals, and there are a lot of differences between a dog and a dolphin (as I often heard while working at the facility). Furthermore, my degree of relationship varies with each participant, ranging from casual acquaintance to close friend. These variables played in more than I expected; the depth and honesty of the answers I received from close friends was tangible. This in turn affected the quotes I chose; it was hard not to always choose those interviews where I felt I received much more open and thought out answers. I disclose
these variables to make the point that the categories insider/outsider can themselves be problematic. Rather than just acknowledge and pay lip service to them, I wish to keep them close at hand and to use their unstable boundaries as entry points into examining the interviews.

Third, as a new researcher, my impulse to identify the ‘other’, to fit my interviews into existing theory, to close off categories and boundaries from a sort of “imperialist academic vantage point” (Lal, 1996), is all too easy. My goal was to resist this urge, in order to not just reproduce the dualisms that I am aiming to break down in this research. This proved difficult to do; as the work progressed I became better at recognizing when I fell back on dualistic thinking, especially regarding the dolphins. Keeping this in mind, the interviews were transcribed, and then compared with my notes taken during the interviews. I attempted to use contextualizing strategies so as to understand the ‘text’ in context, trying to identify the relationships instead of fracturing the interviews. In this way I hoped to produce a thesis that stresses interconnections and works to break down dualisms.

1.6 Chapter Conclusion

Zoos and aquariums follow a long tradition of animal display that in its modern form emphasizes education, entertainment, and research through science. The emphasis on science as the way to study and understand animals is often based on looking at animals from a dualistic perspective. Animals have long been viewed as fixed objects of study that are not capable of agency or intentionality. Only recently have the social sciences begun to take up the animal question and to look at the social relations that are at
the core of these conceptualizations of animal others.

This research aims to study the everyday situated relations between humans and animals. The interconnections and complex relationships will be explored and new ways of thinking through the human/animal dualism will be encountered. This will occur through the interviews with animal trainers, exploring their daily life of intense interaction with animals. During the interviews the conversations that have taken place help to create an alternative discourse which can subvert the power of existing dualisms and contribute to their destabilization (Gibson-Graham, 1996).

The next chapter will extensively analyze the interviews. By looking carefully at trainers, dolphins, and the corporation we begin to understand the more complete picture of human-animal relations in one particular place, Dolphin Fun. All three players in this story have important roles: the corporation works to maintain the human-animal divide, dolphins break down the divide from the nature of their behavior, and trainers are caught in the middle of these two positions, negotiating their way back and forth in the borderlands.

The last chapter is a detailed discussion about the results of this research. Here the theoretical framework will be incorporated with the findings of the interviews. By putting the two together we have a powerful view of human-animal relations at one place in the borderlands between human/animal. We will see that dualistic thinking has produced complex relationships between the trainers, the corporation, and the dolphins. Finally, we will explore the alternative methods of viewing animals that is occurring at Dolphin Fun.
Chapter 2

The Interviews

2.1 Introduction

Relationships at the borderlands are "places where conventional approaches are questioned, stereotypes dissolve, and new understandings emerge" (Ingram, Laney, and Gilliam, 1995, in Michel, 1998). Far from being a smooth process, it is a complex interaction that is socially contested. In this story at one site of human-animal borderlands, there are three main players, the corporation, the trainers, and the dolphins. The corporation, based in scientific decision making, primarily reinforces the human-animal divide. The dolphins, through their capabilities of agency and free will perhaps non-intentionally work to break down dualistic thinking. The trainers are caught in between these two actors, having responsibility to both the corporation and the dolphins. Having to traverse the human-animal divide daily they simultaneously reinforce and break down dualistic thinking about animals. How these three players mediate the relationships that exist between them is the core issue that is explored during the interviews.

By concentrating on the three players I was able to begin to break down the complex web of relationships that exist at Dolphin Fun. However, by suggesting these three areas I by no means want to imply that these categories are solid; indeed, they are the opposite. The framework for analyzing here is just one option that could have been utilized, and hopefully this will be kept in mind during the subsequent sections so as to emphasize the fluidity that exists in these relationships and not the concreteness that may
appear after they are placed, named, and called truth.

2.2 Trainer’s Perspectives on Dolphin-Human Relationships

2.2.1 Introduction

The dolphin trainers in this story are working within multiple systems of domination. They dominate the dolphins through training, and they are then dominated by the corporation and management through powerful thought systems and practices. However, because of their intense daily interaction with the dolphins, they have begun to question many of these dominating practices and have started to form new world views. Perhaps most importantly, working with dolphins has led them to question what it means to be animal. Because human identity is intricately tied up in how we define animal, they are beginning to change their fundamental identities in ways that could foster non-dualistic thinking about animal others.

This section aims to explore the trainer’s views on animals, humans, and the relationship between the two. It focuses on the role that trainers play in mediating the relationship between corporation (management) and dolphins. The questions used to explore these issues are as follows:

- What are the trainer’s perceptions about the animals?
- How do the trainers talk about their relationship with the animals?
- What sort of multiple subject positions are the trainers taking on, and what circumstances are these dependent on?
- What are the trainer’s personal hierarchies regarding themselves and the natural world?
- Has caring for the animals blurred the trainer’s sense of human/animal boundaries? Has
it led to an increased awareness of the similarities and differences between humans and animals? Has it produced a sense of kinship?

2.2.2 Trainer Perceptions

To begin I looked at the trainer’s perceptions of the animals. Every trainer explained his relationship as an important part of his/her life and fundamental identity. Beyond the mere family pet, the dolphins were described as family or close friends.

“Basically I just think they are kind of like our friends, like our kids. They are just really cool, I love them. Just, everyday you are excited to see them, and it is just fun” (Interview #3:2).

Every trainer had a favorite animal that they were especially bonded with, and emphasized continually that their relationship with every dolphin was different. It seemed that when asked which dolphin was their favorite, every trainer named a different dolphin. Their reason for picking that dolphin, however, was always based on the same thing, a bond that existed that they were unable to fully explain.

I think I have developed some really strong bonds with the animals...one in particular. He can be very challenging. He is a little sprite spunky little guy who will test his element. A lot of people find him to be somewhat frustrating, our other trainers, they just have to develop their relationship with him on their own like you would a person. I have a lot of success with him getting a great response by knowing what he needs. He relies heavily on eye contact and on touch and on trust as long as you build that and give him attention that he needs you will go milestones with him. Now I may try that same technique with another animal and it many not mean anything, so you really have to read each animal to their personality.

(Interview #1:4)

They described the dolphins as teaching them things about life and friendship that they were able to carry into their personal lives away from work. One trainer explained it this way:
I interact daily different with people because of these animals. They have taught me how to interact socially, in my own world... It made me pretty passionate for life in general, and individuals and, and... reading behavior better so I can live my life more productively and not get warped by clouded issues or even emotional issues at times.

(Interview # 4:8,13)

One continual theme that arose was the lesson learned about building relationships based on trust and respect as the best way to accomplish things together as a team. If they failed to develop that relationship with each dolphin based on trust and respect, then they had a hard time training that particular animal. “The more relationship you had with an animal the more things you could do together so there was just like a direct correlation” (Interview #7:1).

However much they all knew on a personal level that relationship was everything to training and successfully working with dolphins, there was an underlying tension to the fact that training had become very scientific. There is methodology to training specific behaviors, and set criteria that are expected for a given behavior. In reading training manuals it would seem that if you follow the guidelines to train a behavior, then voila, with practice you would have the desired behavior. However, in the real mixed up world of trainers, this was not so easy to create. The dolphins were willing and able to do some things for some trainers that they would not do for others.

The animals... knew what they were supposed to do, knew what was appropriate, knew when they were supposed to be positively reinforced, when they were supposed to be ignored. So if you didn’t know what you were doing they totally took advantage of you.

(Interview #2:2)

There was continual talk about how trainers were able to push some dolphins into learning new challenges while for others it was not possible due to the limited relationship they had with those particular animals. There seemed to be a very uneasy
tension between the textbook training that they were supposed to follow and the training that they did based on their relationship with each particular animal. “But yeah basically I try not to let my relationship really interfere with the training. But when I do train, I think it has a good deal of relationship because I feel real strongly toward them” (Interview # 3:2).

In fact, there was constant unease due to the fact that many of the questions were looked at by the trainers as anthropomorphic, or non-scientific. Over and over I had to assure them that it was okay to be anthropomorphic, that I was asking for their opinions, not a scientific answer. Still, many of the trainers framed their answers with some sort of qualifier, such as, ‘of course this has not been proven’. “I mean I really don’t know how to answer that (a question) except for again, it is anthropomorphic” (Interview #1:16). It was telling of the kind of environment the trainers were working in, one in which you are not supposed to base ideas about the dolphins in thought or emotion.

However, all trainers seemed to acknowledge the gap between what they thought about the dolphin’s personalities and intelligence and what they are expected to think or know about dolphins from science. “Yeah, we are definitely bridging that gap (between science and their knowledge about the dolphins)” (Interview 1:17). It was clear that the corporate standpoint was one of a strong standing in science. Indeed, the upper management was not very involved with the dolphins except from an animal husbandry standpoint, a field that is thoroughly scientific. The trainers all agreed that they probably knew more about dolphins on a personal intimate level than upper management, and yet they were in no real position to make any decisions regarding the dolphins.
I would honestly say yeah, I did feel responsible for those things (making decisions about the dolphins), however I didn’t do much about them...There were many people ahead of me...who were intimidating. So therefore if there was abuse to animal I stood up but anything else it wasn’t my call. If I really thought something was wrong, yeah, I would say something, um, but it wasn’t really my place and it wasn’t really encouraged for people in my situation.

(Interview #2:4)

Most had accepted this from the perspective that it was the management’s job to take care of the health of the animals, and it was their job to provide environment enrichment, and as much as possible, without wanting to sound anthropomorphic, provide for the dolphin’s happiness.

My personal, what I feel personally responsible for is I really want them to have fun, and I don’t know if they ever are, I mean we don’t really know...So that is my personal goal, just to make sure that they are happy! Even though I don’t know if, well they are.

(Interview #3:4)

It is a huge responsibility. You cannot not go to work one day, you can’t oh I got a I feel sick I want to sleep in. No, you owe your life to those animals. You have to make sure that you are giving them everything that you possibly can and never stop striving to give them more and more stimulus or food or what you think they may need by learning. By learning from their buddies out in the wild. But yeah, give them as much as you can you can never not show up.

(Interview #1:15)

Of course that is tricky to do when you are in a corporate environment that looks down upon any views of animals that has yet to be proven. However, it seemed that most of the trainers were going out of their way to make sure that the dolphins, their friends, were thriving as much as possible.

2.2.3 Multiple Subject Positions of the Trainers

The trainers at Dolphin Fun have many things to do on a daily basis. They interact with the staff and management to plan the dolphin’s day, which ranges from gating and separating, to deciding which animals and trainers will work together during programs, to animal husbandry, to answering questions to the public. They are constantly
switching from inside to outside, complete with the switch from a private personality to
one that demands a certain attitude, described as, “best job in the world attitude”, when in
front of the public. Not everyone had problems with these abrupt changes in attitude
throughout the day, but many did.

Shifting gears has to be the hardest thing ever. I mean it is for anybody, it is hard to get into a
heated argument in a staff meeting... when you are just trying to do the best you can, and then you
got to step outside and shine on, yeah that is hard.

(Interview # 1:10)

Many things came up when asking the trainers about all the different roles they had to
play. Several facets, however, kept coming up in most of the interviews. Almost every
female trainer I interviewed commented on the primarily male dominated supervisor
positions. The other was the male dominated, often sexist, role of the management
(supervisors and up, which were all held primarily by males) and male trainers.

But god yes. Yes, Yes. Men were much more sexual, in the environment we were working in, I
mean our attire, we were barely wearing anything so men were much more sexual much more
flamboyant.

(Interview #6:7)

The staff meetings and many of the decisions about the animals were made by this
group, often during heated meetings. Or conversely, decisions were made without any
influence from the rest of the staff, many who were actually with the animals and knew
what was going on with them that day. One trainer when asked about decision making
from this group put it this way:

...especially if it is four guys and this is the decision they have decided to make and then
somebody who is not supervisor or senior brings up an idea it is just not heard, they have already
made their decision.

(Interview # 5:14)

Either case was equally frustrating, especially when faced with the prospect of
going out for an interactive program where they were expected to be very happy and
positive for the guests. However, it was not just for the guests, but for the dolphins as well, as every trainer I interviewed was concerned about how their attitudes affected their training and ultimately the dolphin’s fun.

The trainers realized that for the dolphins the interactive programs were a very large part of their day and one of the few opportunities they had to stimulate and play with them. With six programs (or more) a day there is little time for bonding or just playing with the animals.

Because it is a corporation and because their goal is making money and hopefully taking care of the animals, you had a set schedule and you couldn’t play with that set schedule. So if something happened to run over, a money making portion that happened to run over their play time was shot, their training time was shot.

(Interview #2:4)

This was seen as a key issue, because the trainers all rely heavily on their relationship for training. They needed this relationship time in order to get into the water with a 400 pound dolphin and have respect and trust with that dolphin. They continually repeated how important relationship is with dolphins, and yet at the same time how they were provided very little opportunity to build this relationship. Programs are the money makers at Dolphin Fun, rarely canceled even when an animal dies. “However, you know an animal dies and you have a program that is supposed to happen, and it doesn’t get cancelled” (Interview #5: 16).

The trainers felt pressure to make the programs fun and challenging for the animals, and they tried to use that time in the programs as much as possible to also take the animal aside and get that one on one connection. Trying to accomplish all that is difficult at best when you are in charge of one dolphin and up to five guests in the water.

Another key area that came up was having the role of educator to the public on
behalf of the dolphins. Every trainer expressed a firm commitment to conservation and education, and they realized that they were the ones primarily in charge of getting any message across during the program. Even during the day while working outside, it is primarily the trainers who talk and interact with the public, and many if not most of those questions are educational in nature. It would not be going too far to say that as far as the public is concerned the trainers are the voice for the animals. During the programs they received the utmost respect from most of the participants, and rightly so, they are protecting both the dolphin and the participant from any harm in the meeting. This respect during the program allowed the trainers to be taken seriously and allowed them to share educational information. This is probably best summed up in the trainer’s own words:

I like doing programs, I like to educate people...I like programs mostly because I am at the level where I can make up my own program. So it can be unique, I feel like I am giving the animals something else to think about. So that it is not just the very same old program that new trainers are learning. But also to really have these guys have a once in a lifetime experience. And the people and the animals have a good time, and they also get educated, because I know I am going to do that.

(Interview # 5:16)

Most of the trainers found it difficult to reconcile that in the public light they were spokespersons for the animals, but that in a management sense, they had almost no voice for the dolphins.

But the cool thing is that my guests really let me know that they love me, and that I am awesome at what I do, so that is where it is not the most horrible thing to do a lot of programs. You get that positive feedback, if it is not going to be from the staff or from management, then at least from the guests.

(Interview #5:15)

There was little room for the trainer’s perspectives as the corporate decision making process did not frequently include them, and even the supervisors making
decisions about the day (gating and such) did so without actually being out with the animals. Some felt more empowered to speak up than others, but most felt that their opinion did not really matter. This was viewed as ironic because the trainers were the ones who spend all their time with the dolphins, and knew what is going on with each one fairly intimately.

In fact all of the female trainers, even the ones who had made it to senior trainer (one up from trainer, but one down from supervisor), felt that they were relatively insignificant when it came to most decision making. One senior female trainer put it this way, "...if we ever said, hey, we need time to work on this they would never stop a program. To do that" (Interview #6:11). Some felt they could speak up and share their opinion but all felt that it fell on silent ears. The two male interviewees both expressed no problem with sharing their opinion and both felt that their voice was heard and considered while making decisions. This was one main difference between the male and female interviewees.

2.2.4 Personal Hierarchies and the Natural World: The Place of Dolphins

This was one area where the answers were very varied. It seemed that all the trainers had different ideas on these subjects. To begin, when asked questions about relative intelligence most of the trainers had a hard time placing the dolphins in some sort of scale (i.e. smarter than dogs, less than humans, etc). All except one thought they were less intelligent than humans, although many wondered what the mixed up world of captivity did to their intelligence.
I still feel that there is a line in there, I mean all species are different, I think because of working with the animals in such a controlled environment you just always see us being in control of them. And, sad to say, I think that we are still a bit of a higher power. Even though I have had my ass kicked and my life flashing before me. And knowing that they could kill me, I still think probably because of the controlled environment that it is us controlling them. If I was out there working with animals in their own environment it might be totally different.

(Interview #6:4)

In training, food is withheld to induce the desired behavior. Although there was much unease in talking about this, trainers admitted that dolphins received almost all their food while interacting and training. In fact the main way trainers would get a dolphin to participate if it stopped cooperating was to withhold food. So food was a major subject in talks of intelligence and natural behavior.

The practice of withholding food exemplifies the trainer’s mixed feelings about admitting that the dolphins were strong animals with strong personalities and that they considered them friends, and the real world of training, which involves things like withholding food when an animal is expressing free will and not participating. In fact, while training, most expressed concern about training on emotions rather than behavioral criteria as a real challenge of animal training.

But I think if you really want to move forward then you have to read the animal which means your going to have to change your behavior in order to make that happen. Sometimes you can push a little harder sometimes the animal can push a little harder and there has to be a midline there has to be a leeway for that to develop it is not paint by numbers black and white in that building of a relationship. Now your training and what you are trying to do can be black and white so you don’t create confusion for the animal but you also have to know what those lines are when you start training.

(Interview #1:6)

This is a convoluted world where on the one hand the trainers are working with animals that most considered like family, on the other, they are expected to deal with and train them from a rational perspective.

One way that many trainers bridged this gap was by referring to the dolphins as children.
...just like any child testing a baby sitter or uh the sub teacher they want to see what they can get away with for free grinds or free whatever...for sure once you make that connection with an animal say as a teacher would with a child that is somewhat challenging in a classroom and they are able to teach them some math skills or how to read or to do something that they may have not done before it is an incredible feeling it is more than any payment in the world because you made that connection it is what keeps you going and keeps your drive.

(Interview #1:5)

This was used repetitively throughout the interviews, and I think it a powerful metaphor in many aspects. The first is the lowered intelligence that one usually assigns to small children. The second is the curiosity, excitement, testing of boundaries, and perhaps bad behavior that follows when they do not get what they want. The third is the general idea that small children need discipline, they need the adults to guide them and make important decisions for them. By viewing the dolphins as small children, many of the concerns of the trainers were alleviated. They can be viewed as partly human, but not developed, needing the trainers to help them make the correct decisions about their lives. The trainers in turn can look upon their roles as the loving parent, providing for their children but also being firm with them when necessary. There is an unequal power relationship in the parent-child team that nicely fits the unequal power relationship between trainer-dolphin. This paternal view follows part of a general European view of ‘other’ and resonates with how Europeans treated nature.

The idea that dolphins were captive animals also produced much tension among trainers, as well as differing opinions. Many of the trainers were opposed to captivity in general, but thought that sacrificing a few for the good of the whole species was worthwhile.
First it (captivity) just wasn’t a big deal, it was all new to me. And the more I was a dolphin trainer the more it started to come up for me as an issue. I am not totally against it because I think there is a lot of benefits that can come from it and maybe, perhaps, dolphins are so evolved that the ones that are in captivity are like you could think of them maybe as like martyrs. Like maybe it is not so strange that they, like maybe some of them know that they are like ambassadors between species. But I would like to think that if I was a dolphin, I would like to be free rather than captive, for sure...So captivity bugs me but I am not totally anti about it.

(Interview #7:3)

Of course this is based on the notion that the dolphins at Dolphin Fun are of such educational value to the people with whom they interact, that people then want to save dolphins everywhere, and protect the ocean from harm. That is a big assumption that some of the trainers feel uneasy about. Most of the trainers were also opposed to captivity in man-made environments, like concrete pools, but were happier with facilities with a natural environment. The trainer’s own words about captivity capture the differing emotions:

I have mixed feelings about it...I think if you have a big enough environment where it is kind of natural and it is for a good purpose then I think it is better. Every once in a while...every once in awhile I look at it, it was low tide and I was like, God this is really terrible, what are we doing here? I feel sometimes we are (exploiting) and I do work and it is for a really good purpose but it still, you kind of feel that way. You put yourself in their shoes, if I were an animal and put in a little place like this, how would I be?

(Interview # 3:7)

They also had opinions about what species should be in captivity and what species should not. This was based partly on scientific knowledge, such as how much a species travels or how deep they fish, but it was also based on the other animals that some of the trainers had worked with. One trainer who had previous experience with killer whales thought they absolutely should not be in captivity, due to their incredible intelligence.
And I felt that there was nothing we could have done to give them (killer whales) what they needed. To stimulate them in what they needed, and to justice to that. I think that is one animal I would rather see out in the wild, because there is so much to be learned...but as far as me personally I don't think I could ever go back to working with an animal that size in captivity. It would be very difficult. Cause I never felt that I could be smart enough for them, or give them the stimulus that they needed to live.

(Interview #1:35)

Some of the trainers admitted that they felt differently about captivity everyday. Some days they felt that it was a great thing, that they were providing a valuable educational service to the public and that the dolphins were thriving in captivity. Other days, they felt that they were exploiting the dolphins and that captivity was a bad thing. Like all contested issues, there was no clear answer. Indeed, this seemed to be one of the hardest issues to talk about during the interviews.

2.2.5 Human/Animal Boundaries

Many of the trainers were surprised that they had developed such strong feelings for an animal, although some of the trainers recognized that they had always had close relationships with animals. Most of the trainers acknowledged that training animals simultaneously reinforces and blurs the line between humans and another species. One trainer when asked if training dolphins had blurred the line between humans and animals had this to say. “Yes it did, definitely. I feel that everyone, animals and people are just not separate really, we are just in different form” (Interview #7:3).

Building a solid relationship with dolphins can take a long time. During this time the bond that forms between trainer and dolphin often grows very strong. However, training itself involves unequal power relations where the human is dominant. In this sense the divide between humans and animals is continually reinforced. Not surprisingly, some of the trainers felt there was a strong distinction between humans and dolphins,
while others felt that there were not many differences. Some of the trainers wondered what would develop if the dolphins were given more freedom, from the food, time and space constraints that controlled their daily lives.

There are many differences between humans and dolphins. They really seem to have a desire to learn and please, and I think a lot of humans are like that. Um, all the animals had different personalities just like humans. Um, just trying to think of a difference because I see more similarities than differences. Just due to circumstance of working with them is how much they unfortunately had to rely on us. I mean if a person wants to be away and separate themselves from other humans or animals we can do that, and unfortunately they cannot do that.

(Interview #6:3)

All the trainers admitted that training and caregiving for the dolphins had begun to break down their scientific ideas about species. Some of the trainers could articulate this immediately, but with others it took some probing. Seeing different dolphins wanting and needing different stimulus really brought home their distinct personalities and differences, and reinforced the idea that they are closer to humans, who are looked at as individuals more than species. One trainer explained it this way:

Each dolphin is different. It is like people are different. Your relationship with each animal is different. They have their own personalities...their own way of doing things, just like people, so it really depends on the animal, and it changes.

(Interview #2:1)

Not only did the different dolphins like different rewards, but that changed depending which trainer they were working with. All this pointed to a very dynamic animal, one that is capable of likes and dislikes, and preferences for some people and not others. This is not contained in textbooks, but was something that the trainers experienced daily. This changed their beliefs about animal species and intelligence.

2.3 Corporation (Management), Trainers and Dolphins

2.3.1 Introduction

In many ways the corporation is responsible for setting the foundational concepts
that define what is possible and not possible in these cross-species encounters. The corporation represents the powerful in this story; they own the dolphins and they employ the trainers. The corporation views the dolphins as a commodity. They are able to view dolphins from this perspective because of their beliefs in science and the human-animal divide. This outlook on animal management defines who is able to speak for the dolphins and who is not, as the science they practice sets up high requirements for legitimacy.

As a corporation, Dolphin Fun also controls its employees. It has in place a sexist workplace hierarchy that works to devalue its women employees. However, it also works to devalue trainers, whose personal knowledge about dolphins does not grant them the authority to speak for dolphins. The metaphor of dolphins as children is useful here, since it feminizes trainers; even male trainers are ‘like women’ in that they are caring for their children. Furthermore, the corporation has idealized narratives that it portrays to the public about education, breeding, and captivity.

This section focuses on the role that the corporation plays in mediating the relationship between dolphins and trainers. The questions used to explore the issues in this section are as follows:

- What kinds of discourses does the corporation want the trainers to tell the public about the animals and captivity issues?
- What kinds of workplace hierarchies do the trainers identify in the corporation?
- How do the trainers perceive corporate scientific decision making regarding the animals?
- What do the trainers feel the corporation’s underlying mission is?
-How/Do the trainers resist corporate culture, scientific discourses, and decision-making protocols?

2.3.2 Corporate Discourse on Dolphins and Captivity

Dolphin Fun has several narratives that it requires employees to tell the public. At a first glance they seem like spontaneous stories about the animals and place that Dolphin Fun represents. However these are in fact carefully crafted tales about human-animal relations, corporate style. I focus on three main topics: education, captivity, and breeding.

Education is the single most important issue at any modern marine mammal facility. It is the justification for the captivity of dolphins (and other marine mammal species), an often unpopular concept. Education through personal experience is supposed to leave people with a deeper sense of knowing a marine mammal and therefore lead to a stronger commitment to conservation. Indeed, education and conservation are so thoroughly intertwined it is hard to tell where one starts and the other ends, partly because the education guests receive is primarily about conservation. Captivity is considered crucial for many reasons, the first and foremost being first hand education for the public about marine conservation that makes them want to save a dolphin because of personal contact. The second argument about captivity involves research. The justification is that research on wild populations is not enough to save them, because of the difficulty in studying wild marine mammals. Thus the combination of wild dolphin research coupled with captive dolphin research is promoted as the way in which complete knowledge of these animals will be discovered.
The brochures produced by Dolphin Fun promote a corporation established for the purpose of research and education, providing a valuable public service of a non-profit nature. I assume that the public realizes it is a for profit operation, especially when they pay the high price for their short interaction. The education and conservation emphasized in the brochures does obscure the fact that Dolphin Fun is big business. When asked what the trainers thought the company’s underlying mission was, all of them responded 'making money'. I bring up this point to show the glaring inconsistency between what the company promotes and what it does.

Dolphin Fun has an education department whose main focus is on children’s programs and outreach. Most of the interactive programs at Dolphin Fun do not include a section involving the education department, so how much education visitors receive depends on the trainers. Most of the trainers are aware of their educational role, but in the corporate advertising, there is the strong suggestion that simply participating at Dolphin Fun is educational. In reality, the trainers have twenty minutes in which three to five people enter the water with a dolphin, bond with the dolphin, give everyone a chance to touch the dolphin, and take pictures. The educational role of the trainer is thus only a small part of their overall task.

Another of Dolphin Fun’s narratives concerns captivity. All the trainers said they were told to tell the public, if asked, that captivity was a good experience for the dolphins. They received the best health care, they were fed the choicest fish, they had a safe yet enriching environment in which to live out their lives, and that they often lived longer in captivity than in the wild. Furthermore, visitors are told that these dolphins are
doing a public service, educating the masses and teaching them about conservation. The
visitors were told the research being done, with the full cooperation of the captive
dolphins, was of enormous value to all dolphins. While this sounds great, most of the
trainers, as discussed above, had very mixed feelings about captivity.

So I think it is a good thing (captivity). I think there is good and there is bad.... Um, I didn’t think
it was too bad, I would definitely rather see animals there than in a tank. So it really depends, it
really just depends...On the flip side, they are not an endangered species, they are money making
animals, are they abused? (Pause) That is debatable, it depends on who you talk to...because that
was basically the whole point of Dolphin Fun was to make money. I mean and I think they did
good things, I think they educated a lot of people. And going back to what I said about people
going to a zoo and seeing elephants, how many people are ever going to see a dolphin, touch a
dolphin? And for some people that makes a huge difference. And in 20-30 years from now there
might be another dolphin species going extinct and now that this person has made some sort of
connection, now that they feel some sort of connection maybe they will work to help out those
animals. So yes, and no, I mean you can back and forth for like forever on this.

(Interview #2:8)

This was not something that management encouraged trainers to openly discuss with the
public.

The third narrative that Dolphin Fun emphasized concerns breeding. All the
trainers are instructed to tell the public that successful breeding programs proved that the
dolphins were happy and well cared for. One trainer said she was told to say this.

Atlantic bottlenose dolphins are a shallow water species that are found in an average of twelve feet
of water. You can have about, what was it? I don’t know the square feet in Dolphin Fun’s lagoon,
you could have over a hundred animals in that area by federal regulation and they would be
comfortable. And if they weren’t comfortable they wouldn’t breed.

(Interview #6:9)

Trainers were told to tell the public that the dolphins bred on their own, completely
naturally. Some trainers, however, when questioned further about breeding, admitted that
while some of it is natural, much of it is controlled. Females were placed on birth control
(tucked in a fish) and then taken off of it to control when they would ovulate. Ovulating
females are gated with just the dominant male, so that there is nowhere for the female to
go.
But I didn’t agree with leaving one female out with two males and that kind of thing. Um, because I definitely would have like to have seen it happen completely naturally and whoever decides to do with whoever and that would be great. 

(Interview #2:10)

There was even mention, quietly, of some drugs that were thought to be used to produce low levels of fertility.

One trainer said about babies, “It is good for publicity, it is good money, you know...Babies are money makers, I have heard that...since the day I started” (Interview # 5:21). It would seem to be the case, as not only are they great publicity, they are great ‘proof’ that the dolphins are doing well in their environment. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the babies are owned by the company and can later be sold or loaned to another public display facility for a price. With the tightened regulations under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, acquiring animals for public display by buying or trading them is becoming big business.

Interestingly, everyone but the two male trainers I interviewed did not feel like they had the freedom to share openly how they really felt about these issues. The male trainers said they did not feel pressured to say what management required, but felt they could tell the guests how they felt personally.

There was some truth in the narratives, so that most days the trainers willingly went along with the program. However, some issues agitated the trainers more than others. Breeding was an especially confusing issue for most trainers. Many said that it changed day to day for them. Like anyone, they loved the babies. Many times breeding was natural, as dolphins are very sexual and engage in sex often. However, the birth control and gating issues bothered many trainers.
There are some treatments that I just don’t feel are absolutely necessary like putting the animals on regalmate which is not an approved drug on animals right now. There has been controversy about whether it is a fertility drug as well as suppressant, or pregnancy (birth) control, I don’t necessarily agree with it.”

(Interview #1:20)

Most however, did not speak up about this, and certainly do not speak about it to the public.

Feelings about the educational value of the program were harder for the trainers to discuss. They have a huge emotional investment on this issue. Most of the trainers have some reservations about dolphins in captivity, and they justify captivity to themselves through the idea that they were using these few dolphins to educate the public for the greater good of all dolphins.

...we said that Congress passed the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 1972 or whenever it was, that you cannot collect animals in the wild so that you have to breed them in captivity. So that was the spiel. It was definitely emphasizing the good things, all the benefits, like education. That was a big thing. And you can see the importance, I mean some of the kids that see a dolphin a face to face are going to be touched and do some things to help the dolphins, so you could see it. It is not all bad.

(Interview #7:5)

To look too deeply into this issue was hard, since it was intertwined with simultaneously having to look into why their friends, the dolphins, are captive.

A few of the trainers were willing to talk about the issue. The unease they felt towards the company and the fact that it was all for profit was ever present. Those trainers who lived daily with the idea of dolphins as a commodity, seemed to try harder to make their programs educational. Rather than just give out a few random facts to their guests during the encounter, they seemed committed to sharing some real knowledge about their friends, the dolphins, with the visitors.
I remember once, the story that I will remember till the day I die that a mom came up to me after a group program and with a teenager just ranting and raving and thanking me so much for what I did for her daughter, her daughter started a recycle program at her school and uh she understood now why she had to cut the plastic ring tabs, and that is what I hope everybody got out of those programs, is more responsibility for nature and the environment.

(Interview #6:4)

In this way, they felt that they personally were making the education justification for animals in captivity a reality, something they felt management was failing to do successfully.

2.3.3 Human Work Place Hierarchies

The hierarchal management structure at Dolphin Fun was essentially like any corporation, with the CEO’s and marine mammal veterinarians making most of the decisions that then trickled down to local management, supervisors, senior trainers, and then trainers. Almost all of the upper management positions are held by males. There was much talk from female trainers about how difficult it was to be moved up the ladder, to senior trainer, if you were a female. This female trainer was trying to be moved up to senior trainer, and this is what she had to say about her efforts:

I mean they want me to be involved but depending on whether there is five guys and they purposefully walked to the other end of the dock so they could talk, I am not going to walk in there and say hey what is going on. Some days I do it, depends on whether I am feeling spiteful or not.

(Interview # 5:15)

There was a marked difference in opinion about whether trainer input was valued by management. Not one female trainer felt they had a voice at Dolphin Fun, and that even if they did speak up they were not likely to be listened to. The male trainers did not feel this way. They never mentioned it in the interviews, and when asked if they felt ignored by management, they said they did not. One male trainer said this about the issue.

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So...anyone could bring up a topic or an issue or whatever, I saw girls do it, and guys do it, probably more guys than girls, but there were some strong women who had some strong opinions and let it be known. So, I don't think it was such a guy/girl thing. I mean, but yeah, there was that difference.

(I Interview #7:6)

All corporations have a management hierarchy. In an animal based corporation, in which the dolphins cannot speak for themselves, input from the human level closest to them might be seen as crucial. However, management at Dolphin Fun involves top-down decision-making. Further, most of the decisions that come down the chain are based in science, something that the trainers felt they cannot argue about. Repeatedly in the interviews the trainers commented on the fact that they did not know enough animal husbandry to say anything, or that they were not veterinarians, so they could not state an educated opinion.

...Then you have to be careful in how you say it because they could take your job away or you could lose credit and value and if you lose that credibility with the vets then, then the next time something comes they may not listen to you and your primary goal is to help the animals so that you can interact with them...and I think the hard part too is that I am not a vet and I don't know exactly how all the biology works and I might be coming at if from an emotional standpoint. Which is very difficult, because they are in my face...and if you see an animal is down or not behaving normally to what you are used to seeing than yeah that emotional involvement definitely can get in the way.

(I Interview #1:21)

Based upon the notion that 'science' produces 'truth', most felt that they could not make a cogent argument about management practices.

The structure of top-down decision making based on science devalues the trainers and their relationship with the dolphins. Trainers acknowledged that the decisions that came from the top were made without much knowledge of individual dolphins. Trainers work with the dolphins every day, building relationships and running the money making interactive programs, and yet they were completely ignored when it came to big decisions
about the dolphins with regard to health, breeding, or moving dolphins to different facilities. Trainers feel that they are not respected, powerful, or appreciated. One trainer when asked about these big decisions and her role in the process put it this way, “I couldn’t have a voice to voice my opinion. I didn’t have the authority to voice my opinion” (Interview # 6:10).

2.3.4 Species versus Individuals: Trainer and Management Differences

The main difference that came up in the interviews was the clash between the corporation’s view that dolphins were a species (a collectivity) and the trainer’s view of the dolphins as individuals. This was not seen by trainers as a completely negative thing. Most of the trainers understood that there were times that it was absolutely necessary to view the dolphins from a species level, for example if one was sick and needed a specific medicine. At that time it was great to know what medicines were compatible with Atlantic bottlenose dolphins. However, trainers gave many examples that indicate that they see the species view of dolphins from management as a negative thing. Trainers did not expect management to get to know the dolphins personally, but there was some underlying tension that they made no effort to do so. Many brought up the fact, sarcastically, that when the owners came they could not even recognize their own animals. By far the biggest complaint was that trainers felt that they noticed behavioral changes that might point to illness much earlier than anyone else.

There are times where I may notice some behavioral changes before (management)...and the end result may be that they really are sick...so there is that gap a little bit between them being distanced.

(Interview #1:20)

However, most times, no one listened to them until the dolphin actually displayed
obvious (textbook) signs of distress. Since trainers felt that it was the management's responsibility to keep the dolphins healthy, this really bothered them. Once again, this pointed to the relatively non-important role that the trainers play in this corporation. The trainers were there to care for the dolphin's well-being and to train them. The corporation was there to make the big and important decisions regarding the dolphins.

2.3.5 Trainer Perceptions of the Corporation's Mission

Trainers all felt that the corporation's main goal was to make money. However, the corporation emphasizes its education and research roles. In terms of the latter, none of the trainers said they were provided with any of the results from the studies in which they partook. In academia, results are shared with colleagues. In corporate research on dolphins the results were not shared with the people in charge of the animals. As for education, trainers believe that most of the educational benefits to visitors came from the amount of time they spent on educating their guests (minus the programs that include an educational department component).

There was also a tension between trainer's perception of their underlying mission, which was the dolphin's well-being and happiness, and that of the corporation. There was much frustration on the part of trainers who wanted to implement new training or to introduce new toys and were told that they could not by management because it was not one of the immediate goals of the program.

Um, at Dolphin Fun in particular it was very hard because from when you got in until you left you just were consistently taking care of the animals and doing the programs. It was unfortunate that unless you were in a program you didn't have a lot of time to train the animals. So, it was basically feed, separate the animals, program, feed, separate the animals, program. That was the day.

(Interview #7:3)
However, the immediate goals primarily involved upkeep of the behaviors necessary for the programs and medical behaviors. There are few goals that focus on environmental enrichment, a big concern of trainers, or on ways to increase the dolphin’s level of enjoyment (like through new novel toys).

Trainers also found it difficult to have time to bond with the dolphins and build relationship.

The programs and husbandry come first. End of story. If you cannot uh find the time or do it in the proper way like us, if you want to give five pounds for training a new behavior you probably don’t want to do that prior to a session because then you are going to take away the attention and focus of the animals...uh, that is definitely a factor.

(Interview #1:21)

Many trainers tell of working on days off or staying late, so they could accomplish some of their personal goals for the dolphins. This was always done with some resentment. Trainers do not make very much money, and they work long hours. Many expressed wishes that the company would change their policies so that they would have time to work on what they saw as important to the dolphins.

2.3.6 Trainer Resistance

Trainers mostly feel that they do not have the power to stand up to the corporation. There was a difference between long term and short term employees. Trainers that had worked for more than two years said that they did speak up and share their opinion, whether it was popular or not. At a minimum, they always asked lots of questions, to at least begin to understand the nature of the decisions. The more inexperienced trainers said they spoke up only when they felt it was absolutely necessary; when a decision was being made that they did not agree with and felt strongly about. Or they spoke up but knew that it wouldn’t be listened to.
We would have to power to say hey maybe I think this. And then most likely it wouldn’t make a
difference but I have the power to say what I think but it probably wouldn’t make a difference in
their decisions...even as much as the supervisors that are often not out on the docks, but in the
back a lot of times. And they will come out and say okay we are going to do such and such for a
program. Meanwhile the trainers have all been there on the docks dealing with the animals and
knowing what is going on and you can say well I think you should maybe do this or what about
that and they will say no no no we are going to use these animals. So even up to that level I think
sometimes it would be nice (for trainer’s opinions to be counted). You know it doesn’t happen. It
doesn’t even trickle down the line sometimes, or back up the line.

(Interview #3:11)

Of course, many of the trainers did the most extreme thing they could do to resist,
which was to quit. Of the seven trainers interviewed, only one still works at Dolphin Fun.

Another major factor holding the trainers back from expressing their views was
the fact that most of the decisions of the corporation were based in science, so they felt
they had no grounds on which to base their personal views. Trainers felt that they could
not dispute decisions that were supported by veterinarians. Indeed, much of trainer
dislike for veterinarian decisions was based on dolphin’s behavior, something that was
somewhat qualitative. The trainers whole training and interaction was based partly in a
world of relationship building and emotions, something that the corporation did not
acknowledge. Trainers’ work was viewed by management as personal, with no scientific
foundation, and thus trainers were disenfranchised. Anything they had to say was
qualitative, non-scientific, and easily discredited.

Because if there is an issue, or a question I mean the trainers should be active thinkers and be able
to ask these questions to the vet.... but it has been a huge controversy in this industry because a lot
of people look at trainers as dimwits, they don’t know what they are doing, they are just out there
playing having a fun summer job. And most people nowadays are older and are doing it for a
career uh, and uh the hard part of it is it is hard to make a career out of it, the money the financial
side of it and your personal life but also you know you are putting yourself on the line for an
animal that needs your care. You have them in captivity. So you need that trust with them and to
have that open communication. Sometimes in any situation be it political you are going to have to
do some kind of balancing act, but uh I would like to see that happen.

(Interview #1:21)

Most resistance to corporate attitudes and practices by trainers was amongst
themselves. Supervisors are trainers with some management responsibilities and are close to trainers. One of the trainers I interviewed was a supervisor and three are or were senior trainers, meaning they had some management responsibilities and also that they were responsible for training new staff. Within this smaller circle all trainers felt that they could speak up, and did so as much as possible. This was especially true if the senior trainer was a female. They did not feel that it accomplished much, but at least they felt that they had a voice within this sub-group of the corporation.

2.4 Dolphin Behavior, Management and Trainers

2.4.1 Introduction

Animals as real actors have been left out of most scientific inquiries. Science has defined how we can talk about animal agency and free will and has generally viewed animals as fixed categories. The social sciences are just beginning to deal with the animal question, which involves opening the possibility that animals are capable of agency, free will, and resistance. However, animals have no voice that humans can understand, so it is difficult to engage them in research as active agents. Because they cannot speak for themselves, the main way to engage dolphins in this story is by looking at how their behavior affects interactions with them and decisions made about them. By responding to dolphin behavior dolphins are either made into important players or denied the right to any form of agency.

This section focuses on the role that dolphins play in mediating the relationship between corporation (management) and trainers. The main questions in this section are as follows:
- Do the trainers perceive the animals as capable of resistance and agency?
- How does the animal’s behavior affect the decisions made about them by the trainers and the corporation?
- How does the animal’s behavior affect the interaction between the trainers and the animals?
- How does the animal’s behavior affect the relationship between the trainers and the corporation?

2.4.2 Dolphins: Resistance and Freewill

When asked whether dolphins are capable of resistance and agency all of the trainers answered with an emphatic ‘yes’. Because dolphins somewhat regularly refuse to gate, or carry out their programs, all the trainers felt they were capable of resistance. Some of the trainers felt that every time they asked a dolphin to carry out an action, the dolphin chose whether to do it, and practiced free will constantly. “I mean they know what we are asking them, but every time a signal is given, they make a choice” (Interview #7:8). Other trainers felt that the dolphins were not able to exercise free will because of all the constraints placed on them. One trainer wondered how the strict control on spaces and especially on their food supply, affected their behavior and free will. Only one trainer was willing to speak about the food restrictions.

I think I mean at Dolphin Fun when things were going wrong with the animals we would half their dietary intake to make them more hungry and want to work for us, and I think that is mean. That is something we need to work through as trainers and that is where we never had a chance to say, hey can you just give us a day to work on this instead of coming back and telling us to cut their food.

(Interview # 6:13)

The trainer felt that it was the corporation’s way of dealing with any behavioral problem.
The same trainer felt that such problems could be solved if given time. This is a very touchy and quiet subject. Most trainers are not willing to discuss it, even after some gentle probing.

One dolphin in particular, whom we will call Rio, originally captured from the wild, came up in every interview as the problem dolphin. Some think she is mentally ill. Most thought she should not be in captivity, and that she was too smart for it.

I don't think she is really an animal that needs to be in captivity. I think she is just smarter than that. I think she is one animal that would be safe to say would be happier out of captivity. Which is really a bummer.

(Interview #5:13)

She has consistently had gating issues, has refused to do programs, and harassed new trainers, video, and camera people. I think without Rio, more trainers would have been willing to stereotype the dolphins as not capable of having such a level of resistance and free will. But she continually pushed all the trainers and tested their training skills and ideas about dolphin intelligence to new levels. She seemed to avoid space control by refusing to gate. When she had food withheld she would fish the lagoon on her own. She seemed intent on doing things her own way, and the trainers all had stories about her.

Another interesting point that came up in the interviews is the question of who was training who.

...some animals were more patient with you when you were first learning how to train, whereas some animals would train you, hey you had better shape up or else you are going to get fluked.

(Interview #6:12)

It is clear that the trainers with more experience achieve better training results. But those who were new and just learning training, almost think that the dolphins are training them. There were numerous stories of dolphins performing a behavior for a new
trainer, not getting the reinforcement they thought they should, and then leaving that trainer and refusing to participate, or demanding their reward aggressively.

There are several dolphins that only more experienced trainers could consistently work with, because they give newcomers a hard time. On the other hand, there are a few dolphins that everyone could work with without problems.

He (a dolphin) is...man’s best friend. He will do anything for you. Like, if any of them could get up on land and cruise around with you guys it would be him. Walking around, talking shop, cruising. Also, he is pretty tough individual you know. He had Rio as a mom who picked on him a lot and now he is not dominant so he still gets picked on a lot. But he doesn’t get bitter or upset, he just takes each one as it comes, he is awesome.

(Interview #4:9)

This points to the diversity of personalities within the dolphins and to what extent they practice their free will. Trainers said that just like humans, there were the people pleasers and those that did not really care much.

2.4.3 Dolphin Behavior and Dolphin-Trainer Interaction

All of the trainers agree that dolphin behavior did not really affect the corporate decisions unless dolphins were very ill, or refusing to participate in programs for an extended period. When the corporation did step in, the decisions were made from a scientific perspective.

For trainers, dolphin behavior is the important criteria. Reading dolphin body language, and other subtle clues, is a challenge for all trainers when they begin. Once experienced, trainers are able to use this information to train effectively and to interact at a new level with dolphins.

...you are reading their behavior too while training but it is like how they are interacting with you or other individuals or if they shy away from looking at certain animals or going in that direction. Yeah, what they do and why they do it...It takes time to learn everything. You can learn programs, but you have to learn how to work the animals, how to work the people, how to work both together, and trying to balance all that, it is hard.

(Interview #4:19)
Dolphin behavior is at the basis of all the decisions that trainers make about dolphins, from gating, training, medical care, to just playing with them. This is definitely an area of tension, a major difference between how the trainers viewed the dolphins and how the corporation viewed the dolphins.

2.4.4 Dolphin Behavior and Trainer-Dolphin Interaction

To the trainers, dolphin behavior is the significant factor. The type of relationship developed between dolphin and trainers is key to training, and this varies from dolphin to dolphin and from trainer to trainer. Some trainers report a dolphin will work great for them and they feel a special bond with that dolphin. Other trainers cited that same dolphin as their ‘challenging’ dolphin. I found it fascinating that some dolphins will only do certain behaviors for certain trainers.

Like I work Susy (dolphin) and she is just great and someone like Tiffany just has a hard time with her. Susy just goes away. So I think there is definitely a difference between trainers and animals and the relationships and comfort level and so many issues involved in that.

(Interview # 4:17)

There was a high level of complex relationships at Dolphin Fun. This type of behavior from the dolphins shows that they have likes and dislikes and are capable of forming strong bonds with some people but not others. Furthermore, this varied day to day, so that the dolphins were said to have good days and bad days, just like humans.

2.4.5 Dolphin Behavior and the Relationship Between Trainers and Management

Dolphin behavior affects the relationship between the trainers and the corporation in many ways. The main way involves sick dolphins, since this is when the corporation will take action based on the dolphin’s behavior. While the trainers were satisfied with most veterinary decisions, concern remained about birth control.
Putting an animal on birth control, or allowing an animal to get pregnant when they have oversized calves and have stillborns. I mean that is going to play a huge part on the animal’s psyche. And that is being anthropomorphic. So I don’t know what they are thinking or feeling, but you can definitely see a behavioral change and postpartum depression. That again is not a clinically proven thing but there is enough literature out there to kind of bring it to justice. Uh, and there have been decisions that I think they need to re-think. Like especially if an animal has a hypo or hyperthyroid, chances are their calves may be too large and they have problems. And so watching them go through those problems and the stillborns. That can be very difficult. And that could be a health thing that could be treated. There’s not enough known on dolphins yet and I am not the vet so I don’t know...but from my own personal experience in that seeing other people and other animals I would make that educated guess. But it may not be the right answer. But yeah there is definitely times when you don’t understand where it (the decisions) are coming from. Like breeding animals when you feel that you are maxed out in capacity. Which I think we are.

(Interview #1:28)

Trainers feel that the corporation undervalues the behavior of the dolphins in making decisions. This is in sharp contrast to the trainers who base their day to day activities on dolphin behavior.

I mean the company...as a whole weren’t there that often and often weren’t there when we needed them. So how could you possibly make these decisions when you don’t know the animals, you don’t work with them everyday. You really don’t know what is best for them because you really don’t know them.

(Interview # 2:15)

More importantly this corporate view on dolphin behavior set the context for how trainers spoke about dolphins. Trainers were afraid of talking about dolphins as though they were human. All but one trainer worried about this throughout the interviews. This worry about sounding anthropomorphic derived from the corporate environment in which it has been clearly established that the way to make decisions about dolphins had to be based on scientific understandings of them.

They are also trying to think of it from a business standpoint because they are their product. Animals are animals and they can withstand and withhold a lot, oh more issues or pain or whatever it may be better than we might. And they won’t think of things anthropomorphically. They think of things more scientifically, given their background.

(Interview #1:28)

Since most of the trainer’s opinions would be based in behavior, which was not scientific, they had no way to defend their opinions to the corporation. So in these
respects, the corporation's unwillingness to acknowledge dolphin behavior was an area of
difference between the corporation and the trainers.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the interviews were explored and mined for clues into the messy
world of human-animal relations that Dolphin Fun's trainers experience on a daily basis.
By looking at how the trainers talked about themselves, the corporation, and the dolphins
we begin to see the myriad of ways that the dolphins are placed, both conceptually and
materially. The story that arises is one of multiple contestations in the struggle to identify
and place the dolphins. The corporation uses the very powerful and seductive allure of
animal science, which claims to be the way to answer these questions at the borderlands.
The trainers in general find that view of the dolphins incomplete, and while they are
seduced by the concreteness that science has to offer, they find that it does not allow
them to fully explain the dolphins and their relationship with them. The trainers are stuck
in between the world of animal science and personal relationship, and their daily job
requires them to constantly navigate the boundaries between human-animal. The
dolphins themselves seem to refuse categorization, and the stories of dolphin agency and
resistance shake the foundational beliefs that the corporation through science have put in
place.

The next chapter will discuss these issues, and their ramifications will be
explored. By pulling from the theoretical work done on human-animal relations and
dualisms in general I hope to bring together a more holistic picture of what it means to
be working in the borderlands of human-animal relations. Hopefully this will illuminate
the complex world of the trainers and begin to show how science and the animals themselves play into these dynamic power struggles.
Chapter 3

Discussion and Conclusion

3.1 Introduction

Dualistic thinking is a powerful system of thought in the Western world. It defines how we think about ourselves and our place in the world. The nature-culture relation has been treated primarily as a dualism, and this is one leading cause of our modern environmental crises. Dualism's logic of otherness and negation "corresponds closely to classical propositional logic, the leading logical theory of modernity" (Plumwood, 1993). Because dualism's structure is similar to classical logic, "the logic of instrumental reason", it uses reason as the defining contrast to nature (Plumwood, 1993). Reason is associated with men, science, and master identities. Dualism's logic "yields a common conceptual framework which structures otherwise different categories of oppression" (Plumwood, 1993). Thus dualism's logic structures our thinking about race, gender, class, and nature. Through the exclusion of many groups from the master category of reason we can find the unifying trend between different systems of domination. They are all interrelated. Furthermore, dualism's logic has structured how we form western identities, and how identity's structure has become separate from nature.

The main goal of this research was to begin to find ways to break down the human-animal dualism so that new ways of interacting with animals could be discovered. This chapter will begin to explore dualism's role in this story at the borderlands, to see how dualism's logic contributes to multiple systems of domination, human-animal relations, and identity formation. After we have analyzed these areas, we will look at
how dualisms are beginning to break down at Dolphin Fun by looking at the concepts of relational self, situated knowledges, and the politics of care.

3.2 Multiple Systems of Domination

Dualism's structure is based on either/or mentality that is associated with positive and negative connotations. It simplifies and judges the world according to the master subject. Typically this master subject is a white, bourgeois, heterosexual man. The master subject is associated with rationality, while all others are typically associated with irrationality. The master subject is associated with the mind, while others are associated with the body. Masculinist rationality, a form of knowledge where the knower is separated from his body and social position therefore enabling him to have autonomous and objective thoughts (Rose, 1993), is at the base of domination of trainers at Dolphin Fun. It contributes to a sexist workplace environment, and through science works to silence the trainers and their non-scientific embodied knowledge.

3.2.1 Sexism

Masculinist rationality that transpired in the seventeenth century led us to “the formation of a world view and a science that...sanctioned the domination of both nature and woman” (Merchant, 1980). Because this idea is based on the notion that only man is capable of separating himself from his emotions and body, all others are viewed as incapable of participating in science and rationality. Historically women have been associated with nature, and men with culture.

...Western culture...privileges certain (i.e. ‘male’) attributes and properties (reason, abstract thought, mind, culture, production) above others (i.e. female) attributes and properties (emotion, concrete thought, the body, nature, reproduction).

(Barry, 1999)
At Dolphin Fun, trainers operate within multiple systems of domination that come from the outside through the corporation and from the inside through their own world views. They are expected to dominate dolphins through animal training, and in turn they are dominated by the corporation through patriarchy, science, and capitalism. In the interviews, all the female trainers identified a sexist workplace hierarchy that works to silence female trainers and prevents them from moving up the corporate ladder. They felt less empowered than the male trainers to stand up to management and voice their concerns. Management was usually male, and rarely let the female trainers participate in decision making processes. The male trainers felt more empowered to join this decision making process. Although they felt they were not listened to, they felt they could voice their opinions about the dolphins. The few female trainers who made it to management were more open to female trainer’s opinions. However, they still were not taken as seriously as the male trainers, and felt they had to prove themselves constantly, a concern I did not hear shared with any male supervisors I interviewed. For the male trainers, science and its strict rules of authority were primarily responsible for demarcating their opinions as trivial. For the female trainers, the empowerment to speak up and share their opinions was limited. The sexist workplace devalued their opinions, not because they were not trained scientists, but because they were women.

Dualism’s structure which influences culture-nature relations focuses on domination and exploitation of nature. However, “‘Nature’ in this context of domination is partly non-human nature…but it is also significantly much of humanity” (Birke, 1994). Thus domination of nature implies domination of women (and other humans, too). Male
trainers are devalued because they have not received proper scientific training, but the female trainers seemed to be primarily devalued because they are female. Dualism's hierarchal structure is built into human-animal relations at Dolphin Fun, where humans are master over animals, but men are still master over women.

3.2.2 Science

From the sixteenth to seventeenth century there was a change in the view of nature from one of intrinsic value to one of instrumental value. Nature was seen as a storehouse of raw materials for human use, a view that still persists today. Dolphin Fun benefits from this world view of nature by using dolphins as commodities for business opportunities. Nature is only useful as it applies to furthering human interests. The corporation at Dolphin Fun is profit-driven, the animal’s well-being is considered secondary to the use of animals as commodity, swimming, breathing money-makers.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth century nature became viewed as a machine, something to be taken apart and studied through science.

Science was seen as unlocking the secrets of nature, developing new insights into its inner workings, and in conjunction with technology provided more effective ways in which humans could exploit it.”

(Barry, 1999)

Science and rationality provided the vehicle for this new endeavor. Through the concept of rationality “…science since the seventeenth century has been widely considered to be objective, value-free, context-free knowledge of the external world” (Merchant, 1980). Science has become the way to explain nature, and yet science has high requirements for legitimacy. In fact “scientific facts’ are often thrown up in opposition to community-based and ‘amateur-collected’ evidence” (Seager, 1993). Again, it is important to note
that there are many different sciences. Many are not operating under these paradigms. However, at Dolphin Fun, the corporation uses science as the way to frame discussions about dolphins. One outcome of this is that trainer’s non-scientific embodied knowledge of dolphins is discredited.

The corporation at Dolphin Fun works to indoctrinate its trainers and the public about nature and dolphins. By thoroughly using the language and ideology of science the corporation has a powerful tool in shaping both trainers and the public. Dolphin Fun and many other modern marine mammal facilities profit from an unproblematic view of nature through science. The science that the corporation is utilizing reflects dualistic thought that reinforces the human-animal divide.

3.3 Human-Animal Nature-Culture Dualisms

Historically scientific study of animals has concluded that “animals are ‘mere’ biology, puppets of their genes” (Birke, 1994), they do not have rationality, agency, or feelings. These are things that only humans are capable of. Humans are culture, animals are nature. However, since women have been historically associated with nature, women too have been defined from biological standpoints, something that feminists argue strongly against. By attempting to resist this biological determination, a move has been made to delineate women away from nature.

In rejecting biological determinism (however right our arguments may be), while not questioning what that means for and how it depends on particular ideas of animals, we are setting ourselves up as different from/superior to/apart from them; the assumption that our behavior has very little to do with biology is aligned with one saying that theirs has everything to do with their biology. (Birke, 1994)

By setting up animals as radically different than humans, we set them up as ‘others’ that are defined by their biology. We use these ‘others’ to define what is meant to be fully
human, by an association of everything that they are not.

Viewing animals as outside the human sphere has affected animals and how they are placed in human’s worldviews. At Dolphin Fun, this is played out through narratives on captivity and breeding. After discussing these narratives, I will then move to basic definitions of what it means to be human, and how Dolphin Fun’s trainers are using ideas of self/other and human/animal to define their identities.

3.3.1 Corporate Narratives on Captivity and Breeding

Defining animals by their biology, an idea that came from scientific research, has provided the basis for the human-animal divide. This powerful discourse of the definition of animal based on scientific fact is used to influence the public’s view of captive dolphins. The public, through popular understandings of science, is told that science makes captivity possible through careful management of dolphins through animal husbandry. Science makes the interactions possible through training, which is based in the study of animal behavior. Training permits a bond to develop between humans (trainers) and dolphins that gives the latter happiness and environmental enrichment. Further, through animal husbandry and the study of animal behavior, research is being done that will help to save real wild dolphins. As Susan Davies (1997) points out, “research always appears as a neutral and positive activity; it is never presented as controversial or problematic.” The emphasis is on the wonders of science that is made possible through dolphins in captivity, and this emphasis backgrounds the fact that wild marine mammals are being captured, held, and used as a commodity. In this view animals are defined as a:
…resource empty of its own purposes or meanings, and hence available to be annexed for the purposes of those supposedly identified with reason or intellect, and to be conceived and molded in relation to these purposes. 

(Plumwood, 1993)

Consistent with dualistic thinking, dolphins are the background against which science is allowed to achieve its results. Dolphins are seen as objects of scientific inquiry, not as subjects. This view of dolphins as objects defined by their biology creates a view of dolphins as fixed entities. This view leads them to be studied from a species standpoint, not as individuals. In studying the animals at Dolphin Fun, individuals are left out of the picture. In breeding captive animals, the assumption is that those captive bred animals could be released back into the wild to replenish dwindling populations. Because all individuals within a species are essentially viewed as the same, and therefore replaceable, this is a widespread unproblematic idea of fixing our wildlife population loss.

Dolphin Fun’s breeding program expounds the same logic. The dolphins born in captivity could someday be used to replenish wild stocks. However, it is well known that without major effort in limiting human contact, captive animals released into the wild do not survive.

A November 1992 report of the Canadian Advisory Committee on Marine Mammals concludes that the release of whales and dolphins that have been in marine life parks for extended periods is "inappropriate." 

(www.ammpa.org)

The individuals in captivity have changed; they are not the same as their wild counterparts. Dolphin Fun as a corporation is benefiting from these assumptions about their breeding program and the nature of animals. It masks the larger picture that dolphins are being bred for publicity and for profit.
3.3.2 Identity, self/Other

Human identity is tied into ideas about self/Other. Using the logic of dualisms, humans define themselves by what they are not. As with all dualisms, it is not just that humans are different, it is that we are superior and the animals are inferior. "Separating ourselves from 'animals' becomes a statement of our sovereignty over nature" (Birke, 1994). The trainers own hierarchies viewed dolphins as below humans but above other animals. At the same time, most of the trainers said that their fundamental identities had changed after working with the dolphins. They thought of the dolphins as friends and family. They said that the dolphins had taught them about themselves. It can be concluded that working with dolphins and developing relationships with them leads to fundamental changes to one's idea about self. I argue that this has led the trainers to think of themselves more from a relational self, which Plumwood (1993) describes as:

The individual conceived in terms of mutuality is formed by, bound to and in interaction with others through a rich set of relationships which are essential to and not incidental to his or her projects. Nevertheless he or she can and must remain a distinct individual, separated but not hyperseparated...The reciprocity and mutuality which form such a self are not only compatible with but actually require the existence of others who are distinct and not merged...on which the interplay of self and other is based. 

(Original emphasis)

Although trainers at Dolphin Fun place dolphins below humans in the hierarchical scheme, they recognize that their experience with them has changed who they are as individuals, which in turn leads them to re-think what they thought was possible as 'animal'. Thus all trainers agree that dolphins are active subjects with free will which leads trainers to recognize that dolphins are more than just their biology. By beginning to view themselves from a more 'relational self' the trainers are beginning to accept a non-dualistic way of viewing animal others.
3.4 Resolution of Dualisms

The resolution of dualistic thinking is a difficult task. However, given the state of the modern world, it is necessary that we begin to practice a new way of viewing nature that does not include domination. Dualism’s structure is either/or, black and white. It depends on rigid definitions of separation. Hence all animals are viewed as their biology. However, if we start to break away from these idealized definitions of what it means to be animal/human, we can begin to see interconnections. “(I)f we are only somewhat different than other animals (instead of absolutely different), then we are also somewhat similar” (Birke and Parisi, 1999). This process can be started by expanding the category animal, to show that animals are more than their biology, that they have capabilities for agency.

3.4.1 Animal Agency

The arguments about possible animal agency are linked to ideas about science, intentionality, and rationality. Among geographers studying the animal question, there is a reluctance to grant agency to animals. The division between transgression and resistance is one way in which this is played out. Cresswell defines resistance and transgression as follows:

Resistance seems to imply intention-purposeful action directed against some disliked entity with the intention of changing it or lessening its effect...Transgression, in distinction to resistance, does not... rest on the intentions of actors but on the results-on the ‘being noticed’ of a particular action...Transgression is judged by those who react to it, while resistance rests on the intentions of the actor(s).

(in Philo, 1998)

Animal transgressions have been the focus of geographical research, but resistance has not really been studied, for resistance implies agency (see Griffiths, Poulter, and Sibley,
Until animal agency is taken into account we will continue to view animals from a dualistic perspective. Haraway (1991) claims that “coming to terms with the agency of the ‘objects’ studied is the only way to avoid gross error and false knowledge of many kinds in these sciences.”

There are two areas of concern here. The first is refusing to grant animal’s agency, the second is discrediting those people who work closely with animals, but are not trained scientists. Animal studies have often “operated with a hierarchy of knowledge positioning the amateur’s local knowledge or ‘wisdom’ as less valuable than the more general formulations of the biological sciences” (Philo and Wilbert, 2000). One way of changing the dualistic ideals that some science is utilizing is to recognize local knowledge claims. These views should begin to be studied and legitimized if we are to move away from dualistic informed science.

At Dolphin Fun, trainers work with dolphins on an intense daily basis, and have developed extensive local knowledge about those individual dolphins. Therefore they have a legitimate voice for these animals. Trainers believe that dolphins practice resistance. For example, dolphins know what gating means. They are asked to gate numerous times throughout the day. If a dolphin refuses to gate, that dolphin is practicing resistance to the space control that is imposed on her/him.

Stories about training provide more examples of resistance. In these stories, dolphins often appeared to control much of the training. Not only do dolphins know the behavior, but they know the criteria for the behavior, and know what their reward should be. If a proper reward is not forthcoming, dolphins respond behaviorally. A dolphin
might become aggressive or refuse to participate because they did not receive the
deserved reward, demonstrating a high level of intelligence. Trainers also talk about how
dolphins constantly push their boundaries. To do this dolphins have to know what those
boundaries are with each different trainer. Again, a high level of intelligence, memory,
and decision making skills come into play. Clearly these animals are not automatons;
they have the capabilities to learn, adapt, and manipulate their environments. These
animals have agency.

Another way that animals are limited to their biology is in the idea that only
humans are capable of culture. However, animals “could themselves be thought about in
terms of social construction, thus challenging the human/animal binary at the heart of
biological determinism” (Birke and Parisi, 1999). This kind of research is already
beginning to happen with higher mammals. At Dolphin Fun, dolphins show a high level
of social construction. Dolphins demonstrate that they have preferences and that they
make decisions based on these preferences. This is a dynamic process as dolphin
preferences for each other, for trainers, and for certain activities change day to day.
These examples illustrate that dolphin worlds are based on factors besides just biology.
This has the potential to challenge the nature/culture binary, instead of preferring the
‘biology’ side of the dualism, experiences with dolphins could encourage us to think
about nature/cultures as connected, integrated, mutually constituting arenas.

If wilderness is often seen as “the transcendent sign and site of the radical
otherness of a nature without a past; an immaculate space defiled by any taint of human
presence” (Whatmore, 2002) and captive dolphins are considered wild animals, then
trainers are working to present another picture of wild animals. This picture is one in which dolphins are shown to have pasts, to have social bonds, to have likes and dislikes, and to be capable of forming relationships with humans. Instead of representing a distant Other, they become closer to the self.

3.4.2 Situated Knowledges

Allowing the possibility for animal agency is just one way in which to break away from dualistic thinking that views animals as outside/inferior to humans and culture. After allowing that objects can be actors with agency, it is necessary to go further and redefine modern rationality. Modern rationality is based in the idea that man is capable of using disembodied objective vision to discover nature's secrets. Rather than discard this idea of vision, Haraway (1991) claims that:

Vision can be good for avoiding binary oppositions. I would like to insist on the embodied nature of all vision, and so reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere.

This embodied vision is partial and has limited voice. It is particular rather than claiming to be universal in nature. It takes account of multiple subject positions and the knowledges of the subjugated. Situated knowledges:

...require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor or agent, not a screen or a ground or a resource...Accounts of a 'real' world do not, then, depend on a logic of 'discovery', but on a power-charged social relation of 'conversation'.

(Haraway, 1991)

The emphasis on embodied experience is important. At Dolphin Fun, trainers have learned how to utilize non-verbal body language for communication with dolphins through the principles of training. Although training has a dubious background, based on principles of domination, there is no question of the importance of body language, both
human and animal. Positive reinforcement as a training method uses non-verbal communication to effectively communicate across species. This non-verbal bodily communication is essential, because for now, it is all we have with animal others. However, it is partial, and by definition provides us with a limited voice to talk about animals. This communication provides us with a possible example of situated knowledges. It requires that we view trainer’s knowledges as legitimate and dolphins as active agents. It emphasizes conversation between species rather than closing off the possibility of human/animal communication.

This emphasis on non-verbal communication is important, both because it validates trainer perspectives on dolphins and because it grounds our discussion on dolphin agency, based on the trainer’s perspectives. By acknowledging that there is the potential for practicing non-verbal communication through body language with animal others we open up a space with which to rethink our relationships with animals that does not rely on dualistic thinking and idealized categories of human/animal.

The emphasis on communication between dolphins and trainers has focused on training. However, I argue that it is through care-giving that Dolphin Fun’s trainers are able to learn how to communicate with dolphins and see them as active agents. Care giving offers us an alternative way to be in the world that is not based on the principles of dualistic thought.

3.4.3 Politics of Care

Joan Tronto has thoroughly analyzed the politics of care. She defines care as follows:

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On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.

She defines care as a practice that involves thought and action that includes four phases: caring about, taking care of, care-giving, and care-receiving. ‘Caring about’ involves recognizing a need for care in the first place. ‘Taking care of’ involves a sense of responsibility and agency, beginning to determine how to take care of a given need. ‘Care-giving’ involves the physical work of meeting the needs for care. ‘Care-receiving’ involves the notion that the object (or subject) receiving the care will respond to the care that is being given. Care is usually considered as a marginal part of our daily lives, one that is traditionally associated with the private, and with women. However, Tronto argues that care can be a means to transform political and social thinking, especially about the ‘Other’, because of the way it brings these concepts back to the lived daily life. It adds concreteness to our thoughts because it involves practice, and that practice introduces values into everyday life.

At Dolphin Fun, all trainers identified themselves as caregivers for dolphins. I argue that trainers are practicing all four aspects of care for dolphins; they are active agents daily practicing care for dolphins. The corporation I would argue is only practicing caring about and taking care of, since they recognize dolphin’s needs (caring about), they put money and staff resources into meeting those needs (taking care of), but they do not actually participate in the care-giving, and since dolphin behavior rarely effects their decisions, they do not respond to care-receiving. As Tronto (1993) points out, it is only through care-receiving that one can assess the adequacy of the care being
I argue that it is through caring for dolphins that trainers are able to develop such strong cross-species relationships. The care that they give daily involves practices that lead trainers to relate to dolphins on a profound level. By striving to meet dolphin needs, trainers become aware of the dolphin’s personal idiosyncrasies and the larger social structure within which dolphins act. It is through care that some trainers become important to individual dolphins, as some dolphins respond positively to only certain trainers. Those trainers then seem to feel more personally responsible towards that particular dolphin.

There are many levels at work here besides the personal. The trainers also extend the ethic of care to a more general level through promoting dolphin needs to the corporation, and through educating the public about dolphins and their conservation. I argue that what makes the trainer’s education to the public potentially so powerful is that first and foremost it is passionate and personal. Trainers educate from the heart, and share with the public their intimate knowledge about dolphins. This demonstrates to the public that dolphins are involved in complex social relationships, not just with other dolphins, but with humans as well. This breakdown of the human-animal divide has the potential to lead the public to question the separation of themselves and other animals too, not just dolphins. Second, trainers translate their passion for the particular dolphins at Dolphin Fun into an ethic of care for all dolphins. “By focusing on care, we focus on the process by which life is sustained, we focus on human actors acting.” (Tronto, 1993). This example of action by trainers potentially leads the public into action as well.
This education about human-animal relations involving dolphins has the potential for visitors to see how there may be an interdependence between humans and animals. Through the interactions with dolphins, the public is able to imagine another definition of animal that is based on their subjectivity, a feat that could have far reaching effects. The public, motivated by their experiences may take political actions of care that have the potential to extend beyond the private, into the public. I would argue that if done successfully trainers convince the public to become a part of this work of caregiving.

It is also important to note the possibility that the dolphins are also caring for their trainers. If they are viewed as active agents than certainly this possibility exists. Most of their behavior could be explained away by animal behavior theory, stating that they perform their behaviors and show affinities for certain trainers solely based on food and reward. However, this leaves something incomplete, and talking to the trainers who feel special bonds with certain dolphins leads one to believe that the feeling is not one-sided. If we entertain the notion that dolphin behavior is more than just behavioral responses to stimulus, then it opens up room to allow dolphin behavior to be explained at least partially by the care they practice towards their trainers. Not only do they perform the desired behaviors for their trainers, but they also show them affection and attention. This would in turn be fulfilling a need in the trainers to be successful animal trainers, both on a professional level and an emotional level. Are the dolphins capable of recognizing this need in the trainers and then acting on it? That is a question that needs further evaluation, but the possibility must be left open.
3.5 Conclusion

Dualistic thinking is a powerful thought system in the Western world that contains the conceptual framework for many different kinds of oppressions. The aim of this research was two-fold. First, by studying the logic of dualistic thinking I was able to explore the myriad of ways that dualistic thinking informs human-animal relations at Dolphin Fun. Dualism’s structure, which is the unifying tie in many forms of oppression, led the trainers to work under multiple systems of domination which included sexism and science. Dualistic views of animals as products of their biology supports corporate narratives on dolphins in captivity and breeding. This view also reinforces a superior human identity, since animals are nature, we are culture.

Second, this research project studied how dualisms are being resolved through new ways of viewing animal others. This alternative view, fostered through a politics of care, views dolphins as active agents. It has led trainers to begin to develop a more relational identity which recognizes mutuality with other animals. Because dolphins are viewed as capable of agency, and humans are viewed as similar to nature, an embodied partial communication has developed between trainers and dolphins that provides us with a possible example of situated knowledges and opens up a way to communicate with animal others.

The overall goal of this research project is to investigate new ways of viewing animals that is not based on dualistic thinking. There are three main ways that trainers at Dolphin Fun are breaking down dualistic thinking. I argue that through the politics of care, the trainers are viewing dolphins as capable of agency, viewing themselves from a
relational self, and fostering embodied non-verbal communication.

This work of caregiving and developing strong relationships with the dolphins has led the trainers to begin to break away from scientific thinking about animals that views them as fixed objects. Dualistic thinking views humans as unique in this world; we are the only ones capable of culture and rational thought. “Animals’ bodies and lives remain mired in the bogs of pure biology, while human minds miraculously make the escape” (Birke, 1994). To view animals as active agents breaks away from this thinking. Hopefully it is clear that the dolphins at Dolphin Fun are intelligent individuals with the ability for agency and resistance. The stories trainers told go beyond mere chance and show that dolphins regularly practice free will and resistance to the systems of control that are placed on them. Dolphins are capable of high levels of decision making and have personalities that differ from dolphin to dolphin. They have the ability to bond strongly with humans, but not all humans equally, just as they do with other dolphins. They are subjects and objects, just like humans.

It is through the act of giving care to the dolphins that trainers recognize that dolphins are important in their lives. Because of this, trainers have begun to develop a more relational identity which recognizes mutuality with other animals. This relational identity recognizes both kinship and difference, and because it is based on empathy with nature it also resists the domination of nature. As Plumwood (1993) points out, “The resolution of dualism requires, not just recognition of difference, but recognition of a complex, interacting pattern of both continuity and difference.” This recognition of difference and continuity disrupts usual dualistic thought that posits humans as different
and superior to animals. Instead of an either/or situation, it opens up space in which we can all co-exist on mutual ground.

Dualistic thinking based in rational thought views dolphins as objects. Haraway (1991) has called for a new definition of rationality that views objects of science as having agency and uses the metaphor of conversation instead of discovery. These embodied situated knowledges have the potential to replace this type of universal science where it is still practiced. Although a partial perspective, it allows for "a better politics and a better science" (Birke and Parisi, 1999). I argue that an example of this concept of situated knowledges is occurring at Dolphin Fun through the development of a non-verbal communication with dolphins. Although partial and embodied, it is nonetheless a powerful tool with which to open cross-species communication. This cross-species communication could be a valuable tool in understanding more about animals. The people who work in fields that require them to interact with animals on a daily basis should be encouraged to foster this communication, as it could be a powerful way with which to re-think our relationships with animal others.

Lastly, the work of care is a practice; it is an active ongoing embodied work. Because caregiving has led trainers to break away from dualistic thinking it sets a great example for the public. The public sees new possibilities of human-animal relationships that involve cross-species relationships and a new view of animals as subjects. This powerful education has the potential to break down dualistic thinking and to create a vision of human animal relations that involves interdependence. The practice of caregiving sets an engaged example to the public of political action against the
domination of nature that has the potential to reach across many scales, from the private household to public arenas.

Another goal of this research was to bring the research back to ‘real world’ suggestions that could help foster non-dualistic thinking and that would benefit the trainers and dolphins at Dolphin Fun, and also others working in an animal field. The trainer’s main emphasis of working with dolphins was education, and because of this I feel that this research can show them the possibility of how powerful their personal education can be to the public. Hopefully I made my case for a deeper education that has as its purpose a goal of re-thinking human-animal dualisms. By fostering and emphasizing the embodied non-verbal communication that trainers and dolphins are capable of sustaining, I also wish to support them in their endeavors of cross-species relationships. Because the corporation devalues their opinions, it is important for them to feel that the work they are doing is important. Although they receive positive feedback from dolphins and the public, from the interviews it is clear that at a deeper level the struggle to defend their thoughts and feelings about dolphins wears them down. This valuing of their intimate knowledge and communication with dolphins will hopefully lead them to see their work with new eyes and more personal empowerment. With a renewed job enthusiasm and a sense of the importance of their work, trainers are less likely to quit their job. This in turn would benefit dolphins as well, since trainers must also be their friends and family and certainly they are their voice. With wildlife everywhere threatened, we need these humans who are working in human-animal borderland politics, who have the potential, if fostered, to show us a new view of animals.
Dolphin Fun’s trainers and others who work intimately with animals have the potential to teach us about new ways of viewing animals that does not depend on their domination. Even in a corporate environment like Dolphin Fun, trainers are fostering ways to relate to dolphins that does not involve dualistic thinking. By concentrating on these ‘local’ knowledges about animals, we can find new ways to think about animals from the people who know them best. Their ability to communicate with animals from their close work of caregiving is something that should be encouraged and further studied. When human animal communication is accepted, dualistic thinking will fundamentally be disrupted. Furthermore, the politics of care, shown by example, not only leads us out of dualistic thinking but shows us the possibility of a new politics that emphasizes interconnectedness.
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