

# How does veterinary expertise become contested ?



## Session 2, Constructing and Contesting Veterinary Expertise: Professionals, Publics, and Prospects, 5-7 July 2022

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# Presentations in this session . . .



## Contesting the Spaces of Veterinary Expertise: Veterinary Journeys into Animal Research

Dr Alistair Anderson  
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## Careful Epidemiology and Evolving Disease Ecologies: Contesting Veterinary Expertise in Bovine Tuberculosis

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## Identity, Gender, and Tracking: The Reality of Boundaries for Veterinary Students

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## Constructing and contesting veterinary vaccines

**Professor Pru Hobson-West**  
School of Sociology and Social  
Policy; and School of Veterinary  
Medicine and Science

# Observations and Inferences ...

- Variety in veterinary expertise
  - Contestation varies, too
- Professionalization amongst veterinarians in various roles
  - “Named Veterinary Surgeons” vis-à-vis **farmed animals** with **corporate** owners
  - Veterinary education, specialization, and **gender** identities
  - Compassion and cultivation of skepticism regarding official statistics and maps, as **practiced** by veterinarians vis-à-vis “bovine tuberculosis” (bTB) – with farmers and with one another
  - In popular culture, resistance to infections and to institutions (e.g., biomedicine) now encompasses **organized resistance** to vaccinating people’s pets

# Organized resistance to vaccinating people's pets ...

Constructing and  
contesting veterinary  
vaccines

Professor Pru Hobson-West  
School of Sociology and Social  
Policy; and School of Veterinary  
Medicine and Science

- Q: “does vet[erinary] medicine illuminate a potential **consumerist future for human medicine** or [human] vaccination? (n.b., my emphasis)
  - as per Hobson-West and Jutel 2020; Hobson-West 2022...
- A: Yes !
  - + **veterinary expertise** already applies to human health (e.g., vaccinating dogs versus rabies)
  - + **consumerism** vis-a-vis **veterinary expertise** already **amplifies** and **reflects** consumerism in **healthcare by humans** and for humans

# What kinds of Knowledge Wield Power?

## Compare: Empower + Tactical Resistance to institutions

### Careful Epidemiology and Evolving Disease Ecologies: Contesting Veterinary Expertise in Bovine Tuberculosis

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I used to be a  
proper vet

- Farmyards, rural landscapes akin to ‘house calls’ and ‘clinical rounds’ for these veterinarians
  - Clinical reasoning includes statistics
  - Statistics don’t determine clinical reasoning
  - Units of analysis include farmers and livestock
- 2 kinds of knowledge in French:
  - **Savoir**
    - Knowing that something is scientifically false, or true
    - E.g., Cartography, mathematics, microbiology...
  - **Connaître**
    - Knowing first-hand, from embodied experience
    - Knowing about people and places

# Animality, Gendered Identities, and Career Trajectories in Veterinary Schools

## Identity, Gender, and Tracking: The Reality of Boundaries for Veterinary Students

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## **IDENTITY, GENDER, AND TRACKING**

THE REALITY OF BOUNDARIES FOR VETERINARY STUDENTS



Jenny R. Vermilya

- Amongst veterinarians and veterinary students, whose knowledge reflects and reproduces privilege?
- What happens to animals themselves, as humans operate in stratified systems?
- What about humans as animals, ourselves?

# “Am I that name?”

(Shakespeare’s *Othello*, especially as elaborated by feminist theoretician, D. Riley, 1988)



“President Theodore Roosevelt signed two historic bills aimed at regulating the food and drug industries into law on June 30, 1906.... Sinclair’s novel “The Jungle”...helped spur the public outrage that led to the legislation.”

The New York Times. (2016, June 30). Upton Sinclair, Whose Muckraking Changed the Meat Industry.

- “A **Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS)** is a veterinary surgeon specified on the Establishment Licence to provide advice on the welfare and treatment of the animals kept at the establishment,”
  - So says The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (UK) – see website
- Recruitment, retention issues for (highly-)qualified veterinarians in ‘food production’ reliant on farmed animals
  - Career stage? Gender? Family, region of origin?
- Many people seem prepared – even eager – to eat farmed animals, and to feed bits of farmed animals to their pets
  - Few of this multitude respectfully recognize that veterinary medicine – as a profession – contributes to a ‘safe supply’ of animal-sourced food for human and non-human beings

# Abductive reasoning – in ethnographic research and in shoe-leather epidemiology



Department of Anthropology,. (2017).  
Honoring Professor Emeritus Michael Agar.  
University of Maryland.

<https://anth.umd.edu/feature/honoring-professor-emeritus-michael-agar>

- **Shoe-leather epidemiology** aligns with **qualitative** and **quantitative** inferences in the **ethnographic** tradition
  - **Abductive** thinking is central, and crucial (Agar, 2006 with reference to Peirce, 1906)
  - Today, epidemiology usually entails statistical analysis and inferences, as a “style of reasoning” (Hacking, 1990, 1992)
  - Even so, the evidence for decisions informed by epidemiology never have been purely quantitative or “data driven,” as some say
    - Policy decisions in and outside governments.
    - Medicine and allied professions
    - Veterinary medicine and allied professions



# Dr John Snow had help with “his” famous map, as a physician and shoe-leather epidemiologist

Dr Snow collaborated closely with a certain Reverend Whitehead

Johnson, S. B. (2006). *The Ghost Map*. Penguin.



John Snow's cholera map of Soho. Click image to embiggen

How often does a map change the world? In 1854, one produced by Doctor John Snow, altered it forever.

Rogers, S. (2013, March 15). John Snow's data journalism: The cholera map that changed the world. *The Guardian*.

<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/mar/15/john-snow-cholera-map>

- “We” remember **Dr Snow**
- “We” forgot about **Reverend Whitehead**
- And what, “we” might ask, of a **Mrs Whitehead**?
  - Johnson (2007) doesn't mention such a person
  - Yet, a clergyman without a ‘spouse in the house’ in that time and place seems unlikely (to me)
  - Ethnographers’ **wives**, similarly, often assisted (read: collaborated) in fieldwork and analysis
    - Without so much as co-authorship credit, until at least the 1960s in sociocultural anthropology
    - Throughout the British Empire and beyond
- And how about other residents of the neighbourhood?
  - Children often help ethnographers, directly and indirectly

# Multi-species research and ethnographic prospects



Hamilton, L., & Taylor, N. (2017).  
*Ethnography after Humanism:  
Power, Politics and Method in Multi-Species  
Research*. Springer.

**Hamilton and Taylor (2017)** want to see radical transformations in ethnographic ‘social research’ + ethology

- Contest a tendency to ‘frame out’ non-human beings in conflating ‘social’ with humankind
- Call for an expansion in tools, techniques, and thinking so as to consider **non-human ways of being**
- Resist the term “multi-species ethnography”
  - Why? Partly because oft-cited proponents of that term (namely, Kirksey and Helmreich) have not advocated consistently for non-human animals in their own research

# Multi-species ethnography and textual materials



Hamilton, L., & Taylor, N. (2017). *Ethnography after Humanism: Power, Politics and Method in Multi-Species Research*. Springer.

- ✓ Hamilton & Taylor (2017) have written the best methodology textbook 'ever' for multi-species research, in my opinion
- Just 2 concerns arise for me:
  - 1) Within anthropology (unlike sociology), primatologists had already wrestled with how to document and discuss multi-species interactions (e.g., Lestel, Brunois & Gaunet, 2006)
  - 2) Multi-species ethnographers can focus on textual materials
    - 1) Maps, webpages, etc. crucial to study professionalization and institutionalization vis-à-vis non-human beings
    - 2) How are non-human beings represented?
    - 3) What happens to human and non-human beings, as a result of being represented and misrepresented?
- Today, I consider myself a **multi-species ethnographer** even when I focus on textual materials in governance
  - Rock, 2017; Rock & Blue, 2020 cf. Rock & Babinec, 2009

**Audience members:**

**Thank you for your attention, and  
for spending time with us today.**

**Now, over to you...**

Also, the presenters have provided contact information,  
should you wish to reach out to them directly.

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