

INTERSPECIES PERSPECTIVES ON DECENT WORK:

**INEQUALITIES AND NEW SOLIDARITIES IN WORK BETWEEN PEOPLE AND EQUIDS
(PART OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW SEMINAR SERIES 2023)**

This digital booklet brings together the discussions that took place at a (free) online seminar series in May/June 2023, sponsored by The Sociological Review Foundation.

The series aimed to reframe our understanding of work as an interspecies endeavour, via a focus on the shared work undertaken by people and equids (horses, donkeys and mules). Comprising two separate but related events, the series brought together more than eighty academics and practitioners, from across different geographic regions and time zones.

Horses, donkeys and mules have long toiled alongside humans, contributing significantly to human societies and development, but their labour has been largely absent from academic and policy discussions about work. Seminar participants discussed what decent work for equids might look like, and how integrating them into our thinking might in turn challenge our understanding of what decent work means in theory and practice.

This is our shared attempt to capture the keynotes, panel sessions and wide-ranging conversations that they stimulated among everyone present. At the heart of the booklet are four illustrations by illustrator Jenny Leonard, who joined us throughout the series. Each illustration is accompanied by summaries of the presentations to which it relates.

We would like to thank all the keynotes, presenters and other participants, together with Jenny Leonard for capturing our discussions and the Sociological Review Foundation for enabling us all to come together.

We hope you find ideas and inspiration in the pages that follow. We also hope that this seminar series will stimulate discussion and opportunities for further collaboration and action among a wider audience. If you would like to join us, please visit our website or get in touch by email.



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INEQUALITIES & NEW SOLIDARITIES IN WORK BETWEEN PEOPLE & EQUIDS

GLOBAL STANDARDS FOR WORKING EQUIDS ARE POOR

• HEAT STRESS
• LONG HOURS

DEVELOPING BETTER UNDERSTANDING



"HORSES ARE OUR RELATIVES"

HORSES AS WORK MATES

THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS HAS AN EFFECT ON WELFARE

SILENT COMMUNICATION

THE LANGUAGE WE USE SHAPES OUR EXPERIENCE

ETHICS?

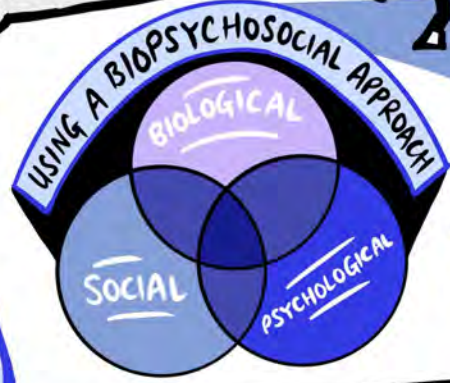
UNPAID MEMBER OF THE WORK FORCE!

INSTRUMENTAL OWNERS

TRANSPORT A TOOL
WORK COMMODITY

IS IT BINARY?

ANARCHIZING? SPECIESISM



INTERSPECIES KINSHIP
RECOGNISING SUBTLE SIGNS

AFFECTIVE OWNERS

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

THE BOND BETWEEN THE OWNERS & THEIR EQUID

CULTURE & CONTEXT INTERDEPENDENCE

SHARED WORK & SHARED SUFFERING



INVISIBILITY, DOMINION, PATRIARCHY, & POLITICS.

5 DOMAINS OF ANIMAL WELFARE

NUTRITION ENVIRONMENT HEALTH BEHAVIOUR

MENTAL DOMAIN

WELFARE STATE

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SHARED WORK? WORKING EQUIDS AND WORKING PEOPLE: HOW TRANSIENCE AND MARGINALISATION SHAPES RELATIONSHIPS AND IMPACTS WELFARE

Tamlin Watson (The Donkey Sanctuary) - KEYNOTE

The interdependence between working equids and humans may lead to a strong bond, and when relationships are supported by owners with an affective perspective the equid's welfare may be better. However, this interconnectedness is limited and fragile due to factors such as socio-economic pressures, humanitarian crises, cultural stigma, lack of autonomy, and limited capacity. The transitory nature of these relationships makes interactions challenging, and both equids and humans often experience marginalisation. Working equids are often perceived as commodities where they are bought and sold on a whim, and factors like incompatibility, conflicting expectations, health issues, and unacceptable behaviours affect the equids' long-term welfare. Additionally, frequent changes in handlers, companions, and environments require equids to adapt and display resilience beyond their control. Similarly, humans involved in this relationship lack agency in many situations. Within most marginalised communities where working equid use is prevalent owners are sometimes bonded into their employ or at the very least too poor to have economic options, so they too are without substantial agency, just as their equid counterparts. Shared work and shared suffering bind these communities and their animals and will continue to do so until there is the political and societal will to implement change.

DOES OWNER CONCEPTUALISATION OF EQUIDS IN SHARED WORK INFLUENCE EQUID WELFARE?

Emily Haddy (Brooke Action for Working Horses & Donkeys) - KEYNOTE

Despite the fact that working equids are vital to the livelihoods of millions of people, standards of working equid welfare globally are poor. To improve welfare levels, we need to understand the variety of factors influencing working equids. This wider context includes both environmental and human factors such as the quality of the relationship between an equid and its owner.

This study explored the relationship between owner attitudes towards their equid and equid welfare state across 6 countries. The way owners referred to their equid when asked the question 'what does your equid mean to you?' revealed two main perspectives. Instrumental owners framed their responses in terms of work, seeing the equid as a tool used to help achieve the goal of completing work. Affective owners framed their answer in terms of an emotional connection to their animal, seeing their equid as a partner in the shared endeavour of work. These perspectives were associated with equid welfare measures: overall the general health status and body condition of equids whose owners showed an affective perspective were significantly better than those whose owners showed an instrumental perspective. This evidence suggests that owner conceptualisation of equids in shared work influences equid welfare.

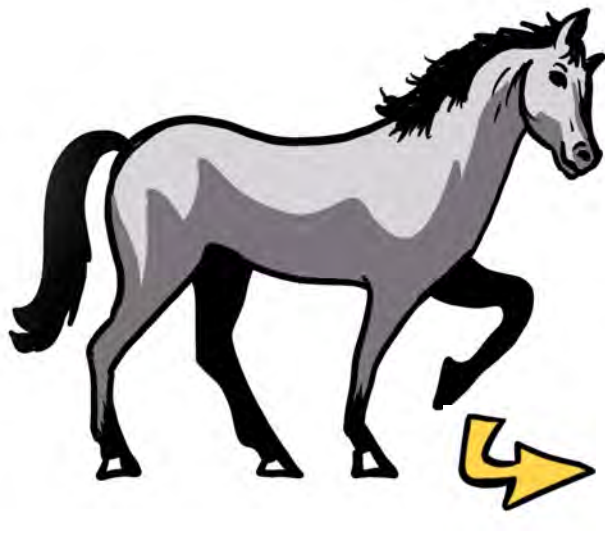
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AN EQUAL PARTNERSHIP? CONSIDERING THE WELFARE OF EQUINES IN EQUINE ASSISTED SERVICES

Anna Haines and Amy Dearlove
(The Mare and Foal Sanctuary, UK)

The Mare and Foal Sanctuary offers Equine Assisted Services with both a person-centred and equine-centred approach. As an equine welfare charity, our horses' and ponies' needs are paramount. Our equines are equal partners in our team. In this presentation the methodology and benefits of this to both the equines and the practice are outlined. Including how through a variety of techniques, such as a biopsychosocial approach to care, optimum equine welfare can be achieved. Furthermore, we discuss the impact of language use and the social licensing on attitudes towards equine assisted services.



WE WANT WORKMATES THAT ARE OLD, EXPERIENCED, AND CALM: RIDING INSTRUCTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF HORSES IN ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Gabriella Thorell Palmquist, Annika Rosén
& Susanna Hedenborg (RS Strömsholm and
Malmö University, Sweden)

Swedish riding schools involve younger children in their activities, which require adjustments in horse training and suitability. This presentation explored riding instructors' perceptions of horses' roles in these activities. The study was drawing on Critical Animal Studies, incorporating interviews with instructors and observations of lessons. Results showed the instructors' conscientious horse selection for this purpose. Young children with relatives were posing safety risks, prompting instructors to maintain control. Instructors were prioritising calmness in horses, while age was more important than size. They were emphasising the importance of mental rest for horses between activities and were highlighting Swedish horse industry regulations ensuring horse welfare.

CONSIDERING INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS AND ETHICS REGARDING HUMAN-EQUINE COLLABORATION

Roisin Seifert (University of British
Columbia Okanagan, Canada)

This presentation reflected on the ethical challenges and opportunities of doing community serving academic work to support and document Indigenous human-horse (re)connections in Canada. There is a significant power-differential and general contrast in worldviews pertaining to human-animal interactions between euro-western University culture - itself fundamentally tied to ongoing colonial structures - and Indigenous cultures. An encounter with university animal ethics requirements, including a requirement for Indigenous horse knowledge holders to complete general animal ethics training provided an interesting point of illustration. This highlighted a type of structural barrier to marginalised peoples participation in knowledge creation. This also raises challenging questions around ethnocentrism and decolonization in arbitrating the ethical engagement of equids (and other animals) in academic and other 'work.'

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INTERSPECIES SOLIDARITY: THE EQUID FUNDAMENTALS

Kendra Coulter (Huron University College, Canada) - KEYNOTE

I developed the concept of interspecies solidarity (2016) as an invitation to reassess and strengthen human-animal relationships within and beyond formal workplaces and disrupt business as usual to take animals' interests seriously. Interspecies solidarity is a process and a destination, one that is rooted in empathy but that must extend into compassion and more ethical action at interpersonal, organisational, and, ideally, political levels. It is not a synonym for all acts of kindness towards animals nor a monolithic blueprint, but a rather context specific opportunity and challenge.

The concept is highly relevant to and applicable in equine cultures and organisations, and its use means thinking more carefully and with more care about horses' work and work-lives, that is, their physical, psychological, and social wellbeing beyond their jobs, on a daily basis and over the course of their lives. Horses and other equids are positioned in complex cultural, legal, geographic, socioeconomic, and political locations the world over. To recognise this diversity, I propose a complementary term, the horse harm spectrum, a conceptual and practical lens to reflect and magnify both the illegal and legal threats to horses. Because interspecies solidarity means caring about and working for horses and other animals, period, not just those whose names we know.



DONKEYS AT EVENTS: BETWEEN THREATS TO WELFARE AND CONSERVATION

Carlos Monterrubio (Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, Mexico)

This presentation analyses the complexities of human-donkey interactions in tourism events in Mexico, where the donkey population has decreased considerably. Based on ethnographic work at the Feria Nacional del Burro (National Donkey Fair) in Mexico, the observations reveal that donkeys are used and presented for entertainment and tourism consumption in a way in which full compliance with the principles of animal welfare may be questioned. However, they also suggest that in societies in which the species is in danger, its presentation in tourism and events may function as a way to promote human awareness about the care and conservation of the species, much of which is socially and culturally defined.

VIOLENCE IN ANIMAL ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS

Astou Maraszto (University of Vienna, Austria)

In this presentation I shared an excerpt of my Bachelor's Thesis on "Violence in Animal Assisted Interventions." In my thesis, I analysed a fictive horse assisted therapy situation to find different social and pedagogical concepts in it. The state of research on the role of the working animal in an intervention was mainly based on the question if animals can be seen as professionals or volunteers in their work. One of the conclusions to optimise the animals' work independently of their role was the implementation of naturally given behaviours and positive reinforcement during the interventions which is why I sketched the state of research on horses' learning behaviour as well as research on equine language signs. An important aspect I found was the gap between scientific and practical work around horses. Another main finding was the similarity of "authoritarianism" to traditional horse handling methods.



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UNVEILING PERSPECTIVES ON WORKING EQUIDS AND DECENT WORK: A SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

Naeem Abbas (Brooke Pakistan) KEYNOTE

This presentation focuses on the socio-economic value and cultural significance of working equids, advocating for decent work for both humans and animals. It highlights their roles in transportation, cultural events, and community cohesion, while addressing the importance of ethical treatment and occupational health and safety. It challenges misconceptions and emphasises the economic contributions of working equids, as well as the role of grassroots organisations and policy reforms. Collaboration and awareness are emphasised as key to improving their well-being and rights, fostering an inclusive and compassionate society.

HORSES: WORKING COMPANIONS

Barbara Turk Niska (Tampere University, Finland)

In family agricultural economy in Slovenia, horses and oxen used to be working animals until the mechanisation of agricultural work in the second half of 20th century and were important participants in a community which formed around work in a network of relations through mutual help and reciprocity. Both horses and oxen were treated as companions at work, yet horses held a privileged position compared to oxen. Life history interviews and childhood memories reveal that the work of horses was not limited to production activities linked to transforming the environment or providing for one's own needs, it also related to the production of multi-species ties, collaboration, sociality, and the conditions of shared life (Porcher and Estebanez 2019).



POST-WORK UTOPIA! MAKING SPACE FOR CHALLENGING WORK-CENTRIC WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING AND ORGANISING PRODUCTIVE HUMAN-EQUID RELATIONSHIPS

Harriet Clarke (University of Birmingham, UK)

Employment dominates modern social and political activity around our work as humans reflecting a (paid-)work centric culture (including notions that work is good for you, and that the worthy work). These messages hide harms that paid and unpaid work can (re)produce. Equids have similarly been represented as being hardwired for labour, that being "in work" is the ideal – often without critical evaluation of its value to the "worker." Levitas' (2013) Utopia as Method can support us to imagine alternatives for less oppressive and more sustainable futures, supporting greater visibility for – and work to support – ethical and productive human-horse relationships.

"RETIRED RACEHORSES" TRANSITIONING TO "SECOND CAREERS" - EXPLORING DECENT WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF THOROUGHBRED RACEHORSE AFTERCARE

Jo Hockenull (University of Bristol & Royal Veterinary College, UK)

Racehorses spend their early lives working with, and for humans, for the prestige of their owners, trainers and jockeys, and for public entertainment. What happens to horses when they retire from racing is under increasing scrutiny. The financial worth, and consequently often the welfare, of former racehorses becomes intrinsically linked with their capacity to work and the work-related talent they possess. Physical and behavioural consequences of their first career in racing may impact their ability to succeed in their subsequent roles. The concept of decent work is very relevant to considering the lives of thoroughbred racehorses, both during and after their racing careers.



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LEARNING & GROWING TOGETHER IN SAFER SPACES FOR HUMANS & EQUIDS

LEAST INVASIVE - MINIMALLY AVERSIVE

INTESECTIONALITY

GENDERING OF INTERSPECIES LABOUR

CLASSIFIED AS 'PROPERTY'

EMPLOYED FOR MANUAL LABOUR

MALE DONKEYS IN THE CITIES

BUT CALLING ALL DONKEYS 'SHE'

LIKE FUNCTIONAL VEHICLES!

DONKEYS RESIST NEGOTIATE COLLABORATE

AS WORKERS WITH HUMANS

POWER DYNAMIC

ECHOS LACK OF ATTENTION TO WOMEN'S WORK!

AGENCY?

DIMENSIONS OF SHARED WORK

OPPOSING VIEWS

ETHICS OF CARE?

HORSES AS WAR HEROES!



EMPATHY FOR EQUID WELFARE

LEGAL LOOP HOLES

EATEN AS A DELICACY!

WHERE STRAY HORSES ARE SOLD

AT AUCTION

LAW TO... PROHIBIT KNOWN SALE OF HORSES FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

CROSS OVER WITH HOW LAND IS MANAGED - CONSERVATION?

ANTHROPOMORPHISM CHALLENGE

'SAFEGUARDING' TO PROTECT & PROMOTE JUSTICE

EVERYONE HAS AN OPINION, A CAMERA & A PLATFORM TO SHARE!

PUBLIC CONCERN FOR WELFARE

EXPLOITATION? LICENCE TO OPERATE?

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HOOF WORK: THE FEMINISATION OF DONKEYS IN CENTRAL ETHIOPIA

Martha Geiger (University of Warwick)
KEYNOTE

Donkeys in central Ethiopia are vital co-workers for many women, especially those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. My research explores how this interspecies co-working relationship materialises within gender divisions of labour. Women do reproductive labour in rural areas with male and female donkeys. Men employ only male donkeys in urban areas in profitable sectors but refer to all donkeys as “she.” Using a more-than-human intersectional approach, I investigated the labour performed by donkeys with humans at the intersections of human gender (masculine/feminine) and class (low/high income) and donkey sex (male/female) using a comparative analysis of rural and urban environments. Analysis illuminated how intertwined donkey and human lives are and how material circumstances and discursive norms reinforce each other: both women and donkeys experience sexism, subjugation; their lower economic and societal positioning devalues both groups, leading to sustained normalisation within communities that poor treatment is acceptable or tolerable. Women and donkeys are aligned and Othered, differentiated from men, resulting in the feminisation of donkeys and mutual marginalisation of women and donkeys. When women challenge gendered divisions of labour and work with male donkeys outside the home in cities, they face consequences such as alienation and stigmatisation from their families and wider communities.

FROM WAR HEROES TO FOOD: A JOURNEY FROM A DECENT WORKER TO DISPOSABLE FOOD IN THE US

Altamush Saeed (Lewis and Clark Law School, US)

*“What was our share in the sinning,
That we must share the doom?
What had we done, our Masters,
That you sold us onto Hell”* (The Horses by Katherine Lee Bates)

Horses are symbols of freedom, independence and triumph in the US. Horses participated in the Revolutionary War of 1776, the Civil War of 1865 and the World Wars on behalf of the United States. However, in the 20th century, the status of horses from war heroes shifted to that of food. Now, those same horses who carried food and symbolised hope are being slaughtered en mas for food. The number of horses the United States exported for slaughter peaked at 345,700 in 1990. In 2007, a bipartisan effort in Congress ended domestic slaughter, and the United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) prohibited any funding for federal meat inspectors at horse slaughter sites. However, a number of loopholes continue to allow buyers, which are highlighted in this presentation, to purchase horses in the U.S. only to send them to slaughter across the Mexican and Canadian borders.

Donkeys in central Ethiopia are vital co-workers for many women, especially those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.



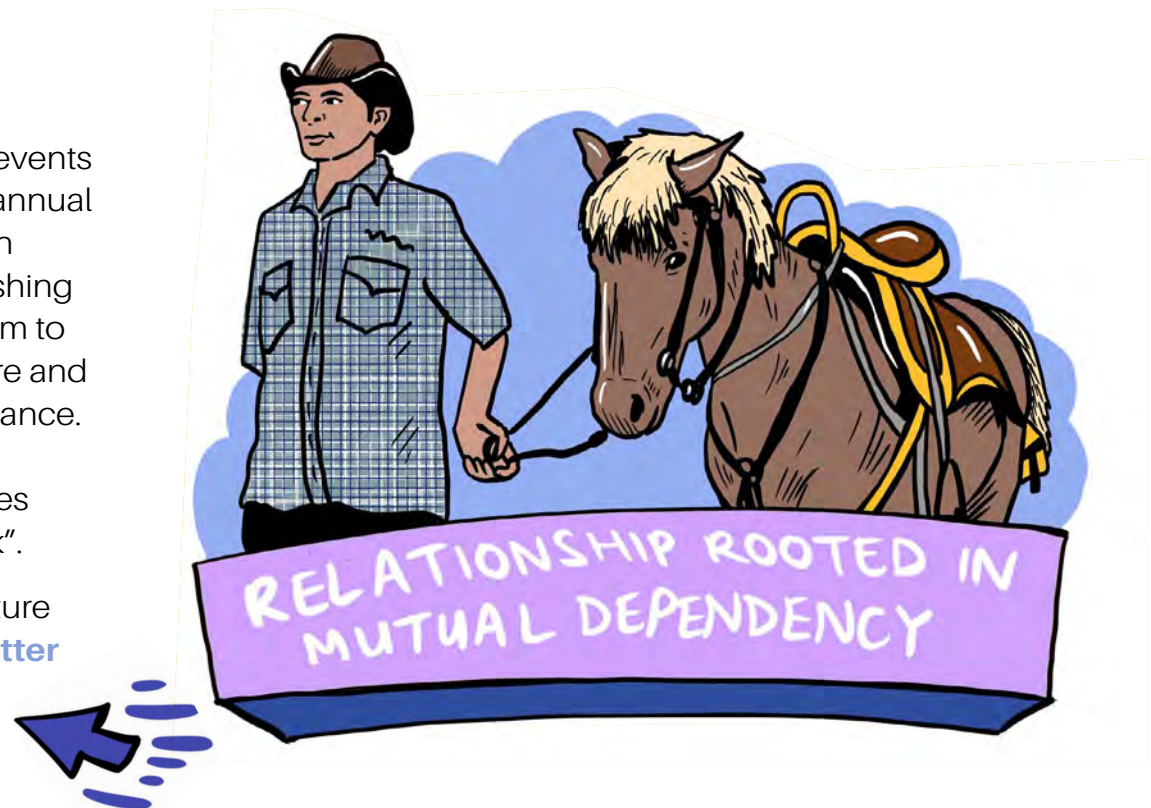
THE GOOD LIFE? AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPLORATION OF DECENT WORK IN THE UK HORSE-HUMAN COMMUNITY

Debbie Busby (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK)

In this presentation I asked, “what’s in it for the horse?”, advocating for and valuing a recognition and respect of the horse’s agency and the protection of their health, wellbeing and rights to enable them to live decent working lives free from harm, abuse and neglect. My work as a clinical behaviourist provides a rich experiential insight into the nuances and complexities of the interspecies struggles and successes that make up the lifeworld of the dyad and I explore this relationship with the aim of transforming the experience of both species into one of co-created understanding and flourishing.

The Sociological Review Foundation supported these events via its Sociological Review Seminar Series grants. This annual programme funds in-person, online and hybrid research seminars and/or symposia on subjects within the publishing interests of The Sociological Review journal, and that aim to bring together established and new researchers to share and produce imaginative work of cultural and social significance. In awarding funding to this initiative, the judging panel commended its “original and timely proposal [that] raises important questions about how we conceptualise work”.

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