

For the Liberation of the Animal Nations: Examining Activist Framing of the Radical
Animal Liberation Movement in North America

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
August 2015

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DEDICATION

*For Matthew, my beloved husband, who fills my life with inspiration, hope, and joy;
to all who fight passionately for the liberation of animals, the earth and humanity; and
to all beings who suffer and die in captivity.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	iv
Abstract	v
List of Abbreviations Used	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	7
Background	7
RALM Tactics and the Radical Flank Effect.....	11
Who is the Real Terrorist?	13
On Violence	14
Social Justice and the RALM	17
Ideological Inclusion and Intersections in the RALM.....	20
(Another) Anarchistic Politics and Total Liberation	22
Ecofeminism	23
Examining the RALM from Activist Perspectives	26
Chapter 3: Research Design	28
Data Collection	28
Strategy for Analysis.....	32
Chapter 4: Data Analysis	37
Diagnostic frames, or “Why we fight”	38
Prognostic Frames, or ‘What is to be done?’	52
Motivational Frames	79
Toward New Understandings of the RALM.....	88
Chapter 5: Conclusion	91
References	104

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: ALF Guidelines	9
Table 3.1: Types, Source and Number of Documents Analyzed.....	30

ABSTRACT

Through a qualitative content analysis of documents gleaned from the Animal Liberation Front, Earthling Liberation Kollektive, and Grassroots Ontario Animal Liberation network websites and Facebook pages, I explore how the frames of activists in the North American radical animal liberation movement (RALM) intersect with frames developed by other radical social movements. Drawing on Robert Benford and David Snow's work on collective action framing, I investigate how RALM activists portray diagnostic, prognostic and motivational social movement frames. The radical/ecofeminist concept of intersectionality is found to be highly influential in RALM frames, depicting common roots of oppression between animals, the earth, and humans, particularly Indigenous peoples, prisoners, and women. RALM activist critiques of hierarchy, state power, capitalism and the prison industrial complex reflect similar anarchistic movement frames. Despite such broad understandings demonstrated by many activists, some activists also express misogynistic and racist views, contributing to the ongoing isolation of the movement. Overall, however, my research suggests that although some barriers exist, the RALM has the potential to join with other movements to achieve common goals.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

AETA	Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act
ALF	Animal Liberation Front
EF!	EarthFirst!
ELF	Earth Liberation Front
ELK	Earthling Liberation Kollektive
FLA	Frente de Liberación Animal
FLT	Frente de Liberación de la Tierra
GOAL	Grassroots Ontario Animal Liberation network
HALT	Hamilton/Halton Animal Liberation Team
KOALA	Kitchener Ontario Animal Liberation Alliance
MAD	Marineland Animal Defense
PIC	Prison Industrial Complex
RALM	Radical Animal Liberation Movement

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Howard Ramos, for his willingness to take on an unknown, idealistic IDS major, for his wisdom, guidance and humor throughout this intense and challenging year, and for the positive and constructive support which encouraged me to grow as a student, teaching assistant, researcher, and writer. Many thanks also to Dr. Alex Khasnabish, thesis committee member, for his thoughtful and enthusiastic encouragement and feedback over the past year, and for being an inspiration both as an activist and as an academic. Thanks to Dr. Fiona Martin for offering helpful, detailed and wise revisions, and for being willing to take this on in a very limited timeframe.

I would also like to extend my warm thanks to Dr. Liesl Gambold, a brilliant teacher and a kind soul who has been a great support. Her friendship and the many laughs we shared throughout my TA-ship and as a student in her ethnography class were a highlight of my experience at Dal. Thanks to Dr. Liz Fitting for her advice and feedback throughout the graduate seminar. I am also grateful to Dr. Jim Conley from Trent University, whose kind recommendation and advice enabled my career at Dalhousie.

To my family – Christina, Polly, Mom, Dad, Kim, Mike and Chris, thanks for believing in me and sharing my successes. Much gratitude to my beloved and departed Granny and Grandpa Quick, whose generosity made this year of school financially possible. You were strong believers in the value of education, and I know you would be happy and proud of me for pursuing this degree.

Thanks to my fellow graduate students and friends at Dalhousie, especially Emily, Jason, Cassidy, Joy, Haley, Ulysses and Dani, for the friendship, advice and many good Times we shared, and to friends near and far who sent their good wishes and support throughout the year. A special thanks to my dear friend Che, the cool cat who graciously allows us to share his home. Your affectionate company through many long nights of writing was so precious.

My deepest appreciation and thanks to all the activists whose words gave life to this thesis, and to all who struggle against coercive power, capitalism, prejudice, cruelty, exploitation and the destruction of the earth - your bravery and compassion changes the world.

And lastly, but always first in my heart, my endless gratitude and love to my soulmate Matthew. Your own compassionate, critical and politically engaged research and passion for academia inspired me to try graduate school. You helped me to become a better and more authentic writer, believed in my abilities even when I didn't, and sustained me with your love, contagious laughter, and epic music. You remind me every day of the beauty, truth and magic of life.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

To some, Radical Animal Liberation Movement (RALM) activists are inspiring and exemplify bravery and idealism, for others they represent a threatening vision of misanthropic, misguided vigilantism. It is difficult, however, to understand the true nature of what motivates RALM activism and what it is comprised of because many of the movement's activists largely remain in the shadows. They cannot reveal their identity nor speak with mainstream media for fear of state surveillance and arrest because many of their actions are deemed illegal.

The result is that the views of activists on the purpose, strategies and goals of the RALM, and the ideology that informs the movement, is to a great extent unknown or misunderstood by others. Unable to relate to ideas of animal liberation because of their own dependence on animals for food, clothing, entertainment, and medical experimentation, many North Americans buy into the portrayals of the RALM that are dictated by governments and animal industry lobbyists and trumpeted by corporate-owned media, which portray RALM activists as violent, chaos-seeking domestic terrorists (Amster 2006; Sorenson 2011). The FBI refers to the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) as a top domestic terror threat (Berthiaume 2011; McCoy 2008). In Canada, a recent anti-terrorism strategy implemented by the Conservative regime offers a warning about 'extremist' animal rights and environmentalist groups who may use violent tactics (Public Safety Canada 2012). Many in the mainstream animal welfare and animal rights communities decry the RALM or seek to distance themselves from it for fear of being tainted by the association (Best 2014; Francione & Garner 2010). Other social justice movements also dismiss the animal liberation movement for its presumed irrelevance to

concerns about human injustices (Adams 1993; Boggs 2011; Llorente 2011; Luke 2007). A small but dedicated few defend RALM activists, arguing that they do not incite fear or use violence to achieve their aims, but rather are engaging in a desperate but compassionate campaign to end animal cruelty and suffering while opposing the injustices of state power, capitalist exploitation, and hierarchy (Amster 2006; Best & Nocella 2004; Boggs 2011; Nocella, Sorenson, Socha & Matsuoka 2014). Yet, the voices of activists themselves remain largely unheard, as silent as the animals they seek to defend. Therefore, there is a need for research that examines how RALM activists frame animal liberation and how the purpose, strategies and goals of the movement overlap with those of other social movements, in order to prevent its continued isolation.

A preliminary source of insight into the strategic and ideological approaches that shape the RALM's purpose, strategies and goals may be found by examining their chosen forms of organization and activism. Several connections between the methods and analyses made by other radical movements, namely anarchism and ecofeminism, are revealed in a brief glimpse into RALM activism. Notably, the grassroots groups that operate in the public eye are organized in a non-hierarchical fashion and use consensus-based modes of decision-making, which have a long tradition of use among anarchistic and radical feminist circles (Dixon 2012; Graeber 2009). Clandestine activists who engage in direct forms of protest (for example sabotage) against animal industries, do so in autonomous, leaderless 'cells' of activists who know and trust one another, reminiscent of anarchistic and radical feminist affinity groups (Day 2005; Hansen 2001). Like anarchists and radical- and ecofeminists, RALM activists' engagement in activism that directly challenges and undermines the broad economic and social structures that confine,

harm, and slaughter animals and humans alike, opposing capitalism, consumerism and state-corporate corruption, the destruction of ecosystems, and wealthy, white male-dominated state power. This radical approach circumvents the typical public protests and petitioning that have become the hallmarks of mainstream animal rights activism (Best 2014; Francione 1996; Munro 2005). Yet, because few studies attempt to directly examine the views of individual activists in the RALM (Liddick 2006; Pellow 2014; Scarce 1990), there is still much to be learned about how RALM activists envision the problems, goals, strategies, and motivations of animal liberation. For this reason, my thesis seeks to give voice to those who devote their lives to defending animals through their work in the RALM, in order that others, including academics, policymakers, and activists from other social justice movements, might better understand what is currently a much-maligned and isolated movement. By exploring the ways in which the RALM shares goals and strategies with other contemporary movements, I propose that in fact, the RALM is not the single-issue movement that it is commonly assumed to be, but rather a broadly anarchistic, anti-capitalist, ecological movement informed by an intersectional analysis of the ways in which dichotomous hierarchies such as species, race and gender create barriers to collective liberation.

To do this, I engaged in a qualitative content analysis of the collective action frames expressed by activists in the North American RALM. My research was guided by social movement literature built on the concept of framing, which offers an influential model to reveal how activists construct social movement goals, strategies, and motivation (Snow & Benford 1992, Benford & Snow 2000). The problem of how to determine the perspectives of activists with whom I could not actually speak, for ethical as well as

practical reasons, was circumvented by analysing documents gathered from activist websites in North America. As many scholars of social movement activity have noted, online environments are increasingly important in linking activists, communicating ideology, and mobilizing activism (Castells 2012; Earl & Rolhinger 2012; Stoddart, Ramos & Tindall 2015). Activist websites for three RALM groups were selected for my analysis: two grassroots groups from Canada, the Earthling Liberation Kollektive (ELK) and the Grassroots Ontario Animal Liberation (GOAL) network, as well as Canadian, Mexican and American branches of the ALF, the name used by autonomous cells of clandestine animal liberation activists who engage in direct action campaigns against animal enterprises.

By interpreting interviews, essays, communiqués and statements of activists posted online I sought to answer three core questions. Most importantly, what are RALM activist frames, and how do they draw on or intersect with those produced by other antiauthoritarian movements such as radical/ecofeminism and anarchism? A secondary question is, how do these frames engage or depart from the mainstream ‘rights’ approach to animal advocacy? And last, (understanding that many within the realm of radical politics and social justice advocacy dismiss animal liberation), how do these frames form potential ideological barriers or opportunities that either perpetuate the isolation of the RALM or offer opportunities for movement - building?

The main objective of this study, therefore, is to engage in a systematic analysis of how RALM activists conceive animal liberation as a movement goal, and what methods and motivations are used to achieve this goal, while acknowledging both the connections to other contemporary movements as well as limitations to movement-

building. I aim that this contribution to existing research on the RALM will, in a small way, aid in dispelling the dominant view of the RALM as a single-issue movement irrelevant to other liberatory struggles.

My thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2, which follows this introductory chapter, offers a review of scholarly work on animal right and liberation as well as social movement literature. It first delves into the background of the RALM and its tempestuous relationship with the mainstream animal rights movement. Subsequent sections explore the accusations of terrorism and violence against the movement. The chapter also examines shared goals of the RALM and other social justice movements and offers a preliminary look at how anarchistic and ecofeminist ideas are reflected in RALM organizational forms, strategies, and critiques of speciesist power hierarchies.

Chapter 3 describes my research design, first explaining how and why the groups, websites and documents analyzed were selected. I then recount the coding processes I applied to interpret the data. The chapter closes with a review of how the social movements literature's concept of framing will be used to guide my analysis of activist perspectives.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of those documents and is divided into three sections, modelled on Benford and Snow's (2000) conception of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational collective action frames. Diagnostic frames reveal how activists view the causes and problems associated with the exploitation of animals through radical critiques of environmental degradation, capitalism, consumerism, colonialism and sexism. Prognostic frames explore how activists conceive direct action as a battle against the coercive power of the state, as a way to prefigure a better world, as an alternative to

mainstream reformism, and emphasize the need to engage in solidarity with other social justice struggles, especially prison abolition. And, motivational framing illustrates the urgency of the goal of animal liberation for activists, and offers insight into how activists incite others to join their cause.

Chapter 5, the conclusion, offers a summary of how the findings specifically answer three research questions that drive my analysis and highlight opportunities for movement-building that emerge from the analysis. I conclude by arguing that despite some barriers, such as a dislike of rights-based animal advocacy, RALM framing shares much in common with frames used by anarchistic, anti-capitalist and ecofeminist movements, attempting to create positive social change through its strong critique, and fearless defiance, of unjust power relations that underlie the widespread suffering of animals, the earth and humans.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present a brief history of the Radical Animal Liberation Movement (RALM), beginning with the formation of its most well-known assembly of activists, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Although the ALF is not the first group to utilize radical strategies for animal liberation, in the contemporary world it is the largest and most widespread presence in the RALM (Best & Nocella 2004). The chapter next examines how the RALM differs from the mainstream animal rights movement, particularly in its approach to activism and reviews the largely negative constructions of the RALM in the academic literature and the repression of the RALM by corporate lobbyists, legislators and the mainstream media. I then touch on how the RALM is understood by its sympathizers as deeply connected to other social movements such as abolition and earth liberation. I also review how anarchist and ecofeminist ideologies contribute to animal liberation theory, and end the chapter by discussing the need for research on the RALM that explores how contemporary activists frame the purpose, strategies and goals of animal liberation.

Background

The RALM began in England in 1964 out of growing activist dissatisfaction with the slow progress and inefficiencies of mainstream animal welfare and rights groups such as the RSPCA and anti-vivisection groups (Molland 2004, p. 67). Activist John Prestige began the direct action-oriented Hunt Saboteurs Association, which sought to disrupt hunting and save the lives of wild animals with tactics such as leading hounds off the trail by distracting them with food (Molland 2004, p. 68). A decade later, a group of activists led by Ronnie Lee separated from the Hunt Saboteurs to form the Band of Mercy, naming

themselves after the Victorian youth groups of the RSPCA led by Catherine Smithies, an antislavery activist (Nocella et al 2014, *xxix*). The Band of Mercy's goal was not merely to disrupt hunts already in progress but rather to prevent them from taking place at all. This was accomplished by disabling hunting vehicles and weapons, leaving behind communiqués informing owners of the reason for the sabotage and an explanation of animal liberation. After two years of such actions, the Band of Mercy turned their attention to the issue of vivisection and burned down a newly constructed animal testing laboratory, causing £26,000 in damages (Molland 2004, p. 69). From 1971 to 1974 the Band of Mercy, comprised of a group of six friends, burned sealing boats, raided vivisection labs and breeding farms, and sabotaged laboratories before two of the activists, Ronnie Lee and Cliff Goodman were arrested and sent to prison. Upon his release one year later, Lee gathered the group together and began a new, more revolutionary movement, the ALF.

Since the 1970s, ALF activism spread across the world, now operating in every populated continent and in more than 80 countries (ALF 2015). The ALF is not a typical group, having no formal leadership or members, and is more accurately described as an ideological umbrella under which autonomous leaderless cells take action (Nocella et al 2014). Any activist following ALF guidelines may consider themselves part of the ALF (see Table 2.1). In order to provide a public source of information about ALF actions, various ALF press offices have emerged, where Press Officers, who are supporters or former activists of the ALF, post communiqués, press releases, essays, interviews and other activist information on ALF Press Office websites (Fitzgerald & Pellow 2014). These posts serve as motivation and inspiration for future activists, and seek to explain

and contextualize the actions of the ALF to the public and media. One of the purposes of websites is to aid the public in understanding the differences between mainstream animal rights philosophy and activism and the RALM, a subject I engage in the following section.

Table 2.1: ALF Guidelines
1. To liberate animals from places of abuse, i.e., laboratories, factory farms, fur farms, etc., and place them in good homes where they may live out their natural lives, free from suffering.
2. To inflict economic damage to those who profit from the misery and exploitation of animals.
3. To reveal the horror and atrocities committed against animals behind locked doors, by performing direct actions and liberations.
4. To take all necessary precautions against harming any animal, human and non-human.
5. Any group of people who are vegetarians or vegans and who carry out actions according to these guidelines have the right to regard themselves as part of the Animal Liberation Front.

Confusion about the ideological differences between the RALM and mainstream animal rights and welfare groups are quite common in media, public perception, and academic literature (Gaarder 2011; Groves 2001; Liddick 2006). The conflation of mainstream and radical is extremely problematic because it obscures significant differences in the ideological and strategic approaches of both movements, and ignores the similarities between the RALM and other progressive social justice struggles (Best 2014; Grubbs & Loadenthal 2014; Sanbonmatsu 2011). Despite the fact that some

activists within both the rights and liberation movements use the terms interchangeably (Best & Nocella 2004), there is a clear distinction.

Mainstream animal rights groups generally follow some version of the utilitarian and rights approaches proposed by influential animal advocacy philosophers Singer (1975) and Regan (1983) who propose modified and restricted forms of animal use, but not total animal liberation. Even animal rights theorists who propose the total abolition of animal use (Francione 2004) envision this happening through a widespread public conversion to veganism, rather than through any radical change to existing social, cultural and economic systems. These groups advocate for legal rights to be granted to animals, relying on lobbying, petitions, traditional protests, and letter-writing campaigns to persuade legislators and companies to change their ways (Munro 2005), while placing most of the responsibility for animal suffering on the average person's buying habits.

In contrast, animal liberationists argue for radical changes to current political, economic and social structures that oppress animals, and view grassroots social movements, rather than states, as the most important actors in creating more equitable relationships with animals (Luke 2007). For liberationists no amount of 'cruelty free' consumerism or animal welfare reform will ever free animals from human exploitation, and therefore direct action must be taken to free animals and damage the industries which exploit them. Animal rights philosophers tend to condemn the RALM as harmful to the animal advocacy movement because of the negative media response to their actions, and argue that real change can only occur by appealing to consumers, rather than by attacking producers (Francione 2004; Regan 2004; Singer 1975). Animal liberationists in turn express frustration with the rights movement for what they understand as veiled

consumerism, moral crusading and inaction (Best 2014). In the next section, I discuss how RALM activists depart from the mainstream animal rights movement through their use of direct action tactics.

RALM Tactics and the Radical Flank Effect

RALM activists often engage in direct action as a means to achieving the goal of animal liberation. Related to the notion of confrontational forms of contentious politics (Tilly & Tarrow 2007), direct action is any act in defiance of the state that directly creates social change without negotiation or intermediaries (Sparrow 1997). In the RALM, it involves particular forms of claims-making on individuals and corporations that are viewed as responsible for the exploitation of animals. Destructive methods of direct action (Graeber 2009), for example sabotage and arson, are used to inflict economic damage and to halt the operations of animal enterprises (Best & Nocella 2004; Day 2005; Flükiger 2008). Disruptive actions such as freeing caged animals or blocking whaling vessels may also cause profit loss, but also discourage or prevent opponents from harming individual animals (Nocella et al 2014; Scarce 1990; Upton 2012).

Tactics utilized by social movements are influenced by the dispositions, political identities and morality of activists, and express beliefs about the appropriate methods of addressing social problems (Jasper 1997). The use of direct action by the RALM indicates an understanding of animal suffering as a dire and immediate problem that cannot be solved through conventional forms of protest and will not wait for laws to change or animal exploiters to have a change of heart (Best 2014; Cooke 2013). RALM activists engage in direct action in order to personally intervene to prevent animal suffering, or to hinder the activities of animal enterprises (Jones 2004). Those who

engage in direct action feel that it is the only moral choice in the face of the horrendous injustices of animal confinement, abuse and exploitation (Scarce 1990).

Studies of civil rights and environmental movements demonstrate that in some cases radical activism opens up public space for mainstream activists to create discussion, through what is known as the *radical flank effect* (Haines 1984; Scarce 1990). In recent years, however, a negative radical flank effect has been noted, in which mainstream activism is discredited through condemnation of the actions of radicals by corporate media, industry propaganda, and activist-targeted legislation (Best 2014; McCoy 2008; Meyer & Staggenborg 1996; Sorenson 2009). For example, black blocs, the groups of anarchists and others who appear at public protests to offer solidarity against police violence, are often met by strong repression from riot police who may effectively end the protest (CrimethINC 2004; Day 2005; Thompson 2010). This can have the unintended result of creating deep divisions between protesters and militants (Graeber 2009; Khasnabish & Haiven 2012). This particularly true in North America, where activists are subject to criminalization under repressive legislation such as the *Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act* and Ag-gag laws (Amster 2006; Best 2004, 2014; Dawn 2004; Sorenson 2011; Wicklund 2004). Yet, if the criminalization of radical protest is permitted, it is only a matter of time before all forms of dissent are suppressed (Thompson 2010), including even mainstream rights actions such as public protest or leafleting. With this concern in mind, I now turn to the ways in which media, lawmakers, some academics, and the public, problematically demonize the direct-action strategies of the RALM.

Who is the Real Terrorist?

A strong undertone of condemnation and negativity pervades many existing academic studies of the RALM. The negative depictions offered by mainstream media, such as those of the violent and misanthropic eco-terrorist, are reproduced in many contemporary studies of RALM activists (Flükiger 2009; Gray 2013; Leahy 1994; Munro 2005). The RALM activist appears as an alienated, angry misfit hell-bent on creating chaos by inciting violence and the sabotage or theft of property. But are RALM activists truly violent and terroristic?

This question has been the subject of several studies in the fields of criminology, political studies and sociology (Amster 2006; Gray 2013; Monaghan 1999; Sorenson 2009), particularly since the enactment of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act of the US criminalized all forms of interference with animal enterprises in 2006. The FBI, who has specifically listed the ALF and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) as domestic terrorist groups, defines eco-terrorism as “the use or threatened use of violence of a criminal nature against innocent victims or property by an environmentally-oriented, sub national group for environmental-political reasons, or aimed at an audience beyond the target, often of a symbolic nature” (FBI 2002). The key difference between this definition and standard definitions of terrorism is that it can be perpetrated not only against persons but also against property. According to the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism ‘the targets of terrorism are civilians’ and terrorism ‘is an act purposely directed against civilians’ (Amster 2006). Many studies, however, uphold definitions that include actions against property, and conclude that RALM activists may appropriately be

called terrorists (see for example Hirschmann 2000; Humphrey & Stears 2006; Monaghan 1999; Vanderheiden 2005).

Other studies argue that the evolving definitions of terrorism that governments and media offer reflect the interests of their corporate backers who wish to suppress the activities of activists who damage their property, reputations, and profits (Thompson 2010), and thus are more aptly understood as tools to muzzle dissent, limit freedom of expression, and incite fear (Amster 2006; Lafferty 2001; Pierskalla 2010; Sorenson 2009). Activists labeled as terrorists face harsher sentencing than others convicted of non-political offences, and the label carries an intense and widely reinforced stigma that has the effect of delegitimizing the activism in question, and consequently the movement itself (Hadley 2009). As some sociological scholars argue, since RALM activists are motivated most strongly not by a desire to incite fear but rather to protect the innocent (animals) from harms perpetrated by an unjust system, they cannot be seen to be engaging in terroristic acts because their actions are in reasonable proportion to the harms that they oppose (Cooke 2013; Sorenson 2009). In fact, some authors suggest that a more apt definition of ecoterrorism would describe acts of terror *against*, rather than in defense of, the environment and animals (Amster 2006; Watson 1993).

On Violence

A handful of vocal spokespeople within the RALM have at one time supported the use of violence as a tactic, opening the movement up to wild accusations that the entire RALM engages in or supports violent tactics (Leahy 1994; Liddick 2006). This speculation is taken further as Liddick (2006) posits that RALM activists may use

biological warfare to destroy the human population because they blame human activity for the current state of ecological destruction and species extinction.

Yet, accusations against the violence of the movement have been greatly exaggerated. A handful of groups, such as Negotiation Is Over, the 'Justice Department', and the Animal Rights Militia believe that the prospective use of violence should not be dismissed, and that animal liberation must be accomplished by any means necessary (Liddick 2006; Upton 2012). These groups, however, generally restrict themselves to threats of violence rather than engaging in violent actions (Cooke 2013). The only proven act of violence by the movement took place in England, where a single activist associated with the Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) campaign attacked Brian Cass, the managing director of Huntingdon Life Sciences with a baseball bat. Other examples offered as proof of the movement's violent strategies have proven false, or were discovered to be the work of those attempting to discredit the movement (Sorenson 2009; Stallwood 2004; Webb 2004). These misconceptions perpetuate media and state conflation of nonviolent RALM activists with those who defend the use of violence, damaging the movement's image and creating widespread confusion. Social movement scholars argue that radical activists like those within the RALM are often wrongly associated with violence in ways that obscure movement strategies and goals (Monaghan & Walby 2011; Scarce 1990).

There is a certain irony in the use of the term 'violence' applied to the destruction of property while actual physical violence is perpetrated against animals and RALM activists by their opponents. Although no one has ever been killed by the RALM, several activists have been killed by animal exploiters and government agents, while others have

allegedly committed suicide while imprisoned or in police custody (Amster 2006; Sorenson 2009). Interestingly, the vast majority of RALM activists adhere to a nonviolent code, which I will focus upon, nonetheless the question of violence will be examined in this thesis through looking at how RALM activists frame the strategies of the movement in their online communications. As well, RALM activists are likely to be aware of the violent media constructions of the movement, which undoubtedly has an effect on how activists frame movement strategies.

Differing opinions about the justification of violence as a tactic is a source of continual conflict amongst and between radical social movements and the general public (Graeber 2009). As well, differing conceptions of what constitutes ‘violence’ cause tensions within and between social movements and the state. While RALM groups such as the ALF argue that violence can only be perpetrated against living beings (ALF 2015), their opponents claim that property damage, and the threat of further acts of sabotage, are violent acts (Amster 2006; Best 2014; Graeber 2009; Liddick 2006; Monaghan & Walby 2011). Anarchistic social movement activists, among others, often point out that in comparison to the many atrocities perpetrated by the state and capitalist enterprises, such as mass imprisonment, the widespread slaying of innocent civilians in resource wars, and the relentless ravaging of the natural world, it is hard to take seriously the claim that property destruction is truly violent (Graeber 2009). They argue that the state (and increasingly, capitalist interests who hold political power) holds the only legal authority to use violence, and therefore has the ability to apply the term to many non-violent acts that threaten their power in order to incite public fear. RALM activists seem to share

similar conceptions of violence and similarly oppose the use of force by the state, particularly as it is used to silence activists and protect corporate property.

Social Justice and the RALM

Ideological and strategic comparisons have been drawn between the RALM and other liberation struggles, including the US abolition movement (Best 2014; Webb 2004), women's emancipation (Gaarder 2011) and Jewish resistance against Nazism in Europe (Schnurer 2004). The horrific systems of confinement, abuse and killing enacted upon oppressed humans throughout history are often modelled directly on systems of animal exploitation (Adams 2011; Patterson 2002; Spiegel 1996). One sickening example of this was the experimental surgeries performed by J. Marion Sims on black slaves (many of whom died from complications) in the 1800s (Gaarder 2011). Many in the women's suffrage movement were also involved in early anti-vivisection movements because of such abuses, linking the plight of women and animals (Liddick 2006). ALF raids and liberations of confined animals from fur farms and research laboratories are viewed by some as the extension of the same ethic of those who fought against such forms of human oppression (Nocella et al 2014; Alston 2006). Others have noted that processes of white colonization have attempted to confine, exploit and destroy Indigenous peoples, and through industrialization and widespread settlement have damaged the environment and slaughtered the wildlife that once existed (Sampson 2004). However, while it may in some ways be helpful to point to similarities between the exploitation of animals and people, in order to point to the systemic injustices that oppress both, there is also a need for great sensitivity when drawing these connections, recognizing that many marginalized

groups still suffer from discriminatory attitudes that compare them to animals (Harper 2011).

Despite the connections of human and animal injustice, animal issues tend to be ignored by the political left, even when there is a clear common enemy, as in the case of the RALM and anti-capitalist struggles (Boggs 2011; Noeske 1997; Sanbonmatsu 2011; Torres 2007). On a global scale, billions of animals are bred, raised, killed and disposed of in assembly-line slaughterhouses where speed and efficiency to maximize profit is the only relevant consideration (Boggs 2011; Eisnitz 1997; Pachirat 2011). In Canada alone, 700 million animals are killed annually for food, after having spent 52 hours in transport without water or rest and up to 81 hours without food (Animal Alliance 2015, para. 9). Under industrial capitalism, the bodies of animals both living and dead become fetishized commodities as they suffer and die in vivisection labs, fur farms and slaughterhouses (Torres 2007). In circuses, zoos, marine parks, dog shows and rodeos, they are confined to tiny spaces and made to perform unnatural and ridiculous acts in order to ‘entertain’ humans, their individuality and personhood erased by the commercial value of their mutilated and constrained bodies. The same capitalist logic which requires this twisted commodification of life is simultaneously responsible for the many atrocities suffered by humans, such as child slavery, 16-hour working days for women in Bangladesh factories, and exposure to dangerous and toxic working conditions faced by workers worldwide.

One current example of the connections between animal liberation and social justice is demonstrated in research on the appalling working conditions faced by industrial slaughterhouse workers, who are often recent immigrants (Boggs 2011; Pachirat 2011; Stull & Broadway 2004). Low pay, stressful and dangerous working

conditions and the emotional, physical and psychological trauma are a few examples the injustices that slaughterhouse workers experience (Eisnitz 1997; Kay 1997; Torres 2007). The work is highly stigmatized, particularly the jobs that involve the actual killing of animals or the dismemberment of their bodies (Pachirat 2011), jobs that are most often done by non-English-speakers and migrant workers (Stull & Broadway 2004). By revealing the hidden atrocities of animal confinement and abuse through undercover investigations and covert videotape surveillance, RALM activists hope to offer an ethical challenge to the public to face the realities of the Animal Industrial Complex (AIC), and to any who might choose to become involved in or support animal use. Through damaging property belonging to animal industries, RALM activists attempt to directly confront the industrial capitalist structures that facilitate the mass confinement, abuse and death of humans and animals (Best 2014; Schnurer 2004).

My research will build on these observations by examining how RALM activists understand their purpose as well as the strategies and goals of the movement. My research will also examine links to other social justice movements and ideologies. In particular, this study focuses on the intersections of the RALM with anarchistic and ecofeminist movements, because all three share broad critiques of power, hierarchy, capitalism, and the state; all use similar consensus-based, autonomous group forms; and all share an interest in dismantling repressive systems that harm people, animals and the earth and building a world where all are respected and treated with compassion. To better understand how the RALM isolates itself or engages with other social justice movements, more research is needed which specifically examines these linkages.

Ideological Inclusion and Intersections in the RALM

Since clandestine direct action groups such as the ALF do not have any formal structure or centralized leadership that dictates an ideological position, they may be seen as encompassing a wide range of ideological positions, so long as they support the use of direct action (Joosse 2007). Such groups have the advantage of allowing the recruitment of activists from both sides of the political spectrum who in a traditionally organized group structure might not peacefully coexist, but through autonomous leaderless resistance do not have the opportunity to engage in conflict (Joosse 2007).

Previous social movement literature on animal activists (both mainstream rights activists and those who engage in some forms of direct action) finds little consensus on ideological issues such as the role of emotion in advocacy, sexism in the movement, and their vision of the movement's ultimate purpose (Gaarder 2011; Groves 2001; Herzog & Golden 2009; Jacobsson & Lindblom 2013; Sorenson 2011). In a collection of essays about the ALF by former activists and movement spokespersons, a wide variety of perspectives on the goals of the radical movement are demonstrated (Best and Nocella 2004). While some claim it is part of a movement of 'total liberation' for the freedom of all life forms from domination, others perceive that the situation of animals is the worst and most dire injustice faced in contemporary society (Best 2014; Gaarder 2011).

Radical environmental activist communiqués reveal the movement's anarchistic and anti-globalization ideological intersections (Joosse 2014). Radical environmental activists routinely express anti-capitalist, anti-hierarchical sentiments in their anonymous statements, and portray their activism as a life and death revolution against capitalism and the reckless and wanton destruction of the earth for endless industrial and technological

expansion (Joosse 2014; Liddick 2006; Scarce 1990). The increasing number and intensity of direct actions in the earth liberation movement (Liddick 2006; Pellow 2014) indicate that the revolution is spreading as activists fight to save the planet in the face of continued population growth and ever-increasing levels of consumption (Becker 2006; Caldwell & Caldwell 1994; Fitzgerald & Pellow 2014).

Do RALM activists share the views of the radical earth liberation movement? Animal liberation activist perspectives on environmental issues and anarchy are touched on in a recent study of self-described radical earth and animal liberation “aboveground” activists (those who do not engage in illegal or covert forms of direct action) (Pellow 2014). Many activists who take action on behalf of animals also engage in earth liberation actions, and hold similar anarchistic opposition to state and corporate power (Pellow 2014; Scarce 1990). The ALF, as well as the two Canadian grassroots groups studied in this thesis research, are organized according to traditionally anarchistic forms, namely affinity-based, leaderless, autonomous cells or groups that use consensus as a means of decision-making. Radical earth and animal liberation activists in the late 1980s were, according to one author “guided by an understanding of anarchy that condemns corporatist-state power in any form as oppression” (Scarce 1990, p. 275). Yet, some within the RALM, such as the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, follow a firmly hierarchical power structure within their organization and dismiss anarchistic groups as ineffective (Watson 1993). For their part, many anarchists are aware and supportive of animal liberation goals, understanding that speciesism is simply another arbitrary and unjust form of power used to privilege one group over another. For example, Food Not Bombs, a worldwide anarchistic community meal-serving organization which operates in

autonomous, consensus-based groups, serves only vegetarian or vegan food that has been donated or rescued from dumpsters, extending their peaceful mandate to animals. My research examines if and how RALM activist documents express anarchistic influences and how the RALM contributes to understandings of the recent evolution in social movements towards anarchistic, anti-capitalist and anti-oppression oriented forms. As noted in the introductory chapter, this is a relevant and important question because of the apparent similarities in organizational forms, strategies and goals (autonomous, grassroots direct action to oppose coercive state and capitalist power) as well as critiques of all forms of hierarchy that are found in both anarchism and animal liberation.

(Another) Anarchistic Politics and Total Liberation

The increasing connection between social movements for animals, humans and the earth is demonstrated in a recent body of literature that describes how movements engage the concept of ‘total liberation’. Total liberation strives to go beyond humanist radical movements and purports to seek the end all oppression facing humans, animals and the earth. With an anarchistic worldview that condemns state power and capitalism, total liberationists engage in direct action, and attempt to promote alliance politics with other anti-hierarchical movements (Best 2014; Pellow 2014). US activists in the total liberation movement, for example, make efforts to counter the hegemonic-white-middle-class-heterosexual demographic of environmental and animal liberation movements (Liddick 2006; Stoddart & Tindall 2011) through anti-oppression training, solidarity work and community outreach (Pellow 2014; Nocella et al 2014), and have had some limited success. These are also features of another contemporary shift in radical social movements, towards what has been termed ‘another politics’ (Dixon 2012). Many

contemporary radical movements engage anarchistic forms of organization such as affinity groups, consensus-based decision-making, direct action, and the practice of prefigurative politics (Day 2005; Dixon 2012; Poldervaart 2001). Prefiguration, a term coined by Boggs (1977) is the attempt to live one's ideals in activist practice. It involves embodying in the everyday actions and functions of a social movement or activist group the forms of social relations and organization that are envisioned in their ultimate goals (Dixon 2014; Fisher & Ponniah 2003; Graeber 2009). Movements practicing prefiguration confront power but do not seek to rule over others (Khasnabish & Haiven 2012). Of course, it is important to note that even the most committed and well-intentioned activists often reproduce power relations such as privileging the voices of able-bodied or cisgendered persons in ways that conflict with their stated values. However idealistic and utopian the values of a movement, it is difficult for most to truly escape from the entrenched power structures and roles that pervade social life.

Because the RALM has often been wrongly considered a more militant arm of the narrowly-focused mainstream rights movement, it is important to reveal how RALM activists, unlike their mainstream counterparts, prefigure a different world through their compassionate acts of freeing animals. How contemporary RALM activists, (particularly Canadian and Mexican activists, who have not been a focus of the existing literature) embody the characteristics of these anarchistic, anti-oppression politics is a focal point of this research.

Ecofeminism

Like anarchists, ecofeminists point to underlying societal structures such as political systems and capitalism that privilege the interests of wealthy men over those of

women, animals and the earth. Ecofeminists have historically been both vocal critics of the animal advocacy movement and some of its most dedicated theorists. Ecofeminists criticize the mainstream animal rights and welfare movements for their failure to acknowledge the overlapping patterns of human and animal subjugation (Adams 1993; Adams & Donovan 1995; Donovan 1996; Fraiman 2012; Gaarder 2011; Luke 2007). For example, many pro-vegan and “cruelty-free” campaigns ignore the lack of access to healthful vegan food faced by many poor communities; fail to critique the highly exploitative migrant and slave labour involved in the production of produce and vegan specialty goods; and gloss over the ecological damage caused by pesticide-laden, GMO farming practices (Best 2014; Harper 2011). This lack of acknowledgment that some human groups still face many forms of oppression is demonstrated through many mainstream animal rights campaigns (and indeed some within the RALM, such as Sea Shepherd) that stereotype and demonize cultures based on their treatment of certain species of animals, sexualize and essentialize women, tokenize minority racial groups, and press for heavier prison sentences for convicted animal abusers (Adams 2011; Gaard 2001; Nocella et al. 2014; Peggs 2013). For example, animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is notorious for their media-pandering public demonstrations and advertising campaigns that feature naked, provocatively posed women tied in chains, with slogans such as “whips and chains belong in the bedroom, not in the circus”.

In an effort to counter this negative trend in the mainstream animal rights movement, ecofeminists instead focus on the interconnections and multiplicities of different forms of oppression, such as the injustices for poor communities of color, the

earth, and animals when industrial expansion destroys trees and waterways (Gaard 1993; Mohai, Pellow & Roberts 2009; Umukoro 2015; Walters et al 2011), an orientation that has been termed *intersectionality* (Crenshaw 1991). Centering on the experiences of those who suffer multiple disadvantaged statuses, such as female non-human animals, this radical perspective questions all forms of privilege and hierarchy and calls for greater attention to those who suffer most from injustice (Dixon 2012; Nocella II et al. 2014). The RALM's direct action approach draws on this perspective by presenting a challenge to hegemonic conceptions of animal inferiority, and delegitimizes exploitation in the same way that radical and ecofeminists have questioned the injustice of white, male-dominated power structures over disadvantaged humans, animals and the earth. Ecofeminist theory illuminates the correlations between the abuse of animals and domestic violence (Adams 1993; Arluke 2002); points to the ways in which animals and women are similarly degraded by men through the objectification of their bodies as food and as sexual objects (Adams 1993); and critiques white male sport hunters' descriptions of hunting experiences that compare the pursuit and killing of a prey animal with the sexual pursuit of women (Kheel 1996; Luke 2007; Morris & Thornhill 2006). However, ecofeminism also has a tendency to essentialize gender, assuming that all women share a common experience of oppression, an idea that has been refuted by many feminists of colour (Gaard 2011). It also may reproduce inequality by simply reversing sexism, and privileging women's voices and knowledge over men's.

Some elements of ecofeminist theory appear to resonate with what is currently known about the RALM, such as criticisms of hierarchical and arbitrary dichotomies based on constructions of gender, race and species membership (Adams 1993; Gaard

1993; Kemmerer 2011), and the acceptance of emotional feelings about animals and others as a valid form of reason (Groves 2001; Donovan and Adams 2007).

Contemporary studies of the mainstream animal rights movement note the existence of two competing frameworks among activists. The first prioritizes animal advocacy over all other struggles, viewing the acknowledgement of connected oppressions as divisive and irrelevant; the other understands the oppressions of animals and humans and seeks an integrated approach (Francione 1996; Gaarder 2011; Kemmerer 2011; Sanbonmatsu 2011). Of course, these are not clear-cut categories and there is a great deal of overlap and diversity among individual activists as well as groups. This thesis research contributes an understanding of how RALM frames reflect the concept of intersectionality and whether activists express ecofeminist perspectives on the gendered nature of ecological destruction. This is an important contribution because the RALM is often accused of being masculine and militant in its approach to activism, a view that is promulgated by corporate media and state depictions of ‘eco-terrorists’, while in fact RALM activists appear to be highly compassionate individuals informed by ecofeminist conceptions of overlapping oppressions, the promotion and practice of non-hierarchical relations between and amongst people and animals, and a commitment to destroying male-dominated power structures like the state in favour of self-governance.

Examining the RALM from Activist Perspectives

One common theme running through the existing literature is that Canadian RALM activism has not been studied extensively, and even less work has engaged the perspectives of activists themselves (Pellow 2014; Scarce 1990). Because of the recent wave of government suppression of social movements and specifically the construction

and targeting of so-called eco-terrorists, radical earth and animal activists are currently very exciting and popular subjects of social movement research (Flükiger 2009; Joosse 2014; Pellow 2014; Nocella et al 2014). Building on this surge of interest, my thesis contributes to the evolving literature on the RALM, exploring the strategies, tactics and goals of activism as framed by RALM activists, in order to ‘set the record straight’. Revealing activist frames, their departure from mainstream rights approaches, and their intersections with other radical movements, I depict how RALM activists frame animal liberation as part of a broader liberatory struggle against hierarchy, coercive power, capitalism, and ecological destruction.

In the following chapter, I delve into the research methods that were used to collect and analyze data gathered from RALM activist websites, and outline the social movement framing approach that was used to guide and organize my analysis.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter describes the research methods used in this thesis and provides explanations and justifications for my approach, as well as touching on the framework used to guide my analysis. Explained briefly, I performed an interpretive qualitative content analysis of interviews, essays, pamphlets and communiqués found on three RALM activist websites: the North American Animal Liberation Front (ALF), the Earthling Liberation Kollektive (ELK), and the Grassroots Ontario Animal Liberation network (GOAL). Because websites for ELK and GOAL did not contain adequate data, Facebook pages were also examined for these groups.

Through the analysis of this data, I sought to examine how activists in the RALM frame movement goals, strategies and motivations, in order to contribute to understandings of how the RALM intersects with other radical social movements. I also considered how these frames serve to differentiate radical animal liberation activism from mainstream animal rights approaches, and whether elements of these frames serve as opportunities or barriers to movement building.

Data Collection

The ALF, ELK and GOAL websites and Facebook pages were selected because they are among a very small number of publically available online spaces for those who engage in RALM activism. To date, there has been little research that engages the viewpoint of Canadian activists in the RALM, yet Canada presents a unique case for two reasons. First, it has come under criticism from animal rights advocates who argue that Canada has a shameful record in the treatment of animals, with ancient animal cruelty laws, little regulation on the treatment of laboratory and livestock animals, and an

internationally condemned seal hunt (Sorenson 2010). Secondly, Canada's geographical proximity to the United States (where RALM activism is more widespread) offers, at least for the moment, a less repressive environment for activists who are deterred by the harsh sentences that may be meted out under the AETA, although this may cease to be true with the recent passing of Bill C-51, which criminalizes many forms of activism and political association.

There are additional reasons why these particular groups were used for my analysis. As noted in the previous chapter ALF is the oldest and most notorious radical animal liberation movement worldwide (Best & Nocella 2004; Flükiger 2009). The North American ALF Press Office website represents the largest body of current information on RALM activism that is publically available. It provides information and communiqués from animal liberations and other direct actions which are otherwise difficult to obtain, and offers insight into the beliefs and ideologies of RALM activists.

However, the ALF presence in Canadian RALM activism has been slow to emerge, and therefore additional groups are needed to provide additional information about Canadian activists. ELK is Canadian grassroots animal liberation movement based in British Columbia and Ontario, which supports and defends the use of direct action in animal liberation activism. ELK takes an intersectional approach to activism and engages in radical anti-oppressive community organizing using a transformative justice approach that seeks to challenge all forms of hierarchy, domination and inequality (Daly 2002; Evans 2015), making it a useful resource for examining how RALM activists engage these elements. GOAL is a network of Ontario-based grassroots animal liberation groups that engage in mainstream activism as well as some forms of direct action (such

as lockdowns and disruptive protest). Unlike mainstream animal rights groups, however, those within the GOAL adhere to non-hierarchical organization and consensus-based decision-making in their operations. The GOAL network also engages in solidarity work with other social justice movements, including Indigenous rights, LGTBQI advocacy and feminism. Because of its population size and large urban centers, Ontario has a significant presence of animal rights and liberation groups. The presence of Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario with its Critical Animal Studies program, provides an influence for radical, intersectional animal activism (Nocella et al 2014). While both ELK and GOAL participate in public activism, unlike the ALF, they are still quite distinct from mainstream animal rights groups in their radical understandings and approach to animal issues.

Several different types of document were analyzed for this thesis research. Table 3.1 depicts the various types and numbers of documents examined for each group.

Table 3.1: Types, Source and Number of Documents Analyzed

Type of Document	Group		
	ALF	ELK	GOAL
Communiqués	165	n/a	n/a
Essays	20	10	n/a
Facebook posts	n/a	49	69
Interviews	9	n/a	n/a
Mission Statement and Other Misc.	6	4	17
Pamphlets	3	2	n/a

Data analyzed from the three websites include interview transcripts with former activists and spokespersons, and essays, pamphlets and communiqués written by activists from 2005-2015. During the course of the data collection, ELK and GOAL changed their primary means of communication from the websites to Facebook. Therefore public Facebook posts for these groups from 2013-2015 were also examined.

Documents written by Canadian, Mexican and US activists from the ALF website were analyzed in order to determine the views of clandestine activists who engage in direct action. The bulk of ALF activist data was found in communiqués, the anonymous statements issued by ALF activists to ‘press officers’ who post them on the activist website. Communiqués provide details of specific direct actions claimed by autonomous cells of the ALF, and provide the most instructive method of determining ideological influence in clandestine movements where activists cannot be identified and studied directly (Joosse 2014). In many cases, they are the only form of communication that activists can safely use, and thus are a rich source of information about the views of activists who must keep their identities secret because of the ‘illegal’ nature of their activities. Examining communiqués offers a way of seeing how activists conceptualize their activism as it occurs in the present moment, rather than in retrospect, as is the case in studies which interview animal liberation prisoners or former prisoners (see Liddick 2006).

Additionally, interviews with imprisoned or anonymous RALM activists and movement spokespersons were drawn from ALF websites (interviews were not available from the ELK or GOAL websites). Drawing on existing interviews as secondary data addresses the problem of gathering first-hand interview data from inaccessible

populations (Szabo & Strang 1997), and avoids the ethical and practical problems associated with directly engaging persons who may engage in criminalized forms of activism.

Publically available Facebook posts were analyzed for the two grassroots groups, ELK and GOAL. Social media offers a source of regularly updated activist material for groups such as ELK and GOAL that engage in public, legally sanctioned forms of activism, and offers a forum for interaction between groups. Facebook and other forms of social media have an increasing significance to research on activism as contemporary social movements rely more heavily on online organization and mobilization (Castells 2012; Stoddart, Ramos & Tindall 2015).

Additional content was drawn from essays written by activists. These longer documents provide a more detailed picture of activist views, and presented a rich source of data. Activist pamphlets were also examined. Sometimes called ‘zines’, pamphlets are a form of anonymous, self-published, self-distributed documents used by anarchists, animal and earth liberationists, among others. They also represent a source that has not been examined in other studies of the RALM such as Liddick (2006) and Pellow (2014).

Strategy for Analysis

I selected a qualitative approach to content analysis that is rooted in critical scholarship such as feminist approaches (Krippendorf 2004). The focus on interpretations of activists’ words allowed me to reveal how they view reality and thus gain a deeper understanding of their lived experience (Strega 2005). To begin the coding process, documents were copied from the websites and pasted into a word processing document. I read all the documents over line by line to get a sense of the whole. The

deductive process, where I imposed some predetermined ideas about content that might be of particular relevance to the research questions posed, consisted of highlighting sections that referred to movement strategies, goals, and motivations. Any reference that appeared inspired by anarchistic, ecofeminist or other radical ideology was also noted. For example content that related to the strategy of direct action (Best & Nocella 2004; Day 2005; Flükiger 2008; Graeber 2009; Scarce 1990; Upton 2012) elicited several codes including *anyone can do it*, *directly creating change*, and *brave and heroic*.

Next, I used an inductive method (also called open coding) that allows codes to emerge from the data (Creswell 2014). To do this, I followed five steps of open coding as outlined by Creswell (2014) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005). First, I read 25 sample documents carefully, highlighting words that capture key thoughts and concepts. I selected 4 documents each from the ELK and GOAL websites (which represented a much smaller body of data) and 17 documents from the ALF website in an attempt to provide a representational sample. I read over these documents in detail and recorded my initial thoughts and perceptions of the data on loose-leaf paper. I then organized the key thoughts and concepts that appeared repeatedly in my preliminary observations into an initial coding scheme. I applied this coding scheme to the entire dataset, adding to the scheme new codes as they emerged from the data. I did this by copying and pasting website text into a word processor document and using track changes to attach codes using the ‘comment’ function. Wherever possible, I used codes that reflected the language used by activists, rather than imposing my own labels, (Saldana 2013), attempting to allow activists’ words to speak for themselves as much as possible. For example, *‘find your inner wolf’* was used to code statements that encouraged potential

activists to engage in direct action, while *'until every cage is empty'* coded promises and warnings that activists would continue to target an animal enterprise. This method of using activist quotes to label codes in order to reflect the most accurate representation of the activists as possible, reflects my wish to engage in research with, and for, rather than about, the activists studied (Juris 2007).

Throughout this process, I asked myself the following questions recommended by Creswell (2007) and Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995) for coding: What are the activists saying? How do they talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on? What are they trying to accomplish? How do they do this (by what strategies and means)? What assumptions are they making? What strikes me as I read this text? Lastly, I organized these codes into broad categories, and then specific and expressive themes for analysis. Despite my best intentions to let the data speak for itself and not to impose my preconceived judgements on it, I acknowledge that coding is largely an interpretive process (Saldana 2013) and thus is filtered to some degree through my personal sympathies with the cause of animal liberation (Adler & Adler 1987). I nevertheless made every effort to include and give voice to all data that conflicted with my expectations and preconceptions about RALM activists, in order to provide the most accurate depiction possible. I offer an analysis of RALM activism that neither glosses over the faults of the movement nor denigrates them unnecessarily, but rather takes a holistic view, giving voice to the wide spectrum of activist perspectives that emerged from the data.

To organize these findings, I draw upon social movement literature on the concept of collective action framing in social movements. Benford and Snow (2000) argue that

three major frame categories are developed by social movements. *Diagnostic* frames define the issues or problems to be addressed by the movement. *Prognostic* frames offer potential solutions, strategies and goals to be undertaken. *Motivational* frames relate to mobilization and consist of recruitment strategies, keeping momentum and preventing burnout. Of particular interest to understanding the RALM is its prognostic framing, which describes how activists envision a solution to the problem of animal exploitation, and proposed strategies and tactical repertoires in which the movement engages, such as direct action, protests and lockdowns.

Prognostic frames are shaped by the complex interactions between the various groups constituting a social movement, and respond to counter-frames imposed by movement opponents (Benford & Snow 2000). Prognostic frames are heavily influenced by diagnostic frames, since the way in which the problem or issue is framed is key to determining prospective solutions (Benford 1993; Gerhards & Rucht 1992; Nepstad 1997). For mainstream animal rights activists, diagnostic frames are most successful in garnering support when they focus on the problem of specific instances of animal exploitation (such as a particular type of unnecessary animal experimentation), rather than by critiquing animal use more broadly (Jasper & Poulsen 1993). Similarly, perceptions of efficacy and success are vitally important in motivating activism (Meyer 2000), and therefore activists select prognostic frames that reflect the need to focus on ‘winnable’ campaigns (Einwohner 2002). These findings contribute immensely to explaining the single-issue focus of the majority of mainstream animal rights groups which the RALM is often highly critical of.

These studies reveal an opportunity for further research in exploring the nuances of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing of animal liberation by RALM activists. As a movement that has broader and more radical aims than animal rights, the RALM requires different prognostic frames that reflect the specificities of their ideological position. The use of confrontational and radical direct action tactics suggest diagnosis of an immediate and dire problem that is rooted in unjust power structures to whom it is useless to appeal (Dixon 2014; Graeber 2009). RALM motivational frames must also be assumed to be quite different. Since the RALM presents a radical and subversive image, they cannot hope to appeal to the mainstream public for recruitment, and therefore their motivational frames may be quite specific and targeted to a certain demographic, such as antiauthoritarian youth. As well, clandestine movements do not have any identifiable organizational body (Flükiger 2009) and therefore motivation must be strong enough to encourage new activists to plan, organize and execute their own actions without the leadership of experienced activists. Movements like animal liberation that face widespread opposition and little hope of success in the foreseeable future must also have unique strategies for preventing activist burnout and maintaining long-term action (Jacobsson & Lindblom 2013; Davis 2014).

In the next chapter, the analysis is presented, revealing how ALF, ELK and GOAL activists frame the issues and goals, strategies and motivations for their activism.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter explores the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational collective action framing of RALM activists in the Grassroots Ontario Animal Liberation (GOAL), an Ontario grassroots animal liberation network and the Earthling Liberation Kollektive (ELK), a British Columbia and Ontario-based animal liberation group, as well as leaderless, autonomous cells of Animal Liberation Front (ALF) activists in Canada, Mexico and the United States. The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first, the RALM's diagnostic framing is examined, depicting activists' perspectives on animal liberation as part of broader issues of ecological destruction, global capitalist expansion, state violence, societal apathy, colonialism, and masculine domination. The second section analyzes prognostic frames, which determine the best course of action to achieve goals. Activists see the RALM as a revolutionary endeavour against the coercive power of the state, with direct action constructed as the best method available to oppose unjust power and fight speciesist domination. They position the RALM as a movement in solidarity with other social justice struggles and reject the reformism of the mainstream animal rights movement. Through frames of prison abolition they make connections between animal and human captivity, while prefigurative frames affirm the importance of saving individual animals to create a better world here and now. In the third and final section, I explore motivational frames. These frames illuminate the desperate and immediate nature of issues surrounding animal liberation, incite a sense of duty in potential activists by persuading them that the fate of animals is in their hands, and attempt to persuade new activists to join the RALM by reiterating that direct action is simple and rewarding, and that anyone is capable of creating positive change.

Diagnostic frames, or “Why we fight”

The diagnostic frames of social movements identify the problems and issues deemed important and that require action. They envision a set of goals that serve as the focus of activism. Obviously, the liberation of animals is the overarching goal of the RALM, however, the nuances of how activists envision the issues that contribute to animal suffering are less clear to outside observers, who all too often assume that radical animal liberation is a single-issue, apolitical endeavour, taken on by misanthropic fanatics (Best 2014; Best & Nocella 2004; Leahy 1994; Liddick 2006; Sanbonmatsu 2011; Sorenson 2012). Yet through examining the words of RALM activists it is clear that they understand animal liberation as a complex issue with several root causes that are social, economic and political in nature. In this section I analyze how RALM activists frame animal liberation through the lens of ecology, anti-capitalism, anti-consumerism and anti-colonialism. They discuss the need to defend animals who are made powerless by human domination, and like ecofeminists, connect the victimization of animals and women.

One of the most pervasive diagnostic frames, found in over a quarter of all documents analyzed, focuses on issues of *ecology and wildlife protection*. Although many animal rights and environmental ethics philosophers claim that animal liberationist and ecological perspectives are fundamentally incompatible, RALM activists reflect deep concerns for the natural world (Morris & Thornhill 2006; Regan 1983; Sagoff 2001). Many animal liberationists are in fact fiercely protective of the natural world and its non-human inhabitants. ALF activists share with their comrades in the radical earth liberation movement a deep sense of connection and passion for animals and the wild places they

inhabit (Becker 2006; Scarce 1990). Activists view themselves as inherently wild creatures desiring freedom just as captive animals do, countering Enlightenment discourses of rationality and human domination over nature (Gaard 1993). The caging and penning of animals whose natural habitats are great expanses of field, river and sky is unbearable and heartbreaking to RALM activists, who feel a deep connection with their wild brothers and sisters (Becker 2006). For example, a communiqué from a bobcat liberation notes that the action was “borne of a fierce love for wildlife, and a torn heart forced to watch as bobcats and other wild creatures have been made to endure intense confinement and the inevitable fate of a horrendous death at the hands of those who seek to profit from their skins” (US ALF 2014). Approximately one quarter of ALF communiqués demonstrate a sense of connection and empathy with wild animals and the earth or mention a “love of animals”, opposing the cold justification of profit used by animal industries (Gruen 1993; Scarce 1990). Such emotional connection with wild animals is a driving force behind RALM activism. The use of emotional rationales for activism has been dismissed as a stereotypically feminine and weak appeal (Korobov 2011) by most mainstream animal rights philosophy, which is characterized by masculine preoccupation with rationality (Donovan 2011; Groves 2001; Kheel 1993). Yet RALM activists, some of whom have firsthand experiences of coming face to face with the animals their movement seeks to free, cannot hold back their admiration and empathy:

The sight of a creature so majestic in a state so pathetic cannot be done justice with words. Emaciated and filthy, his beauty was evident even through the matted fur and traumatized stare...to be in such proximity to this creature, staring into his haunting yellow eyes, changed every member of our cell. We could only speculate as to how he had suffered and what he had seen, but we could know with certainty that he deserved a shot at freedom. We opened his cage and left.

– Montana ALF communiqué, 2013

Many activists are critical of what they see as the artificial and human-engineered development of science and technology. They understand technological devices as tools to control and pacify society and separate people from nature (Becker 2006). RALM activists seek a world where humans return to a more natural and harmonious relationship with the earth just as the wild animals they liberate do. This perspective is shared in common with deep ecologists, primitivists, and anti-civilization movements, all of which advocate a similar shift, often eschewing modern devices in favour of simple manual tools and attempting to live 'off the grid'. An example of this view in the RALM is revealed in this anonymous 2011 communiqué from Mexico: "Our proposal is to negate the artificial reality that civilization has constructed, not indirectly, but by seeking a way of life that doesn't involve domination, the most autonomous way of life possible within wild ecosystems and without intermediaries". Nearly one third of Mexican ALF documents critiqued technological and industrial development, with slightly lower percentages among other groups. Many RALM activists seek a life where artificial boundaries and hierarchies between humans, other animals and ecosystems are dissolved, reflecting an *ecocentric*, or ecologically-centred view that is shared by deep ecologists and ecofeminists (Gaard 1993; Scarce 1990; Starhawk 2004). By risking their own freedom to liberate captive wild animals or directly challenging land development projects, RALM activists demonstrate a belief that the earth was not made for people's benefit, but rather that we are one species among many millions, and must do everything possible to prevent the human-driven annihilation of our common home, the earth.

RALM activists depict a need for resistance against problematic social inequalities of modernity, and a strike against industrialization and the misery it inflicts

on animals and the earth, whose liberation is understood as inextricably linked with human emancipation. As an imprisoned American ALF activist poignantly describes in a 2013 essay:

...in vivisection and animal research there are catalogs [sic] teeming with vices, clamps, restraints and torture devices to aid in the sinister science of flaying [a]nimals ... The deforestation of the Earth is done by megalithic yellow death machines that murder old growth forests world wide with speed and precision. In human warfare we have rapid fire weapons, rockets, nuclear arms, chemical agents, drones and the latest technological advancements in the art of murder... technological advancement is the history of cut, burn, torture, poison, explode and destroy!

This passage recounts many examples of how technology has aided in the violent subjugation of animals, humans and the earth. Processes of animal exploitation, ecological destruction and human oppression become systematized and streamlined through the use of ever more efficient manipulations, obscuring cruelty and horror with the rationalism of progress (Becker 2006; Gordon 2009; Pachirat 2011). RALM activists envision technological control as a problem that is swiftly worsening as humans become increasingly dependent upon “the insidious destructive techno-industrial system secretly aligned with strategists of the state and of capital” (Frente de Liberación Animal [FLA] communiqué, Mexico, 2010). The use of the word ‘insidious’ reflects an understanding of how technology has become a tool of distraction and diversion, as masses eagerly consume the latest technological toys, blind to the fact that by using such devices they willingly allow their personal communications to be monitored by state surveillance (Andrejevic 2007; Meyrowitz 2009; Staples 2000). As I examine in the next section, RALM activists understand both technological advancement and ecosystem destruction as a symptom of a greater evil: the looming spectre of global capitalism.

Like other anarchistic movements, the RALM also uses diagnostic frames that label the *capitalist system and the state as its opponents* (CrimethINC 2015; Day 2005; Dixon 2012; Graeber 2009). On a broad level, they see all too clearly the corruption of democratic processes and governance by corporate giants, and make a strong critique of how laws and police serve the interests of financial elites and private property while criminalizing dissenters: “The state political system is an extension arm of corporate power, the media is a corporate media, and they represent corporate interests...Corporations made these laws and media faithfully dictate them to us” (ALF activist interview 2010). In a specific example of corporate-state collusion, a GOAL posting discusses the recent exemption of major industries in Ontario from adhering to the Endangered Species Act:

Devastatingly, Ontario’s Divisional Court has ruled that corporate interest and profit are more important than protecting our endangered and threatened species. Big industries are now enabled to destroy these species and their habitat in order to maximize profit without penalty.

– GOAL Facebook post, 2015

While still highly critical of the apathy and cruelty of individuals who exploit animals, activists clearly express understandings of capitalism as the ‘root of all evil’: “Capitalism is cancerous and deadly to every life it comes into contact with. We're not interested in...the continuance of a culture that views lives as an economic resource” (Oregon ALF communiqué 2011). RALM activists share with other anti-capitalist movements the perspective that capitalism must, by its very nature, continuously grow and expand its area of influence, and that humans relations under capitalism are inherently exploitative and dispossess animals and people of their means of existence (Dixon 2014). RALM activists see a society in the death grip of capitalism, where the

pursuit of wealth is valued above all else, leading those who control capital to treat animals and less powerful people as objects (Adams 1993; Boggs 2011; Gordon 2009; Torres 2007). For example:

We need a paradigm shift. We need to stop conceptualizing animals as commodities, as the horn-producers. Keeping animals in zoos, for profit and for entertainment, only furthers the commodification of animal life.

– GOAL Facebook post, 2015

Life should be able to develop in freedom and not be converted into a commodity. We oppose all forms of limitations imposed on us by this system which encourage submission and an artificial life maintaining the desire for money and power.

– FLA communiqué, Mexico 2012

Such conceptions of the struggle of the movement contrasts the common perception that animal liberation, (like animal rights) is a moral crusade and lacks a critique of capitalist structures (CrimethINC n.d.; Nocella et al 2014; Sanbonmatsu 2011). Here the goal of RALM activists is to strike capitalism at its roots by making exploitative enterprises unprofitable, and not merely to save animals from suffering, but to combat the many forms of oppression that face animals, humans and the earth:

To combat racism, sexism, animal abuse and more, we must adequately confront global capitalism. For it is this behemoth which allows the militarization of law enforcement, the continued use of police violence against targeted communities, the perpetual pillage of this continent and all others at the hands of amerikan imperialism and ecocidal conquest.

– ALF/EF! activist essay, 2013

As demonstrated in the quote above, capitalism is understood as causing not only animal exploitation but also a host of other social problems, including excessive state and military power, ecological destruction, the marginalization of poor and racialized communities and the destruction of traditional ways of living. The significant power afforded to the police by the state is one such problem that emerges in the anti-capitalist framing of the issues facing animal liberationists.

The physical power and violence of the state is manifested in their public agents of social control, the police; many radical activists, including those in the RALM, are highly skeptical of the power that police are given over the rest of society. Nearly one quarter of the documents analyzed made disparaging or critical remarks about the role of police. Because many radical activists have precarious, temporary employment situations or choose to live outside of the system of paid work out of a refusal to participate in the capitalist system (CrimethINC 2004; Graeber 2009), they may have firsthand experiences with police violence, particularly if they engage in shoplifting or dumpster-diving to meet their basic needs (Ferrell 2011, 2012; Grant 2003). For aboveground activists in the grassroots movements, police are often present at protests and demonstrations to protect the companies or property belonging to the animal enterprises, while ignoring (or even perpetrating) violent attacks on activists:

Police presence was intense and constant all day. Despite threats of arrest of protesters for the use of megaphones...no attempts to identify individuals caught on video assaulting or threatening our safety were made. Some have questions regarding a possible conflict of interest in policing due to agreements between the Hamilton Police and Ancaster Fairgrounds, seeing that the Mounted Patrol Unit keeps its stables at the facility.

– HALT (GOAL member group) Facebook post, 2015

Another of GOAL's member groups, the Niagara Animal Defense League, has a "CopWatch" campaign, whose purpose is "to force accountability and visibility upon Niagara Regional Police" (2015). The group regularly organizes protests and information sessions in Southern Ontario on issues such as police violence, victim support and racial profiling. Police are viewed as the lackeys of state-sponsored capitalism who oppress the populace for the wealthy power elite, reinforcing social hierarchies of rich and poor (Graeber 2009). The RALM is wary of the threat of state violence, yet presents a brave

façade, calling the police “cowardly” for using weapons and armour and warning that “the increased police presence will not stop our graceful and successful attacks...this is war. This is a fur war. This is a class war. The elite and the police are the enemy and will be treated as such” (Puget Sound ALF communiqué 2013).

In addition to defending the wealthy from the uprising of the poor, capitalism is diagnosed as responsible for the deep alienation, selfishness and weakness associated with *consumerism* that characterizes contemporary societies. ‘Society’, which appears to refer to anyone outside of radical activist communities, is heavily criticized for their apathy and submission to the violence, greed and superficiality of modern life. The complicity of the majority of society in animal exploitation is noted in their refusal to give up meat-eating, products tested on animals or made from their bodies, and continued support of animal entertainment industries such as zoos and rodeos. Anti-consumerist frames appear in nearly one quarter of all documents examined. While RALM activists do not solely blame consumers for the current plight of animals, they are quick to point out the vanity and greed that they view as driving the market for animal products:

At this moment in Seattle people are gathering in a grotesque celebration of the barbaric fur trade. They are selling untold numbers of skins from innocent animals in the name of their meaningless god, money.

– Vancouver ALF communiqué, 2013

We jumped some fences during the night to take two rabbits from cages where they were found in captivity, slaves to the whims of this sleeping and alienated society.

– FLA Mexico communiqué, 2010

RALM activists believe that most people are blind to the atrocities perpetrated against animals because the influence of capitalism has stolen their will and replaced it with a selfish desire to consume at the expense of all else. This is particularly evident in

ideological attacks on the fur trade, an industry that survives only because of wealthy consumers:

These jackets are nothing more than a fashion trend, people need to stop listening to dubious advertising and think for themselves. If people had any idea of the cruelty and suffering that it takes to have frivolous fur trim on their coats, they probably wouldn't support that kind of industry...that's why we're out here...to expose animal abusers and remind people that animals are not fabric, accessories or a fashion statement.

– Kitchener Ontario Animal Liberation Alliance (KOALA) Facebook post, 2014

We chose to do this not because we believe that humans wearing fur is inherently wrong. Rather we think that the callous disrespect with which the fur industry treats the animals is despicable. The fact that it has become an 'industry' for the vanity and fashion of the rich is what we hate.

– Washington ALF communiqué, 2011

Distinctions between need-based animal use on one hand and the purposeless cruelty of confining, torturing and killing animals to create commodities demonstrates a more sophisticated understanding of animal exploitation that takes into consideration the ways in which colonial society is implicated in harming Indigenous peoples, animals and the earth.

An unanticipated diagnostic frame that emerged expresses *anti-colonial* views, linked to the intersection between North American settlers' treatment of Indigenous people and the exploitation of ecosystems and animals. Many of the documents analyzed made reference to supporting Indigenous struggles or traditional Indigenous ways of living with the earth and its inhabitants, and/or critiqued colonial takeover and the continuing displacement and marginalization of Indigenous peoples in North America.

[J]ust like Indigenous peoples' inherent rights, animals' inherent rights were really eroded and even lost as a result of colonization...animals have independent life, their own purpose, their own relationships with the Great Spirit...they are not made for food, they are not a resource. Again, they are our family... overfishing, overhunting, captivity, industrial farming, wholesale destruction of habitat [...]

these conditions do not fulfill our responsibilities as people of the Earth to protect the land and ecological relations.

– Métis organizer/ELK activist essay, 2015

Unlike many mainstream animal rights groups, RALM activists are quick to distinguish what they view as unethical and exploitative uses of animals under capitalism from the more harmonious, reciprocal relations that characterize traditional Indigenous practices (Gaard 2001; Nadasdy 2007; Sorenson 2012). They instead critique settler culture for exploiting and marginalizing Indigenous people and destroying their traditional lands (Nibert 2003). RALM activists are also quick to point out the false claims of corporations who defend the mass slaughter of animals by arguing that hunting and trapping are rooted in Indigenous culture, when in fact settler corporations like the Hudson Bay Trading Company were key players in the dispossession and impoverishment of First Nations people (Gaard 2001; Kheel 1993, 1996; Sorenson 2012):

Trapping, killing, and skinning fur bearing mammals for profit was one of the first steps of westward expansion and the colonial process that decimated many Native people and cultures. The fact that the fashion and fur industries point to Native people wearing fur as their justification of the factories of death is inexcusable...they are a part of the system that destroyed their way of life. The current way of 'farming' mink, fox, bobcat, and lynx does not bear any similarity or have any hint of the same respect for life and nature that the native tribes and cultures around here have.

– Pacific Northwest ALF communiqué, 2011

RALM activists do not frame all use of animals as a dichotomous, right versus wrong moral issue, as it is often conceived by fundamentalist animal rights philosophers who believe that all use of animals in all cultures and by all people should be abolished, regardless of their innocence or guilt in perpetrating systemic oppression (Francione & Garner 2010; Regan 1983). Animal rights organizations such as Sea Shepherd, the anti-whaling group led by Paul Watson, have been criticized by human rights advocates for

their campaigns against traditional Indigenous hunting and fishing practices, such as the ongoing fight to prevent the Makah tribe from whaling under their treaty rights (Gaard 2001; Tanner 2005). Rod Coronado, a well-known Indigenous activist and spokesperson for the ALF, in fact began his activist career with Sea Shepherd but left the group out of solidarity with the Makah (Powell 2014, para. 22). While animal rights groups often wilfully ignore the vast difference between sustainable, respectful treatment of animals in traditional Indigenous culture and the exploitative decimation of species by white settlers (Sampson 2004), RALM activists are more likely to understand that the most prevalent and unnecessary forms of animal suffering are directly related to capitalist and settler domination. In response to mainstream animal rights groups protesting the traditional Haudenosaunee deer hunts, GOAL member group HALT offered their solidarity and condemned the white protesters as racist, noting that

As a movement fighting for total animal liberation, we need to understand that this cause is set within a much grander scheme of things that encompasses land use, resource extraction and exploitation, colonialism, capitalism and systemic oppression...the settler community, which the [deer hunt] protesters are part of, has no right to intervene in the traditional practices of the Onkwehon:we. You cannot claim to be fighting against oppression while simultaneously perpetuating a brutal legacy of violence.

– HALT Facebook post, 2014

Such views contrast common perceptions that the animal advocacy movements are uninterested in the struggles of others or ignore the history and continuation of human marginalization. Many activists are aware that however important animal liberation is to them personally, it is wrong to blindly impose this view on others, particularly those who, like Indigenous peoples in the Canadian settler state, have already experienced dispossession, economic exploitation and genocide at the hands of white settlers. As an activist in a 2014 ELK website pamphlet warns, “Do we really think that our myriad of

social positions does not matter in terms of animal oppression? In our relationship to the state and other capitalist entities responsible for animal suffering, we are not all equal.” Eating a vegan diet and buying so-called “cruelty free” products still involves a far greater consumption of animal-habitat-destroying resources than do traditional Indigenous hunting practices. Statements acknowledging Indigenous rights, critiquing the impact of colonial practices, and drawing connections between these issues and animal suffering, were found in nearly a third of all documents examined, and were particularly important to grassroots activists in ELK and GOAL.

According to the literature, women activists are particularly likely to attribute their compassion for animals to a personal experience of powerlessness, a connection that has long been the subject of ecofeminist discussion (Adams 1993; Fraiman 2013; Gruen 1993; Luke 2007). Although it was not possible to determine the gender of activists in the vast majority of the documents studied, there were nonetheless several examples of activists who deployed *ecofeminist* diagnostic frames. For example, one document noted:

I was turned off by meat because I saw it as a symbol of my own powerlessness, that animals were to humans the way women were to men. From a very young age I was taught the bodies of animals were not their own, just as my female body that I was expected to preserve as purity for my future husband was not really my own.

– ELK activist essay, 2014

In the dominant North American culture, women and animals are objectified and fragmented through pornography and meat advertisements that portray them as objects for (male) consumption (Adams 2010). Gendered power inequalities are reproduced and justified by the physical dominance of men over women, and women express feelings of displacement and lack of control over their bodies that are undermined by societal

expectations that women display a femininity which emphasizes weakness and powerlessness to the always-already dominate man.

ELK commonly articulates ecofeminist ideas, hosting a conference in 2014 on the topic of patriarchy and speciesism that featured prominent ecofeminist authors and animal advocates Carol Adams and Lori Gruen. An ELK activist who also spoke at the conference reflected many ideas inspired by ecofeminist critiques of male/female, human/animal dichotomies:

In contemporary western cultures, masculinity helps define what it means to be human. War propaganda, competitive sports industry, and advertisements are constantly reaffirming our identity as connected to power and gender/species domination. At the same time, women and non-human animals are portrayed as objects of consumption and conquest. Through a culture of violence and predation, masculinity ideas subjugate “otherness” in order to affirm Self. Violence against women and animals are not different kinds of oppression, but different expressions of the same oppression.

– ELK activist interview, 2014

There is also an ecofeminist thread present in ALF documents. An anonymous ALF activist essay entitled *Unconditional Anti-Oppression: Towards an Anti-Speciesist Anarchism* points out the sexism inherent in certain animal products: “the consumption of milk from cows or eggs from chickens enables the coercive and sexual exploitation of vagina-bearing individuals” (2015). Adams (2000) has referred to these products as ‘feminized protein’, and has explored similar connections between the sexual exploitation of women and animals, for example drawing attention to the appallingly named ‘rape racks’ used in animal breeding facilities (such as dairy farms and laboratories) to immobilize female animals while they are artificially inseminated (Adams 2010; Luke 2007). Following in the tradition of radical feminists, the word ‘human’ is often spelled ‘humyn’ in ALF communiqués across Canada and the United States. This spelling was

conceived as a way of removing gender bias and countering women's subjugation by removing the word 'man' (Tandon 2008). In a 2005 interview, a Canadian ALF activist describes how "[t]he oppression and abuse of animals does not happen in a vacuum, outside of the oppression and abuse of women, minorities, and other targeted humans [...] Fighting for the rights of animals must be done in the context of fighting against all abuse and killing." While there were fewer examples within ALF documents, roughly one quarter of ELK and GOAL documents expressed intersectional, ecofeminism-inspired understandings of the liberation of women and animals. The interconnectedness of human and animal suffering is understood by many RALM activists as a reason for extending our empathy and consideration outside of species barriers and resisting not only our own oppression but also the oppression of non-'humyn' animals.

Overall, diagnostic frames in the RALM display understandings of the root causes of animal exploitation that are similar to those found within other contemporary social movements. Ecological frames are similar to those found in deep ecological and ecofeminist movements, reflecting ecocentric values that do not privilege the human species but rather attribute the blame for the current environmental crisis to human industrialization and technological takeover. Anti-capitalist frames, which point to the commodification of animal life and the inherent inequality of social relations under capitalism, are common to many contemporary radical movements, such as deep and social ecology, anarchistic movements, anti-poverty and global justice movements, as activists are only too aware of the terrible social and ecological cost of capitalist expansion. Anti-consumerist frames similarly critique the apathy and greed of contemporary society and its ignorance of the animal suffering involved in various realms

of consumption, including fashion, food and entertainment. Anti-colonialist frames point to the intersections of Indigenous displacement, the destruction of the environment, and the exploitation of animal life, and call out the hypocrisy and racism of mainstream animal rights activists who portray Indigenous hunting and fishing as instances of animal cruelty. Finally, ecofeminist frames draw connections between the sexualized consumption of the bodies of women and animals.

Prognostic Frames, or 'What is to be done?'

The creation of prognostic frames is a vitally important task for social movements. Prognostic frames are influenced in varying degrees by diagnostic frames moving from the construction of a problem to the determination of appropriate solutions. Prognostic frames speak volumes about the ideology of the group as they reflect the distinct agenda and methods or strategies for activism that distinguish them among similar movements (Benford & Snow 2000). Such frames are in many ways the key to a movement's success or failure, for without a strategic plan that has potential to create real and lasting change, a movement has little hope of achieving its aims. Because the RALM is largely made up of activists identifying as the ALF in autonomous activist cells, it lacks many elements traditionally found in social movement groups such as a centralized organizational structure, leadership and decision-making bodies (Flükiger 2009; Gray 2013). Scholars who examine radical leaderless social movements indicate that the chosen strategies of such groups are in fact the *only* ideological element that can definitively be proven to exist, as individual activists are only connected to one another through their decision to engage in direct action on behalf of a particular cause (Joose 2014; Flükiger 2008). This is less true of aboveground, grassroots groups such as ELK

and the GOAL network groups, where members are known to one another and can speak publically about their views, however these groups, like the ALF, are also leaderless and largely utilize consensus-based forms of decision making, a characteristic common to many of the “newer” anarchistic, anti-capitalist movements (Day 2005; Graeber 2009) While the findings of this study thus far suggest that there are many commonalities between activists in both the grassroots (ELK and GOAL) and clandestine sectors (ALF) of the RALM, as well as activists who work for other contemporary movements such as anarchistic, anti-capitalist, ecological and Indigenous movements, it is unquestionably the prognostic frames that are most obviously distinguish the RALM from other animal advocacy movements.

Many activists use prognostic frames that portray RALM activists as *warriors* in *revolutionary* battles with the state, capitalism, and in some cases, the entirety of societal structure and modern civilization. While this frame overlaps with anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist diagnostic frames, there are distinct elements to the prognostic framing. Rather than opposing capitalist and state power through political protest marches, prognostic revolutionary frames depict immediate, strong, and wholehearted resistance without boundaries and without negotiation.

Acknowledging that the war is on, that total revolution will not wait and neither will we, on the night of June 5 the Frente de Liberación Animal once again attacked...

We will continue to attack despite the surveillance cameras they have put in the streets and avenues, despite their police-military rounds, despite their operations, despite their threats, anytime, anywhere and on any occasion... The war continues, and with comrades imprisoned or not, bombs will continue exploding, fire will continue illuminating the night, because chaos is not dead!

– Mexican FLA communiqués, 2010, 2011

Just under one quarter of ALF documents made this warlike prognosis, as well as a handful from each of the grassroots groups. ALF raids on animal breeders and acts of property destruction are often referred to as “attacks,” or as retaliation for the attacks on animal life and ecosystems. Animal enterprises are labeled “the enemy,” and activists speak of “battles” in which activists sabotage and counter-surveil animal industry owners in response to threats of violence against them. This is reflected in a 2013 Vancouver ALF communiqué addressed to the owner of a fur and taxidermy store:

You were quoted in the newspaper after the last time the ALF visited your house as saying you had guns and were not afraid of us...we are clearly not afraid of you either and you will have to kill us to stop us. The Animal Liberation Front is always watching.

As with this example, activists may issue a threat of further action against the person or industry targeted, warning that if they do not desist from their involvement in animal exploitation, they can expect additional and more serious actions from an ever-watchful vanguard:

There will be NO REST for the African Lion Safari! We will not be discouraged. We will not be defeated. We will be back, louder & stronger than ever!...It's time to rally and deliver Shrine Circus the (un)welcome they have coming to them...Let's chase these clowns out of town. THIS WILL BE THE LAST TIME SHRINE CIRCUS COMES TO HAMILTON.

– HALT Facebook post, 2015

Like the ALF, some grassroots groups, including GOAL member groups such as HALT, use militant and confrontational language despite engaging in public demonstrations. Several photos from GOAL Facebook pages show activists dressed head to toe in black during demonstrations, sometimes with their faces partially covered, in a manner similar to activists utilizing black bloc tactics. RALM activists refuse to retreat or to enter into negotiation or compromise with animal enterprise owners and corporations, instead

vowing to destroy their businesses and eliminate their profiteering of animals. A popular San Francisco-based ALF newsletter (now defunct) entitled *No Compromise* references the militant perspective of many activists.

We see your fucking anthropocentric culture as our enemy and we will attack it by any means necessary. We are sorry not to have hit harder and caused the material and economic damage that you really deserve; keep in mind that through promoting animal abuse you become a target.

– Guadalajara FLA communiqué, 2015

The phrase “by any means necessary” is repeated throughout RALM activist literature, and raises the question of whether this is merely intended to intimidate targets or whether there is a real threat of escalation. The ALF is explicitly nonviolent in their mandate. The ALF guidelines (listed in Chapter 1) require that activists do not harm any person or animal during their activism. ELK does not have any official statement on violent tactics, but rather decides on appropriate tactics in their collectives via consensus. The GOAL vision statement, rather than specifically dismissing the use of violence, encourages a diversity of tactics:

members are required to adopt a diversity of tactics approach wherein they create space and respect difference. Each member, group or campaign is free to implement the tactics that they feel are most effective and each will also respect different approaches across the spectrum.

– GOAL vision statement, 2015

No mention of ELK or GOAL activists using violent tactics could be found in the course of this research. However, there is some confusion about the nonviolent claim of the ALF. In part this results from the fact that leaderless and decentralized groups such as the ALF have no means or authority to dismiss, reprimand or control the actions of activists who violate the organizational guidelines (Flükiger 2009). Some authors argue that violent acts have been committed and claimed by activists calling themselves the

ALF (Liddick 2006), while others attribute these cases to opponents of the movement attempting to discredit them (Best & Nocella 2004). The question of whether violence is ever an appropriate method for pursuing animal liberation is extremely contentious and activists are relatively divided on this issue. Those who support nonviolent tactics argue that to use violence to end violence against animals is to contravene the very purpose of the RALM:

[A]s a movement whose fundamental belief is respect and reverence for all life, there is no place for violence as a means to preserve life, especially when we have yet to exhaust the avenues of non-violent, illegal direct action against the tools and institutions of life's destruction.

– Canadian ALF activist interview, 1997

Others point out that violence would further alienate the RALM from public support (Francione 2004). Definitions of violence are widely variable and many consider arson and the use of explosives violent because they bear a considerable risk of accidental harm (Best & Nocella 2004). While none of the material analysed for my research shows that activists in the ALF, ELK, or GOAL explicitly endorsed violence in the documents examined for this research, some outspoken animal advocates associated with the movement, for examples some former and current ALF Press Officers, defend the use of violence (Flükiger 2009), arguing that those who exploit animals deserve to face the same suffering that they inflict. Press Officers theoretically have no direct relationship with ALF cells but claim to represent their perspectives (Nocella et al 2014), however a Montana communiqué indicates that this is not always the case:

As an ALF cell, we adhere strictly to...a policy of total nonviolence. Because of our desire not to be misrepresented to the media in this regard, we have in the past very clearly requested that NAALPO not publicize or speak to the press about certain actions of ours. NAALPO has greatly disregarded our wishes in this regard. When a press office claiming to represent the ALF directly scoffs at the

requests of the ALF, this should be a scandal...it seems to us that its very legitimacy would hinge on this.

– Montana ALF communiqué, 2013

It appears therefore that it may not be activists themselves, but rather those who speak on their behalf (the ALF press officers), who truly advocate violence. For example, two prominent North American ALF spokespersons have gained notoriety for voicing public support of violent tactics. A Canadian ALF activist who served time in prison during the late 1990s for liberating cats from a university research laboratory in Alberta, does not promote the use of violence but offers this caution to those who adhere to strictly nonviolent principles:

[T]hose of us who are "fortunate" enough to live in the western world...we don't face totalitarian governments, or death squads, or despots militarily supported by the CIA. For the poor and oppressed people who do face these types of situations and live extremely impoverished lives, fighting back is...not only necessary for survival but it's a right. The debate about violence versus non-violence does not enter into the realm of discussion...it is only for us, the privileged, who have the time and luxury to debate the issue. Our very lives are not being threatened with death or imprisonment for simply having ideas...if they were, we might have a different attitude towards violence.

– Canadian ALF activist interview, 2005

The idea that the use of violence is only a choice for those who hold privilege and are not being actively oppressed is one that has long been observed by anarchist communities (CrimethINC 2004; Graeber 2009) who question whether it is simply elitist to preclude the use of violence as immoral. The issue is more complicated in the case of the RALM, as activists are not directly fighting for their own liberation but rather on behalf of animals. However, many RALM activists know from personal experience that the use of state violence to suppress resistance is a constant threat, as many have been victimized in the past for their activism (Best & Nocella 2004).

Like other anarchistic movements, RALM activists oppose the power of the state and instead use prognostic frames that envision a free society where people and animals are self-governing and not subject to coercive control by others. These frames aim to *destroy domination* and such anti-state frames are well and away the most prolific ones found in the activist documents analyzed, and were found in almost half of ELK and GOAL documents and the majority of ALF documents. Far from seeking rights for animals, activists instead work for the complete dissolution of the state and the elimination of all legal rights and controls in favour of autonomy:

I don't give a fuck about rights. I'm not interested in portraying myself as a victim because I view the State as my enemy. I seek no sort of resolution between myself and domination; I want it to be completely destroyed. The courts, the prisons, hetero-supremacy, white supremacy—I want to work on consistently attacking the manifestations of these forms of domination.

– US ALF activist/anarchist essay, 2014

The entire concept of “rights” itself is fairly problematic, given that what mainstream societies perceive as a “right” for a human or animal is largely defined by the dominant power structures that are white supremacist, ableist, cis, hetero-patriarchal, colonial, capitalist, and of course, speciesist.

– ELK activist essay, 2015

RALM activists seek to dismantle power-over relationships, namely those that involve control and domination, such as those between humans and captive animals or between police and the poor (Nocella et al 2014; Starhawk 1988). This is achieved in part by their refusal to submit to the prescribed laws that protect corporate property or allow humans to torture and kill animals at will. As one Canadian activist notes, it is important to “remember that what’s legal and what’s illegal is defined by the state, and people with power” (Elk activist interview, 2014). Activists oppose the authority and legitimacy of the state, which has taken a leading role in the suppression of RALM activism (Amster 2006; Monaghan & Walby 2009; Sorenson 2011).

Like other anarchistic groups, RALM activists understand their activities as a direct challenge to state power through the use of tactics that violate laws that protect animal enterprises from profit loss due to activism (Day 2005; Graeber 2009). RALM activists appeal to a higher form of moral authority and refer to historical direct-action movements and leaders, such as Malcolm X and Subcomandante Marcos as examples of brave individuals fighting unjust power:

The Bill of Rights guarantees us the right to overthrow the government should it no longer serve the interests of the people. It isn't. I do not believe we can change that system from within. Rarely in history has it ever been citizen outrage alone that has changed immoral or unjust laws, rather a handful of direct action activists' willingness to give their all in their fight for liberty.

– US ALF activist interview, 1997

While comparisons of animal liberation to human injustices issues raises the ire of some who work on behalf of oppressed humans (Gaarder 2011; Peggs 2013; Schurner 2004), RALM activists see all forms of oppressive power as being heavily reinforced by the state. Repeated references to unjust laws and to the corruption of state decision-makers by corporate influences provide a vital imperative to transgress any rules set out about what forms of activism are permitted (Sampson 2004; Graeber 2009). Activists further justify their anti-state actions by framing the state as fascist, racist, speciesist, and corrupt:

With this action we completely repudiate the anti-immigrant laws that were implemented by the fascist state of Arizona, and not only reject this law but all those who prevent us from being free and wild, which we will break when it is necessary, always. Let's keep striking the state, blow by blow, that the flame is not extinguished and that it extends to the most remote places where there is domestication and domination.

– FLA/Frente Liberación de la Tierra communiqué, Mexico, 2010

In defying the state through direct action, RALM activists not only make a powerful protest against injustice, but also engage in prefiguration (Boggs 1977). Through their

refusal to be ruled by the corrupt and repressive state power, they live their ideals in daily life, and create alternative standards of right and wrong through their actions in support of their animal allies (Dixon 2012; Nocella et al 2014). A post by GOAL member group HALT calls others to “question the legitimacy of our government” (HALT Facebook post, 2015). By freeing captive animals, destroying machines that kill animals and harm the earth, and acting in solidarity with other movements, activists prefigure a peaceful and equal world where everyone is free to act as their conscience moves them. Personal commitments to conscientious veganism or freeganism prefigure a world where the production of food no longer involves child slaves, oppressed migrant work, and animal captivity and slaughter.

It is self-evident that ALF activists believe that animal liberation is best achieved through the most direct methods possible and as a result the movement relies on *direct action* prognostic frames. Indeed, it has been argued by some that nothing else about ALF activists can truly be said to unite them ideologically, other than a belief in direct action, as there are few other requirements to become a member. Although many ELK and GOAL activists may not engage in some of the ALF’s more dramatic forms of direct action (such as vandalism), they do take part in disruptive protests, blockades, and other direct forms of activism. As well, as noted earlier, both are committed to a diversity of tactics both within the animal liberation movement and elsewhere. Over one quarter of ELK and GOAL Facebook posts made positive references to direct action or ALF actions, encouraging others to participate. For example, GOAL member group KOALA posted an article about a recent fur farms liberation, with the caption “Support direct action! Hats off to the brave souls who gave freedom to these formerly imprisoned

animals” (KOALA Facebook post, 2015). ELK provides activists with links to a number of documents outlining how to engage in civil disobedience and other forms of confrontational action, as well as links the ALF and Hunt Saboteurs websites.

We must take it upon ourselves to not only organize, educate and agitate our communities toward restoring justice to this planet, but to physically dismantle the concrete pieces of our repression. Tear down the infrastructure, in your mind and in this life, of the frackers, vivisectioners and debt collectors. Lend your hand (not as a metaphor, but as an action) in the disruption of this machine.

– ALF/EF! activist essay, 2013

The methods by which the war over animals is waged are widely varied but share a common element of creating direct change. Whether through radical organizing and solidarity work, as demonstrated by grassroots groups such as ELK and GOAL, or by causing loss of profits to animal exploiters and directly freeing animals, as demonstrated by the ALF, the RALM is primarily focused on directly confronting oppressive economic systems and social structures. RALM activists defend direct action because they believe that it is the most effective method of confronting the issue of animal exploitation, and the swiftest way to achieve their goals:

Symbolic protest and consumer boycotts in and of themselves are not sufficient in addressing the immediate violence that is being carried out against non-human animals every second of everyday. Direct intervention is necessary to free imprisoned non-humans and to destroy the machines that facilitate their exploitation.

– Washington ALF communiqué, 2014

In a world driven by greed and the endless desire for power-over, the best tools available to activists hoping to erode the status quo are those that destroy profits and plant seeds of uncertainty and fear in the hearts of those who hold power. Effectiveness to RALM activists means doing something immediately to confront the unjust situations that unfold before their eyes, not merely decrying policies or power structures or

educating others, but by literally jamming a monkeywrench into the heart of the state-corporate machinery (Scarce 1990). Direct action allows activists to voice their dissent against the injustice of animal suffering while also acting to directly alter the problematic issues that are opposed. To do this requires both courage and the ability to see where direct actions will be most advantageous:

don't play into that thing that's like "We've got good protesters and bad protesters", don't say things like "The anarchists made the cops come down hard on the peaceful protesters" – all of that plays into their game and we shouldn't be doing that...we need to do those things that are going to be effective. So blockade the road, liberate the animals, disrupt the airport when the planes are going out deporting people...do what you have to do.

– ELK activist interview, 2014

Unlike mainstream protest marches or vegan outreach, for the RALM animal liberation is not just a human issue to be debated and theorized, but rather a struggle of animals and their human comrades for freedom. "This is true animal liberation: Returning freedom to a being who is locked up or tortured. This is the real struggle against the exploitation industry: directly targeting companies and individuals who perpetuate the destruction of this world" (FLA Revolutionary Cell, Mexico, 2010). Many activists see traditional protest as a uselessly symbolic or even negative action that does little more than alienate others who suffer from the same systemic injustices:

is [protesting] a successful strategy to campaign for the rights of someone, or does it just result in 'shaming' of other folks who are often victims too of our socialized and institutionalized injustices? how do we begin to offer new ideas and examples of what we want to see in our societies, so that people can be offered opportunities to join in what we are doing instead of being blamed?

– ELK Facebook post, 2013

You will find time and time again that those that put action above ideas and real world resistance above symbolic protests and gestures are the ones that on a deep fundamental level refuse to rationalize away the terrors of this world. And are also committed to effecting [sic] real world changes...Until we start working

outside the system we are just aiding, in innovative new ways, our own and others destruction.

– US ALF activist prisoner essay, 2013

Direct action is often contrasted with the moral shocks and appeals to the public and legislators made in mainstream animal rights campaigns (Jasper & Nelkin 1992; Mika 2006). They believe such forms of activism are ineffective because of state corruption and a society too alienated or distracted by their own suffering to be persuaded to a liberationist perspective. An anonymous Colorado communiqué closes with “a salute to those courageous few who continue to fight alongside the earth and animals, even as your work is overshadowed by the bloggers, video editors, and all manner of self-aggrandizing activists” (ALF website, 2013). Many RALM activists frame their direct-action strategy as the only hope for animals, comparing the ‘warriors’ of the RALM who are seen to do the real work of animal liberation with ‘activists’ in the mainstream animal advocacy movement.

Animal liberation is much more than reformist words or tears, animal liberation is direct and targeted acts in support of the freedom of animals, and an economic and psychological blow to those who torture and murder them in favour of vanity and consumerism.

– FLA Mexico communiqué, 2010

Though RALM activists are sometimes called heroes, they are also quite humble about the limitations of their own activism. They acknowledge the massive and deeply rooted social, economic and political problems that perpetuate the exploitation of animals, and are realistic about what direct action can accomplish. Yet they express hope through a prognostic frame that portrays the potential of the RALM to *prefigure* alternative social relations and the elimination of entrenched power structures through

their refusal to abide by arbitrary and biased laws and instead live according to a higher code of ethics and values:

We don't believe that this action is going to change reality right away, as that would make us either naive or overly pragmatic. But it does function as a desperate act of expression through which we signify that the reality we live in must be negated in its totality, and that the best negation is the destruction of whatever gives meaning to the establishment.

– FLA communiqué, Mexico, 2011

RALM activists understand that power and profits are the majority of what provides meaning for 'the establishment,' and thus focus their actions on liberating animals as a means of disrupting power, and sabotaging property to destroy profits (Coronado 2004). Since they must operate secretly and frequently perform actions without much familiarity with the environment, they are not always successful. They often explain in communiqués that their actions are curtailed by a physical limitation such as not possessing access to the necessary tools to open cages, or because they were spotted by bystanders or police and were forced to make a swift retreat. While they express regret when they claim "this action is no victory for those left behind" (Oregon ALF communiqué, 2013), RALM activists also feel that individual lives are vitally important, and that to save even one or two animals from a life of cruelty and confinement is a worthy action:

4 hens were removed from the premises and placed in good homes where they will live out the rest of their natural lives. This action was done to save these individual animals from the torture and misery intrinsic to industrialized egg production [...] although we may not be able to free every animal, we can free some.

[W]e dismantled a huge section of an aviary that held between 75-150 pheasants; liberating them into the night sky. Although the number of animals freed represented only a tiny fraction of the thousands more still held captive on this farm, we feel that every life saved—no matter how few—is a victory.

– Oregon ALF communiqués, 2008 & 2012

Raids and animal liberations are the most revered of all forms of RALM activism because they are the most direct and immediate means of achieving animal liberation (Liddick 2006). With one action activists provide freedom and a chance to live for animals who might otherwise continue to suffer and die, had they not been released by activists. While RALM activists may free a few or several thousand animals in a single action, this rarely represents a significant loss to animal enterprise owners. In many cases, animals (because they are considered property in mainstream society, and thus assets of a company) are insured against loss, and therefore industries are more inconvenienced than devastated by their liberation. It is commonplace, therefore, for RALM activists to focus actions on the ‘weak’ links of animal exploitation, which in North America are most often players in the fur industry, but more recently have come to include small tourist attractions, circuses and zoos, as seen in this post from GOAL member group HALT: “People defend African lion Safari on the basis that it’s ‘better than a zoo’, that the animals there ‘don’t live in cages’. Do not be fooled just because the cages are slightly bigger! Join us to stand in opposition to this exploitation” (HALT Facebook post, 2014). Targeting small-scale and isolated animal enterprises is important in achieving broader goals of animal liberation. By attacking animal industries that do not have deeply entrenched social support, the RALM may be able to garner some support from the public in ending certain forms of animal exploitation. Smaller goals are far more realistic than attempting to take on the livestock industry or large animal testing operations, yet allow activists to stay true to their radical methods by refusing to engage in reformism that might interfere with or hinder the ultimate goals of the movement (Dixon 2012). Such methods are also highly effective. The enactment of repressive

legislation such as the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act in the US and Bill C-51 in Canada, serves as proof that interrupting operations and damaging property has a substantial impact on corporations and their profits, without the need for large-scale campaigns. If the actions of RALM activists had not resulted in harming and even shutting down countless animal enterprises, there would be no need to criminalize them.

One of the prominent ways in which the RALM constructs movement strategies and tactics is by using prognostic frames that highlight inefficiency and the poor track record of other animal advocacy movements who utilize different methods. They especially note that *you can't buy revolution* and thus use *anti-reformist* frames. Almost all of the ALF interviews and essays, and many communiqués, make some reference to the inadequacy of mainstream reformist action or critique animal rights groups as not truly pursuing animal liberation but simply more humane conditions of captivity. The radical objectives of the RALM determine that their strategies must not seek reform, like the large mainstream animal rights and welfare groups:

For these groups, who have fundamentally misunderstood what animal liberation is, they often speak of freedom as if it is [...] about how to reform laws, talking not of abolition but of how to make the suffering of confinement more pleasant. [...] For us as F.L.A./A.L.F activists, animal liberation means a direct and objective struggle against the torture industry. Objective in the sense of attacking in a focused way, not third parties or those who are broadly implicated but rather attacking the principle figures. Direct because our methods are without intermediaries, against the torturers.

– FLA Mexico communiqué, 2010

As one might expect, many RALM activists are hostile towards the mainstream animal rights movement for focussing on indirect methods such as vegan outreach and education (Best 2014; Cochrane 2012; Francione 1996; Torres 2007). This is a valid critique, as these campaigns often promote consumerism through advocating a yuppie

vegan lifestyle that in reality, is still highly problematic because of its perpetuation of capitalism and the environmental destruction and social inequalities it causes, such as fuel consumption and emissions from food transportation and the migrant and child labour used in produce farming (Harper 2009; Sorenson 2012; Torres 2007).

veganism is not going to 'fix' capitalism, or 'fix' consumerism. Capitalism is *designed* around exploitation of something (labour, animals or the Earth), and consumerism is the means by which we acquire and make use of this exploitation. Sadly, "going vegan" doesn't change any of that...you can't fucking 'buy' a revolution.

– ELK activist essay, 2014

Even more troublingly, it is often white, middle-class, animal rights activists with large wealthy organizations such as PETA or Farm Sanctuary attempt to convert people to veganism without an understanding of how inaccessible vegan food is for many marginalized and isolated communities (Adams & Gruen 2014; Gaard 1993; Kheel 2008). A currently incarcerated activist refers to these types of activists as

[A] bunch of rich white people eating cupcakes, pandering to product manufacturers, pulpit pounding at conventions in swanky hotels, and self congratulating each other...while huge welfarist organizations siphon money into their fat, deep pockets [...] getting rich off of the pain and suffering of their host.

– US ALF activist, 2014

Vegan lifestylism in large animal rights organizations is often paired with reformist campaigns that attempt to 'sell' animal advocacy to large multinational corporations through assurances that instituting welfare reforms will increase profits or streamline operations (Torres 2007). PETA, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and Farm Sanctuary promote 'successes' such as the banning of pig gestation crates in California or convincing McDonald's to change to a more 'humane' meat supplier, acts which many RALM activists argue are irrelevant to gaining liberation or even rights for animals. In fact, welfare reforms such as these often serve to normalize

and justify meat-eating by convincing consumers that it is not animal use itself but merely those forms which are arbitrarily designated as cruel that are unethical (Francione 1996; Torres 2007). Mainstream activism also accepts many of the injustices of power and structural inequalities that allow corporations to systematically confine and abuse animals for profit. In some cases, large animal rights and welfare organizations may even ignore serious abuses of animals for political reasons, such as to maintain the support of corporate sponsors. GOAL member group KOALA post the following comment about a local animal welfare group:

funny how the organizations who are in charge of defending animals would have these huge conflicts of interest. The Humane Society recently had a fundraiser here [at African Lion Safari]...next time you want to donate, think about donating money to an independent sanctuary like Cedar Row instead of groups...who openly support beating elephants with bull hooks.

– KOALA Facebook post, 2014

For RALM activists, compromising the goal of total liberation by acquiescing to the demands of funders, or agreeing to be satisfied with revised conditions of animal use are wholly unacceptable strategies. An anonymous activist makes this distinction between the reformist strategies animal advocacy and true animal liberation:

We, animal liberationists, are fighting for the total liberation of animals. A bigger cage is insignificant when animals are still being imprisoned and killed [...] rules are put in place by people who have a vested interest in the status quo, we cannot beat them by playing by their rules.

– ALF activist essay, 2014

These rules are the rules of the powerful, and the oppressive state looms large in this vision. Animal rights ideology seeks as an ultimate goal a set of state-mandated protective rights for animals, an idea RALM activists are often sceptical towards or even outright oppose. Any right granted by the violent and domineering state is considered a poor substitute for the total liberation of human and non-humans animals from the grips

of power-over relationships. As many RALM activists have been subject to targeting and violence from the state (Amster 2006; Luers 2006; Monaghan & Walby 2008, 2011), it is little wonder that they question the wisdom and utility of engaging it in the struggle for animal liberation. Instead, activists choose to stand with others who similarly fight state and capitalist marginalization. A post by KOALA encourages activists to

support our Kitchener community members taking back public space and standing against gentrification and community displacement by condo cronies, land speculators, police, slumlords, and developers who make rent unaffordable and life unbearable for the poor, working class and minorities in our city.

– KOALA Facebook post, 2014

ELK specifically addresses the shortcomings of mainstream approaches to animal activism with their #DearPeta campaign, which collects and posts reader photos with statements about what they find offensive in PETA’s media stunts and advertising, in order to voice their concerns about

[the] many problems with the culture of animal rights (primarily because it thrives within terribly privileged communities), and similarly with the tactics & priorities of PETA as an organization (essentially for promoting short-term “go vegan” campaigns that tokenize different peoples or issues for their elitist version of “rights” for animals)

– ELK website post, 2014

ELK activists criticize PETA’s tactics for their sexism, racism, ableism and heteronormativity, which are rampant in their advertising and PR campaigns. For example, female PETA activists are often asked to pose naked or semi-naked in cages or chains in public spaces to draw attention to issues of animal captivity. Instead, the RALM deploys *anti-oppression* and *solidarity* prognostic frames. They argue that such campaigns are not only offensive but also ineffective in garnering support from target groups (Adams 1993; Fraiman 2012; Francione 1996). In fact, the sexual objectification of women in the animal rights movement may contribute to the sexual harassment and

assault of women activists by their male counterparts (Adams 2011). GOAL issued a public alert in 2014 about a male animal rights activist accused of sexually assaulting women activists in the Toronto area, and noted “Various [animal rights] organizations that Paul is involved in [have] been contacted, and we are very disappointed by the unwillingness to even respond to these women, let alone assist them in creating safe spaces within their organizations.” The continued protection of sexual predators in the animal rights movement at the expense of victims has been heavily criticized by feminists (Adams 2011). Assaulted women tend to leave the animal advocacy movement or stay silent because they believe that it is more important to have male activists represent the cause (Adams 2011; Gaarder 2011; Groves 2001). After a second incident in 2015 of a male organizer from San Francisco-based animal rights group admitting to several sex crimes against fellow activists, HALT (a GOAL member group) stated:

This is why we need safe spaces in our organizations and communities. Misogynists have NO place in the fight. It doesn't matter if the person is a “good” activist. It certainly doesn't matter if they're vegan. We don't just fight for the liberation of animals, but all living things.

– HALT Facebook post, 2015

Operating in the public sphere, as mainstream animal rights such as PETA do, grassroots groups such as ELK and those within the GOAL network appear to be particularly sensitive to the shortcomings of isolating approaches to activism. One of GOAL's member groups urges animal activists to “actively confront...the racist diatribe [of some animal rights groups against] the China Dog festival and the unbearable hypocrisy of the criticism” (HALT Facebook post, 2014), while Marineland Animal Defense (MAD), another GOAL group, posted this in response to the homophobic pro-vegan Facebook page *Vegans of Eden*: “Everyone go and report this group immediately!

There is explicit hate speech in this group which is promoted as ‘heterosexual-only’. Let these people know that veganism is about standing in solidarity with all living things” (MAD Facebook post, 2014). ELK and GOAL attempt to create more inclusive alternatives to the stereotypical ‘animal rights’ activism by incorporating radical critiques of systemic power injustices within a framework of anti-oppression, community activism and solidarity (Dixon 2012), while ideologically supporting the ALF and other clandestine activists:

[We] will prioritize organizing that is free of speciesism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, queerphobia, ableism, xenophobia, and classism. The Network operates on an intersectional understanding of oppression and aims toward the goal of actively organizing for total liberation that recognizes the inherent worth and interconnectedness of all beings.

– GOAL vision statement, 2013

Several of GOAL’s member groups, including the Niagara Animal Defense League, actively engage an intersectional perspective in their strategic framework, for example through the work of a ‘vegan baking militia’ that holds bake sales to fundraise for social justice campaigns: “Yesterday was Trans Remembrance Day and we raised money for Transgender Niagara. The event was so incredible and we were so happy to be there. Tonight there will be a Vigil to end the siege of Gaza” (2013). The group also forbids the use of chocolate in their collective kitchens “in light of the intense amount of water that it takes to produce chocolate, but more importantly regarding the issue of human slavery, and in particular child slavery” (2015).

Those with privilege who fight for a specific cause such as animal liberation are called to stand in solidarity with struggles against classism, colonialism, criminalization, homophobia, racism, sexism, speciesism and transphobia, among others (CrimethINC 2004). However, RALM activists are also sensitive to the fact that many of them benefit

from white, middle class or other forms of social privilege and must be careful not to overstep their role as allies. Solidarity work must be done with the utmost sensitivity and realization that one's presence may not be welcome or necessary:

[Y]ou want to help and talk to people and see what you can do but it is not always our place to barge into a liberation struggle and start helping out. There are communities around the world who are already mobilizing, and standing their ground, against oppression [...] our presence is oppressive, it's not necessarily our fault, but it goes back far into history, however we all have to take accountability for it and we all have to work on ways to be allies for a community.

– ELK activist essay, 2015

Activists in ELK and GOAL member groups make significant efforts to reject the isolating practices of mainstream animal rights groups and support other social justice struggles, and in the case of ELK, such work is the primary focus. Expressions of a commitment to solidarity work were also found on ALF website:

[A] similar fabric runs throughout society, connecting us not solely to other predominately white social movements but also to many people who survive without compromise in this world on fire [...] what matters is that we utilize our time and privileges toward fighting effectively against the many forces seeking to destroy us.”

– EF!/ALF activist essay, 2013

However, the ALF documents examined were not entirely free from racist and sexist rhetoric. Upon returning to the ALF website after the completion of data collection, I observed a new posting from a well-known ALF Press Officer entitled *Palestinians, Blacks and Other Hypocrites* (2015) in which he rants about unfairly being labelled a racist when he claims instead to be a misanthrope: “I distrust/hate white people, too, and Hispanics, Asians, Israelis, men, women, heterosexuals, homosexuals, Republicans, Democrats, etc.” The fact that this divisive and isolating polemic has not been removed from the NAALPO website is somewhat surprising. It does not appear to represent the views of the majority of ALF activists, if the many documents cited throughout this

chapter that oppose racism and hierarchy are to be trusted. As well as supporting violence and racism, this individual is also blatantly misogynistic, stating in speeches and media interviews posted on his personal website (but not the ALF's) that women who wear fur should be viciously raped and that those who exploit animals should be tortured¹ (Yourofsky 2008).

Two other examples of sexism were found in communiqués from the Vancouver ALF which refer to one fur store owner as a 'fur bitch' (2009), and another as "the psychotic bastard child of Cruella de Ville and Barbie" (2013). Evidently, despite hopeful signs that the RALM, particularly grassroots groups, are making efforts to move beyond the racist and sexist reputation the animal advocacy movement has historically held, there is still work to be done to ensure that the movement does not allow hateful rhetoric to destroy it. It should be noted, however, that the documents cited in the three examples above are the only ones within the entire body of data analyzed that expressed such views, and thus I do not wish to suggest that this is a common viewpoint held by activists. In fact, far more (two dozen ALF documents, one quarter of all Facebook posts, and virtually all ELK documents) express anti-racist views. Nevertheless, there is always room for those with privilege to examine their prejudice, intentional or otherwise, as GOAL member group MAD urges,

If someone calls your behaviour or ideas racist – you have the power to change. Your behaviour and ideas are a barrier to moving forward an issue you care deeply about...this is a crucial time for people in the 'West' to understand what role they need to play in pushing for change. If you care as much as you say you do, step back and try to understand.

– MAD Facebook post, 2015

¹ Due to the graphic intensity of the passage, I have elected not to share this person's exact words.

One of the strongest prognostic frames observed from the data collected in this thesis research was the influence of *prison solidarity* and *prison abolition*, mentioned in virtually all ALF documents as well as one quarter of ELK and GOAL materials. As a social movement that often engages in actions that states deem as subversive and illegal, the RALM is devoted to providing support and solidarity with prisoners, particularly antiauthoritarian prisoners such as anarchists and earth liberation activists. This framing of prison issues directly counters the pro-prison stance taken by mainstream animal rights groups that press for harsher sentences for those convicted of animal abuse:

prisons perpetuate systems of domination whereby perpetrators are taken out of communities, put into prison and then later re-integrated back into the same unjust, politicized and wholly unequal society. The systemic relations of power and oppression are left untouched, and actually reinforced as poverty and marginalization fuel a cycle of incarceration. It is a system used for capitalist gain [...] to criminalize and displace our communities... it targets: queer and trans* folks; communities of colour; Indigenous peoples; immigrants; people with disabilities and mental health issues; poor and low-income communities; drug users; and more recently, environmental and animal rights “terrorists”

– ELK essay, 2014

The protection of private property by the state at the expense of the liberty of others results in the criminalization of those who suffer most under the inequalities of capitalism, such as racialized and poor communities (Christie 2000; Davis 2003; Dixon 2012). In a posting commemorating the anniversary of a prison strike of immigration detainees in an Ontario prison, the Hamilton Animal Liberation Team called upon activists to recognize and support those, who like animals, are imprisoned without reason:

We talk a lot about cages in animal liberation. A cage is a prison cell is a cage. Organizations like No One Is Illegal have been working tirelessly to bring attention to our government’s draconian immigration detention policy, to deliver justice to migrants in this country who are locked up in our country without trial or indefinite sentences, and to question the criminalization of migrants entering this so-called free nation.

– HALT Facebook post, 2014

Increasingly, political dissent is also criminalized and suppressed by law enforcement (Lafferty 2001; Monaghan & Walby 2011; Pierskalla 2010), therefore RALM activists see prison solidarity as supporting allies in the fight against injustice. RALM activists close their communiqués with a message of solidarity for particularly well-known prisoners such as Walter Bond, Victor Herrera and Marius Mason, or more generally “to all prisoners of this war” (Utah ALF communiqué, 2013). The ALF and ELK websites both contain links to information about movement prisoners, while the GOAL’s vision statement positions the activist network “in opposition to captivity be it human or other animal...the network will be used to support and co-ordinate support for movement prisoners...from a prison abolitionist stance that regards cages as a moral evil” (2014).

Connections can be made between prisoners in captivity and the forcible confinement of animals. Both are imprisoned as a means of capitalist profiteering via the PIC (Prison Industrial Complex) and Animal Industrial Complex (AIC). Communiqués and essays contain dozens of references to “imprisoned animals,” and animals and humans are understood to experience similar harms from forcible confinement, including crushing boredom, violence, self-harm, separation from loved ones, illness, poor diet and sanitation and the repression of all natural forms of self-expression (Davis 2003; Sudbury 2008):

What was prison like? It’s infantilizing, it’s monotonous, it kind of chips away at whatever sense of dignity you may have had before you got there...I tried to think a lot about what that would be like if I was in a cage in a laboratory, or a zoo, or a factory farm...You don’t know why you’re there... nothing makes sense. And the isolation that I felt, I could kind of reason through it, but animals can’t really do that. I thought a lot about that, actually, when I was in that cage.

– ELK activist interview, 2013

In the words of a 2013 San Diego ALF communiqué, “every prisoner deserves a jail break.” Nevertheless, RALM activists are quick to point out that most prisoners (at least in North America) are not subject to the myriad tortures faced by animals in vivisection labs, and for this reason they are highly motivated to focus the bulk of their activist effort on animals. Animals in labs are operated on without anaesthetic, have corrosive chemicals poured in their eyes and mouths, have their limbs amputated and brains lesioned; in factory farms they have their beaks, ears, horns, tails and testicles cut off without pain relief; in fur farms, they are anally electrocuted or even skinned alive (Nocella et al 2014; Sanbonmatsu 2011; Sorenson 2012). One RALM activist stated as he served a 51-month prison sentence in 2007: “This is way bigger than us, this is for the animals and the planet, we will never suffer as much as they do.”

Prison solidarity in the RALM is used not only as support for the movement’s ‘fallen comrades’ and other prisoners but also as a method of direct action. In an ALF document instructing new activists on how to engage in direct action, it is noted that actions are often dedicated to prisoners in communiqués as a way of threatening state power and ending political repression and activist targeting by state agents and infiltrators. “This action is dedicated with all our desire for freedom to the prisoners Victor, Emmanuel, Abraham, Fermin, and Socorro of Tijuana. We hope that direct solidarity multiplies in clandestine actions, for their unconditional liberation” (FLA/FLT Mexico, 2010). By demonstrating that imprisoning activists serves to incite other cells to engage in actions, the state may be more reluctant to hand out longer sentences.

This theory finds support in the US and Canada as it widely known that after a concentrated period of state repression, such as Operation Backfire or the conviction of

the SHAC 7, direct actions dedicated to prisoners rose dramatically (Potter 2011). Social movement scholarship has noted that critical events often lead to a spike in social movement activity in the period following the event (Ramos 2008). Between 2011-2013, a flurry of ALF activity occurred in Portland, Oregon. 28 actions in this timeframe were found in the data analyzed for this research, with communiqués citing inspiration from “all of the creative destruction taking place as of late by anarchists and animal liberationists in Portland” and “in solidarity with the grand jury resisters and all long-term anarchist prisoners.” In response to the anti-police demos in Seattle in 2011 and the May Day riots across the Pacific Northwest in 2012, a grand jury was convened to target anarchist organizers. Several young activists who were subpoenaed refused to testify and were incarcerated, causing a global flood of solidarity actions before activists were released in 2013 (marut 2013).

Finally, RALM activists express sentiments that prison is in many cases merely the eventual consequence of engaging in revolutionary struggle and therefore should not be feared but understood as the expected reaction of state-corporate interests that must quell dissent because it threatens their power and upsets the status quo (Graeber 2009):

Like my ancestors who were sometimes outlaws simply by the fact that they were forced to live under a tyrannical society, I am an outlaw simply because I refuse to live by the laws that assert more rights to inanimate property used to destroy life than to the life being destroyed.

– ALF activist prisoner pamphlet, 2006

We send you much strength and an incendiary embrace. Remember that confinement is only a setback that all true revolutionaries have to face sooner or later and that the harder the battle, the sweeter the victory will be!

– FLA Mexico communiqué, 2010

Due to the nature of their chosen form of activism, and because they fight against the status quo and the legitimacy of powerful interests, prison is always a distinct

possibility, particularly for US activists because of legislation like the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (2006). Many of the RALM's spokespersons, such as David Barbarash, Rod Coronado, Kevin Jonas and Paul Young gained notoriety because of their convictions for RALM activism, which effectively ended their engagement in 'illegal' RALM actions as their activities are now closely surveilled by law enforcement officials (Amster 2008).

As a whole, the prognostic frames of the RALM heavily centre around justifications for direct action that are heavily influenced by their diagnostic frames. The construction of activism through revolutionary and anti-state frames is depicted as a necessary response to the concentration of oppressive power held by governments and their corporate influences. Similar framing is found in some revolutionary anarchist groups, who advocate "social war" against unjust power structures (CrimethINC 2002; Graeber 2009). However, it appears that for the RALM, the revolution called for may be closer to an awakening of society rather than a militant uprising. Frames emphasizing the need for direct action and the prefiguration of freedom and autonomy position the RALM as an alternative to mainstream animal rights and welfare organization, and, similar to many contemporary radical movements, places the RALM in opposition to mainstream groups with anti-reformist frames that depict conventional protest as irrelevant or contradictory to movement goals (Dixon 2014).

Anti-oppression and solidarity frames counter the dominant perception of animal advocacy movements as single-issue and isolationist by emphasizing the importance of joining together with other movements to spread awareness, rally support, and fight the many commonalities of injustice that affect animals and people. These frames are also

found in many other radical movements, including anarchism, anti-poverty, eco- and radical feminism, and migrant justice, among others (Day 2005; Dixon 2014; Nocella et al 2014). One of the most heavily emphasized prognostic frames focuses on prison abolition and prisoner support, as captive animals and prisoners are viewed as suffering from similarly hierarchical and exploitative systems which are best confronted through intersectional activism. Overall, RALM prognostic frames expressed a highly action-oriented approach that expresses far more complex and nuanced strategic justifications than are commonly attributed to the movement in the existing literature or popular perceptions.

Motivational Frames

Motivational frames are the ‘call to action’ presented by a social movement that offers encouragement to engage in and sustain activism and demonstrate the urgency of the problem requiring attention (Benford & Snow 2000). This framing task is vital to mobilizing support for the movement that seeks to draw new activists to the cause as well as gain the goodwill of ‘bystanders’ (Ramos 2012). To encourage supporters to engage in activism, RALM activists stress the urgent situation of animal and earth exploitation, arguing that there is no time to lose, that ecological and societal collapse is imminent. They encourage potential activists to stand with them as animal allies against an unjust and cruel world, and express an enduring hope that a utopic world is possible if people want it.

RALM activists use the motivational frame of *urgency* to depict the problems of animal exploitation, human subjugation and capitalist destruction of the earth that together represent an immediate and dire situation. Extending diagnostic frames that

view human civilization and capitalism as the root cause of the ecological, animal and human crises, motivational frames of urgency express that there is little time left before the complete destruction of all life on earth (Becker 2006). Sometimes dystopian in their worldview, RALM activists hold that the situation is rapidly worsening:

While the world burns and swelters with the heat of racism, police brutality, Animal use and abuse, environmental degradation, disease, famine, pestilence, war, filth, perversion and neurosis, we chant, we hold sings, we take to the internet and voice our opinions, in a sea of opinions. We play on our fiddles while the Earth dies.

– US ALF activist essay, 2014

Despite expressing hope for a ‘utopic’ future, RALM activists perceive that multiple issues including the ecological crisis, state power, and the capitalist takeover of society will meld together to create a horrific prospective future, one where those without power will be increasingly marginalized and will eventually starve, sicken and die as the wealthy take control of the remaining resources in a dying world (Caldwell & Caldwell 1994; Fitzgerald & Pellow 2014; Sperry 1998). While similar notions are found in diagnostic frames, these elements combine to create a motivational frame by driving home the understanding that such social problems, while longstanding, have reached a tipping point beyond which the earth is likely to descend into a bleak nightmare. The threat of state force in protecting the vital resources owned by the rich against the impoverished masses is an immediate and widespread problem, to which the only realistic response is resistance (Graeber 2009; Liodakis 2013). Activists fear that without a strong movement inciting others to commit purposeful action, it will soon be too late:

Life on Earth and the human species as we know it are already being fundamentally altered and may simply go extinct. On the other hand, life may survive and proceed to an even more terrifying nightmare...where people must fight one another for access to resources. Reality: We will die without clean water, and we will go to prison if we get caught breaking the laws [that] we must

break if we are going to survive. We must recognize global ecological crisis and...[become] a social force that is not an expression of a moral impulse, but a need for survival and desire for utopia. This is what will occur when we examine the realities we are attached to but arm them with fantasy.

– ALF/EF! activist essay, 2014

In a world where many already do not breathe clean air or drink clean water, and where the Animal Industrial Complex is one of the largest contributors to a host of environmental issues such as greenhouse gas emissions, water depletion and contamination, deforestation and desertification (Sorenson 2012; Walters et al 2011), it is clear to RALM activists that animal exploitation and human quality of life are inseparably linked. They caution that ecological collapse is already occurring, and that many who live in poor and racialized communities within North America already experience terrible health risks from a natural environment that can no longer cope with the destruction (Boerner & Lambert 1995; Gaard 1993; Mohai et al 2009; Umukoro 2015). RALM activists call upon humanity to rise up to defend animals and the earth while there is still time.

It's time to make a stand, and choose where our allegiance lies; with earth and animals, or those destroying them. My hope is that many will join me, and follow their wildest desires and live the life that we believe only exists in myths and fairy tales. Reality is what we make it, and my expectation is for more and more warriors to swear allegiance to the liberation of the Animal Nations and the defense of Mother Earth. As long as we live we may never get another chance to make as much difference in the fate of the planet.

– US ALF activist interview, 1995

Naturally, as activists, those in the RALM do not frame the current condition of the world as utterly hopeless. They hold strong to the belief that society can change, that the masses can awaken and reformists will become warriors, if only the urgency of the issues can be communicated and understood.

Compassion, justice, equity are all important values we can incorporate into our lives on a daily basis and on broad terms. Refusing to see wild animals as commodities, as assets and profits, should be part of a larger project to revise a society that made such things possible in the first place. At our best moments, together, our energy pointed to this – another world is possible.

– MAD Facebook post, 2015

Despite the grim prospect that animals may continue to suffer untold horrors at the hands of humans for decades to come, RALM activists are nevertheless encouraged by the passion and dedication that fellow activists express, and hold a belief that by living in line with their values and encouraging others to do the same, the world will slowly evolve. Scholars of radical social movements have noted similar sentiments amongst many contemporary radical movements. They speak of the ways in which radical activists collectively conceive of a utopic future and bring it into being through the daily work and interactions of their activism (Khasnabish & Haiven 2014). Through their calls to action, RALM activists hope to motivate a similar awakening, and, together with other movements and activists, build a new world from the ground up.

Another motivational frame is one of *duty* and the notion that “*there’s no justice, there’s just us.*” This slogan is repeated throughout activist documents across Canada, the US, and Mexico and speaks to one of the ways in which RALM activists encourage new activists to become involved in direct actions for animal liberation. Appeals to the state are deemed useless because of the deep financial ties that exist between politicians and corporate lobbies (McCoy 2008; Sorenson 2011). RALM activists see little utility in attempting to persuade lawmakers to liberate animals since they will never relinquish control over animal life as long as there is money to be made from their use. In the absence of any social or political protection for animals, they require a direct intervention to defend them from suffering and death:

WE ENCOURAGE ALL ACTS OF NON VIOLENT ECONOMIC SABOTAGE AGAINST WINNERS AND THEIR OTHER COMPANY HOME SENSE. As long as animals are being skinned alive and sold for profit inside Winners, we challenge all who care, to commit economic sabotage against these blood thirsty monsters until they agree to pull all fur from the store. THERE IS NO JUSTICE, JUST US.

– Vancouver ALF communiqué, 2009

RALM activists challenge the public to put their horror of animal cruelty and injustice into immediate action “for human, animal and earth liberation. If not us, who? If not now, when?” (FLA Mexico, 2012). The fact that many animal advocates support the RALM in theory, but draw the line at engaging in so-called illegal or other contentious actions themselves, is not lost on RALM activists, who urge others to overcome their fear and hesitation and become part of the tiny but determined few who defend animals against oppression. They appeal to armchair revolutionaries, angry and alienated youth and all others who are critical of power and the state but have yet to take up the fight:

With this action, we hope to awake a sleeping giant. This action is for those who plot and dream. This is for every anarchist who dreams of taking illegal action but has not yet. As the capitalists destroy everything beautiful in this world, and the vicious state engages in more torture and repression to protect them, we must continue to attack.

– Portland ALF communiqué, 2013

It’s happening, the animal liberation movement is rising, and believing in itself once again. Let’s turn the beauty of what was the single act of resistance into an uncompromising inspiration. Let’s make history and stop this lab.

– HALT Facebook post, 2014

Standing against the viciousness of state violence and the ecological destruction wrought by capitalist exploitation, RALM activists express feelings of pride and joy in every small act of defiance against what they envision as a fundamentally flawed and unjust economic and political system. They defy the laws of the state with impunity, claiming themselves as self-determined actors who care little for unjust and biased laws that

attempt to quell dissent and muzzle the majority, a characteristic also found in some anarchist groups (CrimethINC 2004). The liberation of animals becomes in some way a liberation of the self and an awakening of some feral part of themselves. Giving animals a chance to live freely in the face of a society which treats them as disposable commodities is not only a way to take justice into one's own hands but also to feel free:

For some of us it was the first liberation of our lives, for many it will not be the last. You feel a great empathy and a gentle tingling in your stomach when the animals look in your eyes...feeling the earth under their feet when only days before they were in tiny cages waiting to be killed. You feel like a part of you is going to be freed with them, and that part of you will be lost in the immensity of the forest. You can do it any day, any night [...] then you will finally know what we are talking about.

– FLA Mexico communiqué, 2010

The unquantifiable emotional release and sense of peace that RALM activists feel when they are able to see with their own eyes the eagerness with which their liberated animal allies explore their freedom is perhaps unimaginable to all outside the movement. It does however reveal the driving motivation behind the chosen tactics, and suggests a compelling reason that these people are willing to risk their own freedom for the sake of others. To become one of them requires nothing more than a willingness to step beyond the artificial constraints of mainstream activism, a choice open to all.

RALM activists' also use motivational frames of *encouragement* which construct horizontal organizing, solidarity work and direct action as simple means of creating tangible change that do not require any specialized skills or knowledge, but simply a desire to be active on behalf of animals in the most direct manner possible. Because the RALM still remains a small movement in terms of actual numbers of activists (Liddick 2006), it is easy to assume that engaging in direct action for animals is somehow difficult, or exceptionally dangerous. While those who engage in direct action, such as those in the

ALF, are sometimes idealized by their supporters for their bravery and audacity, the RALM is quick to point out that such constructions are detrimental to inciting a widespread movement, and instead point out that everyone has a role in creating a better world:

Its appeal lies in its portrayal of people who are somehow better than the rest of us — more noble, brave, and compassionate... Social transformation needs no martyrs... Revolutionary action must include a conscious effort to subvert the roles that define our exclusion and powerlessness. Revolution begins with each one of us. We are the executioners of fate. We must decide our own future so that no one else will be able to.

– ELK Facebook post, 2013

Marineland Animal Defense, a GOAL member group that disbanded in early 2015, encouraged others to become involved in grassroots organizing, and to engage directly in confronting animal suffering with these words:

We will never forget that we accomplished what we have using a grassroots model. We never had support or funding from any non profits, never had staff and it never held us back. We don't have to wait for others to do this work for us, or rely solely on politicians to create change – we can join together to do that ourselves.

– MAD Facebook post, 2015

Since many RALM actions such as demonstrations and home visits, spray-painting slogans, gluing locks, and breaking windows require little specialized knowledge or skill, and are simple and cheap to do, they are framed as being accessible to even the novice activist (CrimethINC 2004; Graeber 2009). For example, even the liberation of captive animals can be a relatively straightforward and simple endeavour:

Wildlife farms are everywhere. Their victims can be immediately released, with no rehoming necessary. This life saving action took no specialized skill, less than twenty-four hours of planning, and fifty dollars. With basic tools and determination, anyone is capable of destroying the barrier that stands between an animal and their freedoms... Stop fantasizing about it. Stop frightening yourself out of it... just do it.

– ALF California communiqué, 2013

Many RALM actions involve small acts of resistance (the majority of communiqués referred to minor acts of property damage), and many activists who engage in larger scale actions such as arson and raids begin their career with smaller actions (ALF 2002; Hansen 2001). Because many RALM activists began as mainstream animal rights activists, sometimes starting small can be helpful in building courage and self-assurance in the ability to act outside the law:

Many have argued that these small acts of property destruction are ineffective and futile. We contend, however, that these acts can serve as a starting point for individuals to build confidence and experience acting outside the law for animals. These acts have also served as a catalyst to inspire others into action.

– Portland ALF communiqué, 2013

The ALF and ELK websites provide a plethora of activist materials with instructional guides on how to plan actions, avoid state targeting, and what to do when stopped by police. The very real threat of capture and serving time acts as a significant deterrent to more widespread involvement in contentious action, and RALM activists do their best to allay the fears of new activists. Those who have already been imprisoned encourage others by arguing that fear is really the greatest deterrent:

I'm just saying that we need to really not be afraid of jail. People need to assess where you're at in your life, what your life is like, what your health is like, what kind of challenges you may find [...] our fear of going to jail, and our fear that our friends may go to jail, is a far, far, far more effective means of restraining us than prison actually is. So do what you need to do.

– Anarchist organizer/ELK activist essay, 2014

A posting from KOALA in support of a recent Ontario mink liberation includes a link to a website where activists can “find a mink farm near you” (2015), offering a sly incitement to would-be liberators. RALM activist documents are also careful to explain in detail how an action was or might be performed for those who may need guidance.

Approximately one third of ALF communiqués described in detail skills such as how to break windows silently and effectively, how to syringe butyric acid (rancid butter) through door locks to destroy the value of fur coats, and even how to create simple incendiary devices:

We used 10 large syringes with 16 gauge needles to shoot a foul substance into the stores through small spaces in the doors. Syringes have the ability to shoot more than 25 feet into the building onto their merchandise causing serious economic damage.

– Vancouver ALF communiqué, 2012

The plan was to slash the tires on all of the trucks and slip away through the forested area behind the slaughterhouse. Truck tires are under high pressure and can explode if slashed, so first a screwdriver was used to compress the valves on the tires to lower the pressure before the sidewalls were punctured with an icepick.

– Ontario ALF communiqué, 2013

These informative descriptions allow ‘greener’ activists to learn from the successes and failures of their more experienced counterparts without the need for face-to-face interaction: the vast majority of ALF communiqués also provide the name and address of the industry where the action took place, encouraging others to follow in their footsteps and keep pressure mounting on the target. While minor acts of vandalism may not in themselves be enough to bankrupt an animal enterprise or deter animal cruelty, they nonetheless send an intimidating message that “as long as [animal industries] continue to perpetuate the exploitation of non-humyn animals for profit, they can expect more disruption to their business” (ALF communiqué, Oregon, 2014). RALM activists hope to inspire others to believe in their own power to enact change, and in the words of the FLA Mexico (2014), “give encouragement to the current and future participants of revolutionary struggles. Onward, strong hearts!”

The motivational frames expressed by RALM activists are not entirely unique to the animal liberation movement, and in fact have much in common with other social movements. The urgency frame attempts to convince potential activists that if humanity, animals and the earth are to survive, the time for action is now. Similar frames of urgency are found in many environmental justice, earth liberation and ecological movements (Joosse 2014; Scarce 1990). New activists are called to action through duty frames, which illustrate that animal liberation will never occur by waiting for governments or corporations to change. Rather, justice can only be brought about if one is willing to act on behalf of animals. This is a common frame within other social movements, particularly those such as environmental and animal advocacy where the ‘victim’ of injustice is seen as unable to directly act to prevent their own oppression (Kheel 1993). Finally, RALM frames of encouragement persuade activists to put fear aside, and remind all who support animal liberation that they are able to directly liberate animals or bring down corporations through their own actions. Again, this is a relatively common frame among virtually all social movements that are radical in their aims and where activism poses a personal risk. As the criminalization of protest continues to worsen, it may be expected that such framing will become even more widespread.

Toward New Understandings of the RALM

Contrary to common constructions of the RALM as a moralistic and single issue movement, RALM activist frames demonstrate understandings of animal liberation that share much in common with other contemporary radical movements. Anti-capitalist, anti-consumerist and ecological diagnostic frames make sweeping indictments of the toxic effects of capitalist exploitation of the earth on ecosystems, animals and people.

Far from seeing animal liberation as an isolated issue, their diagnostic frames show that they are committed to acknowledging the intersections of oppression for marginalized humans, animals and the earth. They call for the end of Indigenous oppression with anti-colonialism frames, while ecofeminist frames critique patriarchal and speciesist power over women and animals. Prognostic revolutionary and anti-state frames demonstrate an anarchistic belief that autonomy and freedom can be gained through a revolution of the everyday, rejecting society's laws. Direct action frames illustrate the need to not only push for widespread change but also to make an immediate, personal contribution to animal liberation. In a similar fashion the frame of prefiguration points to the ways in which small acts of liberation and resistance, while unlikely to result in widespread change, help to create a more beautiful and just world. Anti-reformist, anti-oppression and solidarity frames critique the mainstream animal rights movement and demonstrate how RALM activism is firmly committed to radical forms of activism that directly confront the systems of power and injustice that result in widespread suffering of humans and animals, as well as affirming the commitment of animal liberation to confront its own prejudices and shortcomings. Prisoner support and abolition frames present opposition to the prison industrial complex as a vitally important strategy to achieving total liberation for all beings, as prisoners and animals are seen to suffer from the same uncaring attitudes that treat them as unworthy of freedom. The motivational frames of urgency warn that humanity must rise up now to save itself and the rest of the earth and its inhabitants from total self-annihilation, while the need for activists to take justice into their own hands is emphasized by duty frames. Finally, frames of encouragement urge new activists not to allow themselves to be deterred from activism because of their fears.

In the following chapter, I will return to my research questions, joining together the many elements that form RALM activist frames, and draw broad connections between the RALM's framing and that of anarchistic, ecofeminist and radical social movement theory. Focussing particularly on the more unexpected frames that arose during the course of research, including Indigenous solidarity and prison abolition, I suggest how these new frames demonstrate the evolution of animal liberation into an increasingly intersectional movement. I then conclude by offering some final reflections on the potential for the RALM to grow and gain more widespread support.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examine how the RALM activist frames illustrated in the preceding chapter intersect with those produced by other contemporary radical movements, and how this represents a departure from the mainstream ‘rights’ approach to animal advocacy. I then present some thoughts on potential areas for movement-building and solidarity work, and in so doing reflect on the ideological barriers or biases in the RALM that contribute to its isolation. Following this, I offer some concluding remarks.

RALM activists frame the issue of animal liberation as inextricably tied to the same systemic injustices that harm the earth and marginalized humans. This broad understanding is demonstrated in ecological, anti-state, anti-capitalist, and anti-consumerism frames; anti-colonialist frames that place responsibility on white, elite settlers that lead and support these structures; and prison abolition frames that call for the elimination of prison systems that criminalize those who defy power. In this RALM activists reflect values and critiques found in many of the contemporary radical movements, including anarchistic, anti-capitalist, deep ecological, environmental justice, Indigenous, and radical-feminist and ecofeminist movements. Anarchists have long rejected state power and capitalism in any form, as they are considered some of the primary structures that limit autonomy and trap individuals into servitude, halting the path towards a self-determined and authentic existence (CrimethINC 2004; Dixon 2014). The RALM also shares this in common with anarchism, as well as the basic principles of self-organization, voluntary association, mutual aid, and opposition to all coercive authority (Graeber 2009). RALM activists do not balk at the strategic level of activism in contrast to many other contemporary antiauthoritarian movements, which sometimes

have a tendency to remain focused on ideology rather than action (Dixon 2014). As it has been said of anarchism and ecofeminism also, the RALM is a practice, not a philosophy (Jones 2004). Following a long anarchist tradition of using property damage to demonstrate the vulnerabilities of the powerful (Graeber 2009), RALM activists not only engage in defiance of the state but also materially harm the capitalist corporations that exploit animals by impeding their operations. Those in grassroots groups focus primarily on community organization and intersectional solidarity, both educating others as well as learning from their allies, sharing strategy and envisioning and prefiguring a utopic future.

Leaving behind the mainstream animal rights traditions that insist that persuading consumers not to purchase animal products and relying on the state to grant rights is the way to achieve animals' emancipation (Francione 1994; Regan 1983), the RALM's grassroots, confrontational direct action approach instead demonstrates that intermediaries are not necessary, as ecofeminists and anarchists often affirm: "the assumption that progress towards justice is made through the exertion of top-down control...is accepted by all causes and political persuasions with the exception of anarchism and radical feminism, which seek to abolish structures of hierarchical power rather than use them" (Luke 2007, p. 221). True change can only happen if individuals directly confront these power structures as they manifest in the present, in the fur store downtown and the fried chicken franchise in the strip mall, everywhere and anywhere in North America. RALM activists frame this confrontation as a revolution against state power and the capitalist machine, one that rages endlessly between those who exploit animals, people and the earth in the name of profit and power. Despite the claims of their

enemies, who call them violent and terroristic, they do not seek to incite fear in the hearts of the general public, nor do activists use physical violence to achieve liberation. Rather, like contemporary anarchistic movements, they engage in and press for a revolution of the everyday (Day 2005). RALM motivational frames of urgency, duty, and encouragement entreat others to put aside their fear of prison and take justice into their own hands, rising against the formidable powers that hold themselves and nonhuman others captive in cages, prisons, and minimum wage jobs (CrimethINC 2004). With a DIY ethic in which sets of tactics are “unbranded” (Graeber 2009) and freely shared with others, RALM activists attempt to avoid creating hierarchies through communiqués and online strategy guides that demonstrate that no special knowledge or personal qualities are needed to engage in animal liberation.

The sense that one can personally oppose power and directly create meaningful change is a key part of the justification RALM activists offer for direct action. Through frames that demonstrate the importance of every life that is saved, by destroying the tools of the capitalist machine through sabotage, theft and arson, in defiance of state laws ‘protecting’ private property, RALM activists demonstrate an anarchistic insistence on acting as though they exist in a world where they are already free (Graeber 2009). In this way they engage in prefiguration, which also characterises many contemporary radical movements such as Food Not Bombs and No One is Illegal (Day 2005; Dixon 2014). Each animal rescued from a life of suffering and painful death offers a model of how humans and animals can live compassionately together. A collective vision of a fledgling world emerges through the processes of resistance, part of what has been termed ‘the radical imagination’ (Khasnabish & Haiven 2014). RALM activists frame solidarity with

other radical social justice movements as key elements of creating this shared vision. Like anarchistic and radical ecological movements, RALM activists are deeply horrified by the current state of the world, and also determinedly hopeful that humanity can rise from the ashes of its own destruction and create utopia (Dixon 2012), as reflected in the frames of urgency and prefiguration. Thus the RALM is not only a movement ‘against’ capitalism, state power, animal exploitation, environmental destruction and human oppression, but also a movement ‘towards’ a world where all humans live peaceably together with “the animal nations” on a healthy and flourishing planet, as are many other of the anarchistic, anti-oppression movements of the present moment (Dixon 2014). Indeed, radical movements can be distinguished from other more conventional forms of protest by the very fact that they keep a foothold in the future, believing in the necessity of wide-ranging structural and systemic transformation (Graeber 2009; Khasnabish & Haiven 2014).

Despite these positive attitudes towards activism, it is undeniable that the RALM has yet to capture the hearts of those outside the movement, or what has been called the ‘bystander public’ (Ramos 2012). Because bystander publics are engaged by presenting issues in such a way that outsiders feel that the claims made by a movement are justified, a unique problem is created for the animal liberation movement. Most bystanders, like the mainstream society, engage in practices that directly oppose the goals of the movement, such as eating, wearing and using products made of or tested on animals. Thus, it is difficult for outsiders to support the movement without feeling that their own practices run counter to the aims of the movement, or vice versa. While the RALM has to some extent mediated this problem by focusing efforts on less popular animal

industries such as fur, this is not a complete solution. Particularly problematic are the sweeping generalizations made by some RALM activists about ‘society’ (as seen in their anti-consumerism frame), which label most people as greedy, cruel and superficial zombies of a consumerist culture who cares nothing for animals, while constructing activists as the lone agents of justice through their frames of duty. While some activists in the RALM and in other radical movements rely on their position on the fringes of society as affirmation of their radical identity and worldview (Dixon 2014), this remains an ideological barrier to gaining support and legitimacy. A hopeful way to circumvent this difficulty without compromising the goals of the movement is through the practice of movement building. The broad anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist, anti-oppression and ecocentric framing that is constructed by RALM activists offers a myriad of possibilities for alliance building and solidarity.

Many activists in the RALM understand that animals are subjugated by the same discriminatory attitudes, policies, and economic systems that exploit, impoverish and criminalize racialized minorities, recent immigrants, women, LGTTBQIA identities, disabled persons, and prisoners. Groups like ELK, as well as many of the GOAL member groups, offer events, focus groups and fundraising efforts to support the struggles of humans who suffer from discrimination, marginalization and violence, embodying a message of total liberation. In the clandestine arm of the movement, intersectionality is most clearly visible in the ways that RALM activists understand the oppression of Indigenous peoples and prisoners.

Activists’ prognostic frames of anti-colonialism speak of the ways in which Indigenous people, their land, and the animals who long flourished together through

peaceable, reciprocal relations have simultaneously and systematically been violently displaced, robbed, exploited and murdered by settler cultures (Gaard 2001; Sampson 2004). Like some anarchists, Indigenous movements, ecofeminists, and deep ecologists, RALM activists “share a desire to recreate the values of a past age when...maternal thinking or the instinctive knowledge of Indigenous peoples enabled human societies to live in harmony with the natural world” (Bretherton 2001, para. 44). Unlike mainstream animal rights groups that regularly target Indigenous communities for hunting and fishing (Gaard 2001; Sampson 2001; Tanner 2005), RALM activists are quick to draw distinctions between the respectful subsistence hunting and fishing practices of Indigenous communities and the highly exploitative, environmentally destructive and brutal settler sport hunting or industrialized livestock production, and affirm the rights of Indigenous people to have full autonomy and control of their traditional lands.

Grassroots RALM groups such as ELK and those within the GOAL network demonstrate a deep commitment to solidarity-building with Indigenous movements striving to protect treaty rights and fighting against land appropriation. These groups focus on anti-oppression and radical community building in their activism, as described in their anti-oppression and solidarity frames, and engage the voices of Indigenous activists in their conferences and events. RALM and EarthFirst! spokesman Rod Coronado, a Pascua Yaqui Native American activist, is a major source of inspiration and education for activists (as well as the public) on the intersecting oppressions of aboriginal peoples, animals and the earth (Best & Nocella 2004).

Like many other radical movements in North America, the RALM appears (though due to the anonymity of clandestine activists it cannot be conclusively shown) to

face the problem of being a predominantly white movement (Graeber 2009; Thompson 2010). As such, it is of key importance that activists do not appropriate Indigenous cultures or claim connections that in any way further marginalizes, silences or misconstrues the message of Indigenous people themselves. Instead, the RALM could expand connections with, and continue to support, Indigenous movements. In North America, Indigenous people have long been the most strident and active defenders of the earth and its nonhuman inhabitants, engaging in sustainable forms of hunting, fishing and trapping while honouring the animals whose lives are sacrificed. Understanding that the flourishing of life on earth requires a delicate balance, Indigenous people have opposed countless development projects, mines, and fracking sites that would destroy valuable ecosystems across North America (Rolo 2015). Indigenous activists utilize direct actions such as road blockades, armed standoffs, riots and public disturbance, and in so doing have had some successes in reclaiming stolen land, such as in the Canadian example of Ipperwash (Morden 2013). Like RALM activists, they also oppose state governance and advocate for self-rule of their traditional territories, and often face police violence and repression in response to their protest (Ramos 2012; Rolo 2015). In Mexico and across North America, the Indigenous Zapatista rebellion has been highly inspirational to other movements, and has affirmed the power of grassroots revolutionary struggle:

By rising up in rebellion against the corrupt elements of the Mexican state, the Zapatistas did not approach the dominant power structure as clients asking for reforms; they approached it antagonistically, demanding it address the grievances levelled against it or fall completely in the face of this challenge (Khasnabish 2010, p. 102).

While Indigenous protest in Canada has gained some attention and support in recent years through Idle No More and the connections that have been built with environmental

and global justice movements, Indigenous movements in Canada suffer from a lack of support among the settler population and are in need of allies and supporters (Ramos 2012; Scott 2013). The RALM and Indigenous movements might both benefit from solidarity actions and joining together to fight for common goals of autonomy, land and species protection.

The frame of prison abolition illustrates another social justice issue that RALM activists, along with movements such as the Anarchist Black Cross, see as deeply connected with their own struggle (CrimethINC 2004; Dixon 2012). Activists in the RALM view the captivity of animals as imprisonment, and speak of the inherent desire for freedom and autonomy possessed by all living beings. They observe that the protection of the capitalist system and the rule of the elite require an indentured labour force, which is made possible by the prison-industrial complex (PIC) (Davis 2003). They see in human prisoners a reflection not only of the animal captives they seek to liberate but also themselves, for they also cannot live by the unjust laws of a state that values property but brutalizes living, feeling, thinking creatures. Like prison abolitionists and anarchists, they do not seek the reform of the prison system through better meals or larger cells for inmates, but rather the complete abolition of the carceral system, even to the elimination of the state as the arbiter of justice (Rodríguez 2008). Here again is an opportunity for the RALM to gain strength and help while engaging in solidarity work to achieve shared revolutionary goals. Like animal liberation, prison abolition remains a far-off dream in North America, an unimaginable and frightening idea to a society that cannot envision a different world. Those who suffer most from the PIC (such as Aboriginals, Blacks, first-generation immigrants and low-income communities) are in

many ways made invisible in contemporary North American society and require supportive communities on 'the outside' to offer hope and to fight against continuing racial profiling and the criminalization of poverty (Higgins 2008; Myers 2002; Warren 2010), something which RALM activists are well-positioned to do as they already engage in advocacy and support work on behalf of anarchist and animal- and earth liberation prisoners. Just as "'prison abolition' means much more than closing down prisons... a society free of systems of inequity---white supremacy, male supremacy and the gender binary, capitalism, ableism... which produce violence, desperation, hatred, and suffering... would laugh off the outrageous idea of putting people into cages" (Lee, 2008, p. 111), so too does animal liberation mean more than simply closing down fur farms and slaughterhouses, for similar systems of inequity are found wherever animals are being caged, used, and abused and these same systems oppress humans as well.

Yet to be an effective ally to other movements that take a radical, revolutionary approach to activism and share common goals, the RALM must face its own limitations and biases. While many activists take an anti-oppression stance and seek to end all forms of hierarchy and injustice, some activists express prejudices that alienate the movement from widespread support and encourage all-encompassing generalizations of the animal advocacy movement as judgmental and insensitive. While the grassroots does an excellent job of calling out those who engage in oppressive, biased and violent behaviour, it is difficult for the clandestine movement to do the same. ALF spokespeople and activists may say whatever they wish without repercussion because of the nature of the autonomous cell structure of the ALF. Short of condemning their actions in communiqués, activists have little say in what the Press Office does or says and cannot

prevent spokespersons from misrepresenting their opinions. However, concerted and sustained efforts by activists to explicitly oppose hate speech in their communications and offer solidarity to those who face racial and sexual discrimination (for example, by supporting efforts of Black Americans against racialized police violence in the United States) are necessary to legitimate the claims of activists to fight against all hierarchies and oppressions.

Another isolating issue for the RALM springs directly from the way in which many within the movement define it in opposition to mainstream animal rights and welfare groups, as seen in the anti-reformist frames. While there are important differences in strategy and diagnosis, which have been discussed at length, there is also a common motivation of love for animals and a goal of freeing them from captivity and suffering, which lies at the heart of all animal advocacy. There is a tendency within the RALM (as well as in many other anti-authoritarian, radical movements) both to broadly dismiss any strategy that has the slightest hint of reformism, and to fetishize certain tactics, such as sabotage (Dixon 2014). While there are certainly justifications for critique of some of the tactics and frames used by these groups, there is also a need to recognize that for many people, the local SPCA or anti-vivisection group is the first and perhaps only feasible outlet for activism. Many people (including myself) are introduced to veganism and issues of animal cruelty through animal rights groups such as PETA, or gain empathy for animals by befriending a goat or cat at a Farm Sanctuary or humane society shelter. Therefore it cannot be said that the existence of these large mainstream organizations is entirely contrary to the goals of animal liberation, for they inspire care, empathy and activism through their wide-reaching campaigns and high degree of public

visibility. The ultimate goal of a wild and ecologically sound earth, where animals and humans live freely and autonomously together in harmony and peace, remains in the distant future. There is a need for various types of action on behalf of animals, and direct action represents only a small section of the available tactics, which are only limited by the imagination of activists. Despite the ALF's enthusiastic assertions to the contrary, not everyone is able to engage in clandestine direct action. For many, the risk of imprisonment is too terrifying a prospect, or too cruel to loved ones, in the case of those with significant others, young children or other dependents (Kheel 1993).

Just as the mainstream animal rights and welfare organizations might ideally cease to condemn the RALM and instead offer their support, the RALM could also stand in solidarity with those in the mainstream who share the common goal of animal liberation. In a world where eating, wearing, owning and experimenting on animals remains the dominant norm, differences must be set aside and alliances built. We need not give voice to those who harm the movement with racist, sexist or other offensive rhetoric, or who seek publicity and profit from animal advocacy. However, all those who selflessly offer their time, skills and passion to fight for the freedom of all living beings may embrace and encourage one another. There are enough outside of the movement who disparage, dismiss and seek to destroy it. Those with common cause who fight against human and animal violence, capitalism, state suppression, the PIC and the destruction of the natural world can instead choose to join together against the rising tide of suppression and allow it to strengthen resolve and refine our strategies, rather than allowing infighting to divide and conquer the movement.

To conclude, I began this thesis research as a fierce supporter/sympathizer of the RALM, and was disheartened to learn that some of the common criticisms and stereotypes about the movement, such as accusations of racism and sexism, were in fact present in a handful the documents analyzed. However, no movement is free of divisions and biases, and it is particularly unfair to judge the RALM as a whole when activists are in many cases completely isolated from one another. Of course, this research is in no way a comprehensive look at RALM activists – such a study would be patently impossible as long as acts of property destruction and theft remain criminalized. It is possible that RALM activists hold many views, both divisive and intersectional, that can never be publically revealed. Despite these limitations, this thesis research offers a small contribution to the growing body of work on the RALM that neither glosses over its faults nor unfairly demonizes acts and words that, to quote an infamous revolutionary, are “guided by a great feeling of love” (Guevara 1965, para. 58). I was also deeply moved by the passionate expressions of empathy, idealism and hope that emerged from the words of RALM activists. As anyone knows who has educated themselves about the appalling suffering and death endured by billions of animals worldwide, it is difficult to remain hopeful in the face of such seemingly endless horror.

The efforts of RALM activists serve as a heartening demonstration of the great lengths to which some will go in the name of justice and liberation. RALM activists are undeniably brave, selfless, loving and skilled individuals who appear to follow the dictates of their moral conscience more closely than most of us can imagine. Despite their anger and sorrow with the current state of human-animal relations, RALM activists are deeply empathetic and are willing to sacrifice their own liberty in the ongoing battle

for the freedom of animals. The RALM may not have the influence or the numbers to incite a revolution, as they themselves attest, yet they serve as an example and an inspiration to those who seek a liberatory revolution of everyday life, and a world where there is freedom and respect for all beings.

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