

Chapter 14

Post-humanist investigation into human-equine relations in event landscapes: Case of the rodeo

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Abstract

Due to the increases in human leisure time, education, and affluence, animals are now incorporated into a range of recreational activities, which encourage and enable intra-active multi-species encounters in experiential environments. Framed in post-humanist theory, this chapter seeks to challenge the singular focus around human subjects, blurring boundaries between the human and nonhuman, looking beyond human agency and exploring the 'more-than-human' within the human-equine sporting event relationship. Focusing on a qualitative case study of the Austin Rodeo in Texas, USA, it is evident from this research how the boundaries and significant differences between humans and horses are challenged by the fluidity and interconnectedness of both species in rodeo's performance spaces through increased knowledge, skill, and companionship. This has implications for the leisure, tourism, and events fields by repositioning animals as partners in the co-creation of cultural experiences.

Introduction

Human attitudes towards animals have changed considerably from anthropocentric ontologies in the early pre-modern period, where humans regarded themselves as the central element of the universe and realities were exclusively interpreted in terms of human values and experiences. In this way, humans consumed animals for their own purposes, and relations with animals originally were through modes of domination (Franklin 1999). In the postmodern period, there has been a prominent shift from such philosophical thought, which is evident within this study, whereby human society has, for the most part, adopted a bio-centric ontology towards animals. This considers all forms of life as having intrinsic value and acknowledges nonhuman life as a fundamental element of the universe, which has led to the formation of more sentient and compassionate relationships with animals through a sense of equality and moral consideration. Although this is not universal, it has become much more prevalent, and this research recognises the existence of intimate relations between humans and animals in events contexts. Intimacy within the human-animal relationship is understood in this study as a two-way relationship implying a degree of affective mutuality (Knight 2005). This has implications for the leisure, tourism, and events fields by repositioning animals as partners in the co-creation of cultural experiences.

It is important to acknowledge the diversity of research disciplines with an interest in human-animal relations. Research has been conducted within disciplines including sociology, anthropology, psychology, veterinary science, zoology, socio-biology, environmental studies, political science, and, to a lesser extent, leisure, tourism, and events. An additional area of study concentrates on animal ethics, and each subject looks at the issues surrounding human-animal relationships based on their own agendas (Franklin 1999). For example, Fennell's (2017) work on the animals' roles in tourism has been significant in furthering

understanding about moral issues in past and current practice. However, previously, much of the literature surrounding the human-equine relationship is rooted in veterinary science and psychology (Rollin 2005; Hallberg 2008). From a veterinary science perspective, the research relates to equine physiology and welfare, reinforcing the bio-centric stance; whereas, the psychology literature discusses the psychological and wellbeing effects of human-animal relations that mostly take an anthropocentric stance. These two theoretical approaches towards human-animal relations underpin the basic concepts towards human interactions with animals that illustrate an appreciation of animals and an interest in their differences to humans with an understanding of their own value and welfare.

This research attempts to bring together this divide between the two approaches by specifically exploring human-equine relations and lived experiences within event landscapes with a particular focus on rodeo, where the relationship is viewed for the first time through a post-humanist lens. Although there are studies concentrating on the ethical dimensions of rodeo (Rollin 1996; Arluke and Bogdan 2014), the focus of this chapter is more explicitly on how human-equine interactions and multi-species experiences are investigated and evaluated by adopting post-humanist approaches. Until very recently, theoretical frameworks involving human-animal relations in event landscapes have mainly been anthropocentric, signifying how humans interact with animals for their own pleasure, as animals hold some form of entertainment value for humans. Previously, animal domestication was seen as one of the main qualities and practices that distinguished humans from animals. Within existing literature, there are limited accounts demonstrating how animals are able to evade subordination to be dominant over humans; rather, animals have mainly been regarded as a relatively powerless and a marginalized 'other' partner in human-animal relations (Philo and Wilbert 2000). However, this research aims to progress this concept by investigating human-equine relationships to re-conceptualise the human-animal divide from one of oppositional dualism into networks of interdependencies focused on partnership (Wilbert 2009). Moreover, findings in this study illustrate an equalling of power within the human-equine relationship, acknowledging that both human and horse respect and trust each other to be able to interconnect effectively within the relationship, and, in doing so, achieve outcomes that are more successful and rewarding. Although findings do identify a conscious 'othering' between humans and horses in some respects, in contrast to Philo and Wilbert's (2000) statement categorising animals as marginalised 'others', it also is revealed that the humans within this study have taken a post-humanist approach to interactions with their horses. Indeed, human rodeo performers indicate that they have to view the world through the lens of a horse to be able to understand its behaviour and to communicate and co-operate together effectively. Therefore, it can be argued here that the horse in this situation could instead be regarded as a 'powerful other'.

This study supports the notion that humans want to share their leisure time with a diverse range of non-humans for mutual benefit, and, without such interactions, perhaps their lives would be very different and less enjoyable. Furthermore, the horse becomes a fundamental actor within the events environment, acting as a performer, athlete, and motivator for equestrian-related leisure, tourism, and events. Experiential equestrianism provides an opportunity for humans to gain knowledge associated with equine culture as well as creating a stage for social interactions for humans to showcase their animals and exhibit their performances through interconnectedness and cross-species communications (Danby 2013).

This chapter begins by illustrating the historical context of human-animal relations and the changes in interaction over time. It then goes on to examine the shift in adopting post-humanist theoretical approaches as an attempt to explore "new, imaginative ways of understanding relations between lives" (MacCormack 2012: 1). The findings of this research reveal human-equine interactions and experiences encountered within a rodeo environment

are indicative of how equine spaces work as landscapes co-constituted between tourism and events, revealing that successful encounters between humans and horses provide highly emotional and embodied experiences.

The post-humanist shift in human-animal relations

Human attitudes towards animals have changed considerably from anthropocentric views of the early pre-modern period, where Christian theological orthodoxy maintained a view that God gave humans the right to use animals as they saw fit, which basically entailed human sustenance and labour (Franklin 1999). For example, Thomas (1983) acknowledged that most farm animals, such as cattle, pigs, horses, sheep, and poultry were not kept for sentimental reasons; they were there to work, be eaten, or both. Due to the close proximity of humans and animals living in a rural existence, their lives were interlinked, which provided a systematic interrelation between humans and the natural world (Franklin 1999). The emergence of the natural and biological sciences that the theological anthropocentrism was undermined by creating classifications in relation to differences between species which expanded the human universe (Franklin 1999). Humans began to see the universe through a different lens and realised that it was not just human orientated, which led to the adoption of biocentric notions in the sense that the world was made up of 'other' organisms which included animals and plants and became aware that humans played only a small role in a very large universe (Franklin 1999). O'Neal Campbell (2007) notes that humans increasingly modify landscapes, and animal habitats increasingly move beyond the 'natural' to encompass intensively occupied human spaces, whilst arguably suggesting that this has major consequences for both animals and humans to co-exist.

According to Franklin (1999), the modern period witnessed a fundamental shift in human-animal relations whereby humans began to sentimentalise their approaches to animal welfare, and the animals rights movement emerged. Following this, animals increasingly became a significant actant in human leisure. It can be argued that substantial changes in the economic, political, and cultural face of human relations with animals occurred in the twentieth century, where Western societies became less dependent upon animal power through industrial development and became more urbanised, creating a major shift in human-animal relations and attitudes; moreover, a pet keeping culture was formed as a sphere of leisure activity (Franklin 1999). The growth of mass leisure surged the range and scale of human-animal encounters and associated relations.

Postmodern relations with animals are characterised by a stronger emotional and moral content, a greater range of involvement and a demand for more regulation and order. As Hurn (2012) acknowledges, many social scientists have documented the myriad ways in which relationships between humans and nonhumans exist across geographical, historical, and cultural divides (Bekoff 2007; Sanders and Arluke 1993; Serpell 1996). Such an interest in human-animal interactions over the past decade has encouraged a much broader base of scholarly activity and an increasingly wide range of theoretical concepts for consideration (Hurn 2012). Post-humanism is often adopted as an effective approach for exploring human-animal relational being and the interconnectivity between humans and other animals (MacCormack 2012). Viewing the world through a post-humanist lens blurs boundaries between nature, society, humans and animals (Instone 1998). Bowes, et al. (2015) acknowledge that trans-species social bonds are driven by a variety of factors, including affection, kinship, and companionship, which promote wide-ranging benefits. Wilbert (2009) refers to this as understanding the human-animal divide from one of oppositional dualism into networks of intricate dependencies focused around companionship and kinship. Haraway's (2003) seminal work examines the ongoing processes of 'becoming with' each other in natural cultural practices. Instead of seeing a nature-culture divide, Haraway (2003) proposes there are entanglements that are mutually interactive. Thus, interspecies

interactions are viewed as potentially meaningful encounters (Bertella 2014).

The 'animal turn' has created a paradigm shift in thinking about ways in which humans and animals co-exist through such lived experiences. Much research has begun to consider animals as social actors in their own right as sentient beings, and adopt a more appreciative understanding of the cultural practices of non-human 'others'. The 'animal turn' encouraged more balanced considerations of the multifarious roles that animals play in human societies. The post-humanist recognition that other animals are indeed integral actors within social lives and worthy of anthropological attention in their own right has led to a move to 'bring in' the animal; i.e. to consider human-animal interactions from the perspective of the nonhuman as well as the human (Hurn 2012). Such approaches have led to complex geographies of intra-action between humans and animals (Barad 2007), where sharing experiences results in both parties being changed as a result of the deep relationships and complex modes of attention and attachment established. This calls 'human centredness' into question and requires a re-thinking of "being, co-being, and wellbeing" (Maurstad, et al. 2013: 323); therefore, such perspectives are allied to post-humanism.

It is evident here that the human-animal relationship has taken a shift from an anthropocentric viewpoint towards a biocentric viewpoint, which asserted that animals are worthy of moral consideration and humans can effectively coexist with animals. Therefore, this relationship has transformed in the postmodern period from viewing the human-animal relationship through a humanistic lens towards a post-humanistic lens, demonstrating that humans acknowledge the instrumental role of co-existing with animals. The nature of the relationships formed depends upon the species of animal and the types of interactions humans have with them. A common issue relating to post-human approaches to human-animal relations is associated with the conceptual placing of animals. A key debate linked to such relations surrounds the concept of boundaries; i.e. where do we draw the line between humans and non-humans (Haraway 1992; Philo and Wilbert 2000; Whatmore 2002). The notion that there are clear boundaries becomes blurred due to the association of imaginative geographies of animals, where animals should be kept close to humans, and, by doing so, humans and animals share spaces and have the potential to interconnect. It can be argued that there is no such thing as pure human and pure non-human due to the complex associations and entanglements of ecologies (Game 2001). The notion to bring nature back into social theory is becoming common place within the literature associated with critical animal studies; however, much of the existing research is linked to wild animals and the association with zoos and wildlife parks or popular domestic animals such as dogs and cats (Philo and Wilbert 2000; Markwell 2015). There is very little acknowledgement of horses despite their close proximity to natural spaces. Also, perhaps surprisingly, there is very little acknowledgement in the literature of horses in human intimate spaces as well. Although there is still a 'pet culture' in contemporary society, where humans form closer relationships with animals and welcome them into more intimate human spaces, horses are not often viewed as pets per se. This may be due to their size and their location outside of the human household. Additionally, there still exists the traditional association of horses with labour. However, given advances in technology, which have decreased the need for working horses, the majority of horses in the Western world have become more and more associated with human leisure activities, where closer kinship relations and strong emotional connections have developed.

Dashper (2017) similarly acknowledges that once the horse was considered a vital partner to humans with regards to agriculture, warfare, and transport; whereas, nowadays, it is predominantly a partner in sport and leisure. However, a dominant view in leisure and tourism literature positions animals as passive rather than active actors (Bertella 2014). It is argued here that in order to achieve meaningful multi-species encounters, humans and animals need to be involved in the co-creation of experiences. An initial and important step

towards achieving this is the co-creation of relationships to achieve multi-species connectivity. As Ghiringhelli (2016: 460) argues, “Domesticated horses have an advanced ability to assess a human’s emotional wellbeing, having been side by side with humans for centuries. Horses 'know' humans and will attempt to trust and partner with humans to form relationships. Relationships between humans and horses are co-constructions of both parties.” Although many leisure activities involving animals are rooted in humanist heritage and traditions, and, thus, prioritise the human in the relationship, consumers in recent times have more awareness of and empathy for animal wellbeing, cognition, and affect (Despret 2004). Emotional connections as part of the audience experience are increasingly becoming popular (Bertella 2014). Although this may not be a conceptually-informed decision to shift cultural viewpoints, it can be seen in practice that more post-humanist approaches are being demanded and adopted in human-animal leisure sites. This is evident within this research, where we demonstrate how human-equine interactions and relations have developed and have been incorporated into events landscapes, in this case, an exemplar being the rodeo.

Research methods

This chapter draws on research focused on a case study of the Austin Rodeo in Texas, USA. A qualitative approach has been adopted, as it provides an opportunity to be flexible and sensitive to contextual factors during research as well as explore symbolic dimensions and social meaning more effectively (Bryman 2001). Case study design has been selected because it is viewed as the best means to obtain a holistic understanding of systems of action, which are sets of interrelated activities in which actors in a social situation are engaged (Tellis 1997). This study employs in-depth semi-structured interviews with ten key event stakeholders, such as rodeo event managers, performers, such as barrel racers and bull riders, and animal specialists. Purposive sampling was selected, as in-depth interviews with experts in the subject of enquiry can aid in the exploration of how key themes of this research are embedded in the social structure (Lofland and Lofland 1995). Themes drawn out from the questions include issues pertaining to events destination strategies, cultural identity, heritage tourism, and human-animal relationships and performances. Ethnographic approaches, including rich field notes, visual methods, and participant (as an audience member) and direct observation at rodeo events also inform the study. Ethnography is considered an effective method when studying event spaces, as the observation and recording of lived experiences can complement other methods to increase the validity and reliability of the findings (Finkel 2006). An obvious limitation of researching non-humans is the inability to interview animals and have them give human language accounts of their views and experiences. Yet, horses display strong bodily cues to express their feelings and signal behaviour to communicate effectively with humans. Brandt (2006) refers to high levels of body-to-body contact between a human and a horse through interaction, which act as a basis for haptic communication. Through a co-created embodied system of cues, Brandt (2006) reveals that shared meaning is possible due to the absence of spoken verbal language. Thus, to overcome verbal language barriers and focus on interpreting embodied communication as much as possible in order to take into account animals’ perspectives, visual approaches were adopted (Rose 2013). This included interpretation of photographs and videos to provide better understanding of animal body language and human-animal interactions. By studying still photographs and re-playing videos, nuances in behaviour, physical communication, and non-verbal signals were able to be closely observed and evaluated to draw convincing conclusions about animals’ viewpoints and experiences in this rodeo environment.

Case of the rodeo

When analysing human-equine relations in leisure, tourism, and event settings, rodeo is a fitting case study example. The origins of rodeo are rooted in the frontier and ranching

heritage of the North American West, which relied on nonhuman animal interactions for both commercial and occupational purposes. As Arluke and Bogdan (2014: 32) suggest, “The rodeo is a metaphor for our attempt to tame the wild with all the inherent contradiction that such a struggle entails. Those who participate, both competitors and spectators, are there to see this struggle acted out.” Cowboys (and, to a certain extent, cowgirls) have gained an almost mythic symbolism in the North American heritage narrative, representing the so-called ‘rugged individualism’ of the West and exemplifying traditional values (Stoeltje 1981). The image of the cowboy in popular culture is that of a loner; however, he is never without his horse. The cowboy and his horse are viewed as a team, relying on each other for survival, labour, and companionship. This links to post-humanist dimensions of human and animals having to think and work together. Hallberg (2008) reminds us that the Western riding movement originated around the late 1700s out of necessity due to the harsh conditions and lifestyle of the American West. At this time, the horse was honoured and respected and treated much as a family member, as it was the horse that made life possible. A partnership between cowboy and horse was a necessity to move thousands of cattle across thousands of acres in all weather. The horse was a companion, often staying in houses during cold spells, and the only being a cowboy had to talk to for days or weeks on end (Hallberg 2008).

In keeping with Helgadóttir’s (2006) suggestion that horse-based tourism is reminiscent of a rich cultural and historical heritage intermingled with the nostalgia of the romantic past, rodeos are the performance aspect of this particular and now idealised way of ‘Wild West’ frontier life. Lawrence (1984) referred to rodeos forms of social theatre which show the range of human-animal relations. These events originated in the nineteenth century as a way of bridging the urban and rural divide through popular entertainment drawing upon pioneer ideology (Boatright 1964). This supports Franklin’s (1999) argument regarding urbanisation and disconnection from animals in everyday life and the need to recreate this in performance settings. As Stoeltje (1981: 125) argues, “Rodeo does re-enact the Western frontier experience by presenting the popular hero of that experience, the cowboy, in a live performance.” It follows, then, that animals associated with the ranching way of life also were brought into the sporting performance arena.

In many respects, these animals went from working 'tools' on the ranch to working 'actors' in a spectator sporting event. Horses retain their companion role and are present in all rodeo events except bull riding. This emphasises the importance of horses in achieving rodeo success, whether calf roping, steer wrestling, or barrel racing. As Lawrence (1984: 123) suggests, “Most contestants say that they consider the rodeo livestock to be athletes in their own right and highly respect them for doing their jobs well.” Aligned with the post-humanist principles set out by Barad (2007) and Haraway (2003), where humans and animals are entangled in ongoing processes of ‘becoming with’ each other through intra-action encounters, riders and horses in rodeo settings can be seen to co-create a shared language through embodied communication. Using a reciprocal set of cues and symbolic movements with their bodies, humans and horses can adapt and accommodate each other physically and mentally, thus developing a world of co-being (Maurstad, et al. 2013). Brandt (2004: 300) recognises the “significance of the body as a vehicle for expression” in order to “facilitate the creation of shared meaning.” Such co-operation beyond the individual self is imperative for the co-creation of the human-equine relationship, and, thus, successful performances in the rodeo arena. As Ghiringhelli (2016: 463) states, “Neither can have a communication without the other responding... The relationships between human and horses are co-constructions of both parties... Parties intra-act, and, respectively, are changing and attuning to each other in order to communicate well and engage in their activities in meaningful ways.” In practice, a barrel racer interviewee (R2) supports this by stating:

Animals are a part of you. You know each other very well. Your horse knows your mood and feeds off how you are. You're partners and become one. You get to know your horse and feel better, so you perform better. It's rewarding to compete with a horse you know. There's a bond, a reciprocal relationship. You can be a good rider, but if you're not on a good horse, you're not at the top. You're reliant on each other and have to work together.

Indeed, barrel racing is the only rodeo event in which women compete and only involves horses. It is an event focused on speed and agility rather than strength and brawn. Based on visual methods for this research, there is evident interspecies fluidity when barrel racers are riding, as there appears to be a blurring of beings as they move through the arena. At times, it is difficult to know where the human ends and the horse begins, as their bodies are entwined and their movements are correlated, both looking the same way, leaning forward in tandem, and set on accomplishing their goals together. This supports Brandt's (2006) explanation that horsewomen speak of an awareness of the experience of sensation, or 'feel' as a source of information to guide their interactions with horses. She refers to sensations as being an essential part of communication, which occur when horses pick up sensations through body-to-body connections with humans (Brandt 2006).

This also relates to Game's (2001: 2) arguments about the interconnectedness of humans and horses; she states, "different species attune to each other, live with and through each other." This kind of trusting mutual relationship between human and horses is evident within rodeo. Horses are the only animals that performers can bring to rodeos, so they are the only animals that are known to their human counterparts before the events. All the horses observed for this research at the Austin Rodeo were healthy weight and size with smooth, shiny coats. Through the use of visuals, we examined horse body language at various events. The overwhelming majority of horses had relaxed heads and tails before events began, and their ears were forward and alert throughout. These are understood to be signs of contentment. Almost none of the horses appeared to be upset by the activities they were doing or disturbed by the environment they were in. Many horses were observed snorting and nuzzling their humans, which are signs of being comfortable and affectionate and indicate positive interspecies relationships. The main exception to this human-equine partnership is the bucking bronco event, where a man tries to dominate a horse. This has origins in the horse breaking skills required on a working ranch and demonstrates the pre-companion stage of the human-equine relationship, where men felt the need to conquer the wild.

In terms of the other animals involved in rodeo events, this also reflects work on a cattle ranch to a large degree, so mastery over calves and other livestock features heavily. Stock contractors provide the other animals for the rodeo events, such as calves, bulls, mutton, goats, and other livestock. This can be seen to influence human-animal relations, and, thus, there is a hierarchy of animal performance roles in rodeo. Arluke and Bogdan (2014: 18) suggest, "This array of relationships falls on a continuum; one end is defined by human-animal co-operation, harmony, tameness, and control while the other end by conflict, violence, and unruliness." Also, an argument can be made that the size and type of animal is linked to constructions of masculinity of the cowboy. For men, Toth (2000) argues, horses usually move them physically; whereas, for women, horses move them emotionally. For example, bull riding is seen as the top echelon of 'macho' performance given the fierceness of the animal. Mutton busting is an event for children and could be seen as a training ground for performing with animals within the rodeo arena. Masculinity is tied up with the skill in controlling the animal, as it was crucial for ranch work and survival on the range. In this way, human interactions with animals are exemplary of a particular way of life, cultural heritage, and reflection of self-identity.

It is apparent how humans benefit from the relationship with animals at rodeos. Cowboys

and cowgirls demonstrate their skills and have the potential to win large monetary prizes. Audiences of rodeo events are entertained in a colourful, exciting setting that can reinforce community belonging and connections to a storied past. Along with these meaningful experiences associated with negotiating heritage and tradition, rodeo also provides educational benefits for humans regarding animal welfare. Throughout the rodeo site, there are opportunities for attendees to interact with and learn more about livestock, such as Texas Longhorns, goats, lambs, dairy cows, and so forth, as well as a petting zoo for children with pony rides and pig races. As for the animals, the benefits of being a rodeo performer are more nuanced but still convincing. Although there are still traditional narratives of human dominance in rodeo events, it can be argued that human-animal performance relationships are symbiotic. Similar to the survival necessity of the range and the ranch, both actors need and rely upon each other in order to succeed in the rodeo arena. There is a case that the animal does not have a choice in the matter, but this can be said of much of an animals' agency in a still human-centric world. However, animals in rodeo are cared for well (often better than their ranch working contemporaries), get attention and companionship, exercise, work only for short intervals, and are well fed. They are significant actors in the relationship; therefore, their welfare is a core priority.

Still, there have been protests and controversies by animal rights activists surrounding rodeo. The main controversy is with the bucking broncos, where a flank strap is tightly tied around the horse's lower belly to cause bucking. An animal specialist interviewee for this research (R4) states, "There are oversights on this, as it is a regulated sport which takes place in public during a competition. Also, these performing horses have lighter work schedules than other working horses." Rodeo is a spectator sport, so there is sensitivity to audiences' feelings in terms of animal welfare and wellbeing, as contemporary audiences would not stand for cruelty in this public arena. This is illustrative of the 'animal turn' and shift toward animal sentimentalisation. According to R4, being spectator-driven contributes to oversight and fewer problems with regard to the wellbeing of animals participating in rodeo, and most policing happens within the sport itself. Furthermore, many rodeo animals, especially horses and bulls, are worth large sums of money and have had large sums of money invested into their welfare. For example, barrel racing horses are considered partners in the sport by their riders, but they are also huge investments and well-known barrel racing horses are in high demand (R2).

Rodeo can be viewed as an expression of historic ranching ethos and human-animal alignment in sport. These relationships developed from a work environment into performance roles, which has mainly shifted human-equine relationships from dominance/subjugation to co-operation and co-creation. Moreover, rodeo provides opportunities for the public to experience more informed, less threatening encounters with animals in an event and tourism setting. As Lawrence (1984: 270) suggests, "Rodeo is essentially a ritual addressing itself to the dilemma of man's place in nature, exploring the boundary lines between people and other forms of life." Human-equine interactions are intimate, which incur embedded powerful emotions providing a feeling of human-equine connection and euphoria by instilling a sense of togetherness and natural harmony (Danby 2013).

Conclusions

The human-equine relationship has changed drastically over time due to the increased consumption of leisure activities (Dashper 2017). This study reveals the close encountering, blurring of boundaries between humans and horses through furthering an understanding of how both species can develop trustworthy and close bonded relationships to interconnect and create meaningful experiences. Furthermore, the example of the Austin Rodeo illustrates how a heritage sporting event rooted in human-centred traditions is being

rehabilitated to reflect contemporary concerns for animal welfare surrounding human-animal performances within event landscapes. Here, this study recognises the entanglements associated with the 'animal turn' in reconstructing and renegotiating non-human animals' places in human society. The research assembled draws on Haraway's (2003: 16) "ongoing processes of 'becoming with' each other in natural cultural practices." Although this is not necessarily generalisable to all rodeo events, it is evident within this case study how the relationships between humans and horses are enriched by the fluidity and interconnectedness of both species through knowledge, skill, companionship, performance, and wellbeing. This contributes to interdisciplinary understanding of how post-humanist approaches can aid in the co-creation of successful relations with horses in experiential environments. As Bertella (2014: 123) argues, "The tourism experience that includes the use of animals would then be seen as an encounter where the privileged subjects use their power not to dominate the other but to help the other to fulfil his/her potentials." By adopting an animal perspective, it could lead to more meaningful encounters and harmonious coexistence, particularly in leisure, tourism, and events environments. Indeed, as Game (2001) suggests, humans need to forget their human self, blur their boundaries, and adopt an in-between-human-and-horse way of being in order to effectively co-exist. Thereafter, both species are transformed as a result of their encounters and mutual understanding.

Questions for Discussion

- ⤴ How does post-humanism theory enhance the inclusion of and co-creation between humans and non-humans within events environments?
- ⤴ How can post-humanist perspectives be applied to other events?
- ⤴ What would be involved in making the co-creation of events experiences between humans and non-human animals successful for the wellbeing of all species?
- ⤴ How can rodeos be improved to be more non-human animal-centric?

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